

Jorge I. Pereda, Jr.  
770 N. IH 35, Apt 911  
New Braunfels, TX 78130

Friday, May 12, 2006

RE: Houston Canoe Club

To the fine people at the Houston Canoe Club,

This is the wet and disoriented fellow on the red Coleman sit-on-top you encountered last Sunday. I am not sure where to start, so I will start abruptly.

Had I not met you fellows, I would have faced two options when faced with the first rapids:

First option on the menu would have been prudence. Dock and try to walk on wet clothes and sandals to any populated area, and call a taxi. Two things could have happened then. I could either have found help quick, and call it a mean, tiresome, and generally forgettable day, or I could have wandered around desperately until nightfall, at which time I would have been forced to call the police, embarrassed and dehydrated.

My second option, would have been braving the rapids by myself. Here, two other possibilities arise (staying on the boat not realistically being one of them). My ride would have been lost immediately (with my phone, water, and car-keys). With luck, I would have made it to a shore, only slightly beaten, but still water-less, car-less, and lost. The second and last possibility – well – things could really have gotten ugly.

But I found you fellows. The statistics of it are amazing. What is the probability of meeting a group of paddling instructors at the start of the very first serious rapid? Seriously, had I woken five minutes earlier or later that day, our paths would very probably not have crossed. I feel as if I had fallen off the roof of a 20-story building, and landed on a speeding trailer loaded with pillows.

No one wants to have to wonder whether that one guy they met made it, so it would be natural to take a fellow out of the water, check for a means of communication, and send him on his way after pointing him in the general direction of a road, to meditate on the consequences of irresponsibility and solo-kayaking.

However, you went high above and far beyond this very reasonable path.

First, the excellent fellow with the keep-your-cool nose-clip stayed behind the rest of the group to explain to me that whatever happens, I should not try to find the bottom with my feet in a current, because I risk being stuck and pulled underwater. I laugh about it now, but this is not the kind of thing one knows instinctively. He could have very well considered his part done, and proceeded to follow his team, but instead, he walked back with me to show me exactly where to ride the rapid through.

What I'm trying to say here, and I think I'm already being too wordy, is that you could have left me marooned, but you didn't. You could have then exasperatedly made sure I traversed the rapids with no heavy risk, and try to get me to a reasonable spot in dry land ASAP. But you didn't. You took me in as a friend, and not only did Susan (and I'm sure others I didn't see while swimming), with super-natural speed rescue my kayak and loose bottle several times (and I really have no idea how they did it, so amazingly quickly), but you fellows made sure I had a killer time. As if this weren't enough, the very cool Rudy Rivers gave me instruction, encouragement, and got me back to my car several miles away! You were on a weekend trip planned specifically to have fun with experienced teammates, but you took the time to do free what I am sure some of you have charged for at one point or another. I'm pretty sure the responsibility of having a complete newbie infiltrate your group is not exactly weekend material. Yet, the very aptly named Rudy Rivers not only gave me a pretty expert and patient course on the basics of rapid navigation, but he (and the whole group, really) encouraged me to have fun, and spare the repeated damage to my dignity (ha!) no thought.

And I did. I had a killer time. I had recently been brooding on the idea of buying a motorcycle for therapeutic purposes. I am convinced that adrenaline in controlled doses is not only healthy, but necessary, and my desk job has really been giving me plenty of bile, but no adrenaline. After last weekend, though, the prospect of a motorcycle seems idle.

I think I am in love with the sport, and you might be glad to hear that I have enrolled for instruction in San Marcos. I would have asked one of your gang, but I imagine you would be much more interested in instructing someone who has a remote idea of what he is doing, and I will not be that person for some time.

You are an amazingly fun and good-natured group, and I am lucky to have met you for reasons that go far beyond safety.

If any of you ever has any business in or around New Braunfels, please do not hesitate to call or drop by if you need anything at all (lodging, transportation, storage, conversation, tea, or whatever else):

Office: 2405 S. IH 35, Suite J  
Home: 770 N. IH 35, Apt 911  
New Braunfels, TX 78130  
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Well, I think that pretty much covers it. I should really work on writing shorter letters. Grateful, I remain

Sincerely,



Jorge I. Pereda, Jr.

P.S. I posted a copy of this letter to P.O. Box 925516, Houston, Texas, 77292-5516, and emailed one to Rudy Rivers.