

Paddle to False Cape
July 27th and 28th, 2013
By Bruce Julian

We had talked about this paddle for about 4 months and the day finally came. The weather looked like it would be perfect as I had prayed for, for the past two weeks. If you have ever paddle in Back Bay, you know that the water can go from flat to four or five foot waves in a short time. The bay is only about 4 to 8 feet deep as an average; so bad weather is not something that would stop a paddle, unless of course, you have Thunder & Lighting. On this trip we had none of the above bad weather.

We met on Saturday July 27th at 7:45 A.M. with people starting to show up, starting at 7:15 A.M.. Margaret and I had came down to the park on Thursday to volunteer for two paddles that False Cape was having, and also to drive the Tram on Friday; so we were already there. We drove into Little Island City Park and two cars were already there unloading their boats. Everyone else showed up at about 7:30 A.M. and we started carrying and rolling the kayaks and gear down to the put-in; which is about 200 feet across the road from the park. Right off the bat; I had a malfunction with my kayak and it held me up for about 15 minutes re-tying the string that lift's and lower's my rudder. Some of us brought wheels for our kayaks and we shared them with others and we all were in the water by 8:30 A.M.. One of the paddlers picked up his kayak and carried it the 200 ft., there is something good to say about a 6 ft. kayak.

There were people from The Trail Club, The Tuesday Group and The Meet-Up Site, so we had everyone line up with their kayak and say their name, take a few pictures and then we talked about the trip down to the Environmental Education Center (EEC), where we would be paddling, and where we would stop for breaks and eat our lunch. By now it was 8:50 A.M. and I was in the lead as we headed out of the small body of water down a smaller cut through to Back Bay. As we paddled out into the bay, the water was flat and you could see all the way to the other side, my prayers had been answered.

With very little wind we had our chose of which side of Long Island to paddle on. That is one good thing about having three large islands to navigate around, if the wind is out of the West or North, then you can paddle on the East side and if it's blowing out of the East or South, then you can paddle on the West side. Along with Long Island, we had Ragged Island and Cedar Island. Ragged Island is the one you need a map to work your way through, because there are a lot of small creeks that will lead to dead ends. Our first stop was to be at the South end of Long Island where there is a small sandy beach. This was about 2.5 miles into our paddle, but everyone said that they wanted to keep going. Well next time we will stop and take a break because I had a few people tell me later that they wish we had stopped, because the farther you paddle; the harder it gets on a long paddle. It is always good to stick to your original plan because there were some young people and we also had some that were not so young, and it is hard to get people to say " I am tired, can we take a break". After about 5.5 miles we made our first boat stop. We did have stops for water and to let everyone catch up, but when you sit in a kayak that long; you welcome a sandy beach where you can get out and stretch your legs, I for one was ready to get out. This was a small island called South Point and the beach was mostly under water but large enough so we all could pull up onto the sand and get out. Here we stayed for about 30 minutes to drink water, walk around, take bathroom breaks and have a snack. This was when I knew I had made a mistake by not stopping at the first beach.

Now it was about 11:30 A.M. and we all got back into our kayaks and headed for Cedar Island. There were two things that I wanted to show everyone there on the island. Mr. Williams had a small farm with his wife and two children back in the late 1800's and up into the early 1900's, he also had a duck hunting club there on the island. The old house which was in fair shape back in the 1980's had fallen into the bay and only had one room still intact. The bay water in the last 20 years has eroded the ground away for almost 100 feet and in another 4 or 5 years this house will fall into the bay, what a loss !

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The other thing was a small monument with three names engraved into it, these names were of three men that in the 1940's and 50's, and maybe as far as the late 60's; loved to come and stay on this island. I guess that this was long after the Williams had died or moved away. Some of their family and friends bought the monument and placed it on dry land next to the old house but now it is also in about a foot of water. The park wants to save the monument, but with the weight of the concrete, plus the monument, there's no practical way to get heavy equipment over to the island. After spending a few minutes at the monument, we paddled around the island and found a place to eat our lunch, on what used to be a nice beach, but not any longer; since it's been around 14 years since I had last visited, it was no longer like I had remembered it. You just need to ask some of the people from this trip, and they will tell you that it was not the best place to eat our lunch. Sorry to all, but next time we will eat on the West side of Cedar Island instead of the East side. (Am I forgiven yet?)

I could see after lunch that some of the people were not as interested as they were when we started about 4 and a half hours earlier, so after talking with the group; I made another change to our trip, and bypassed the Bald Eagles at Spratt Cove, Cowpens Cove, and the False Cape Landing Boat Dock, where we were going to have another boat stop. The July sun was shining down on us and we had very little wind to keep us cool. This was only going to take about 1.5 miles off of the total trip and I knew we would be going back this way on Sunday.

We left Cedar Island and headed Southeast to Green Point and from there we had flat water for the last mile to the EEC Building. After we had gotten all of our boats out of the water, we met on the front deck of the EEC. Here, I told everyone who had never been to the park or the EEC building, about the old Swam Hunt Club, which we would be staying in. With bunks, two bathrooms, a full kitchen, one indoor shower & two outdoor showers, and with all the cold water you need to fill your water bottles, and also with a terrific view of Back Bay, Knott's Island, and the setting sun. This would be our paradise for two days. We had 9 women : Margaret J, Margaret P, Christine M, Christine W, Gayle, Olivia, Tracie, Dottie and Lori. With 6 men : Frank, Mark, Kyle, Vic, Ken and Bruce. With only 3 bedrooms, I gave them to the 3 couples, and we had all the other women bunk downstairs and the men upstairs, this made the downstairs off limits to all the men and it worked out great.

After about an hour of storing our gear, cooling off with a cold glass of water and taking a short break; some wanted to just sit on the deck and watch the bay, others wanted to walk to the beach and go swimming in the ocean, and 4 of us wanted to paddle another 3 miles to Dudley Island and the North Carolina Border (and we did!). Kyle wanted to have a picture of us crossing the State Line in our boats and with the marker that they have there in Deal Creek, we did get 3 or 4 pictures. We also had time to hike down to the Church Site and old Graveyard before supper, which each person had brought with them. We did have a few goodies to set out for everyone to enjoy, and this went over very well. After 10 miles and for some, 16 miles for others; you have a very good appetite and can eat anything placed in front of you. Most everyone turned in around 10:00 P.M. and the bed felt good, after a long day of fun !

Sunday morning found six of us getting up before the rooster crowed, and we walked out to the beach (1 mile) and tried to watch the sun come up, but with a few low clouds, it was almost 7 O'clock before we got to see it. Two of the ladies braved the early morning surf and took a swim, and I'm sure that they woke up after diving into the water. Back at the EEC, at around 8 O'clock, everyone was eating their breakfast and filling their water bottles for the paddle back. The weather was still good and we had only a light wind which was blowing out of the South. This would help us on our paddle back North. The plan was to leave at around 10:00 O'clock, but some thought that the bad weather may hit us before we reached the take-out; so everyone was ready to leave at 9:00 A.M.. On the way out from the EEC, we looked like the Spanish Armada with 14 boats of many colors and shapes and with our gear tied on front and back as we paddled north.

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On the way back, we did go by Spratt Cove, and some got to see the Bald Eagles as they took flight back into the tall pines trees. We had our first boat stop at Barbour Hill, where we had bathroom for our use, and a sandy beach. We then paddled on the East side of the bay, and had very little wave action until about a half mile from the Back Bay Wildlife Refuge Office .We had another boat stop at the office. We ate our lunch at this time and talked to some people who were eating lunch, who had ridden the Tram into the park that morning. They were on vacation from Pennsylvania, and thought that we had accomplished a great feat by paddling the 20 some miles.



Here our trip was almost over and we started out on our last 2 miles, heading for the take-out at Little Island City Park. This was the first time that I had taken on a trip like this with new people, that I had never send before and with this distance involved, but it worked out very well and most wanted to make it a two night and 3 day trip for the next time. At the take-out we helped each other load the boats and everyone said their good-bye's and we headed back to our homes. I will try and do this trip again, and start praying for the good weather, like we had on this one !!!