



THE FISHIN' INSIDER

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'Tis the season for the Sandspit. The big storm season began a couple of weeks ago and peaks in about ten days, then the probabilities slide south to almost miniscule around Biker week. I'm writing this mess from Marble Falls, two weeks ago I was in San Juan, Puerto Rico where a cat 4 spinner by the name of Frances is kickin' up monster surf as I write this. Should be no problem for those wonderful folks cuz they ain't gonna take a hit, just a minor scrape. Reminds me of another spinner of the same name back in '98. All officialdom was a twitter howlin' about mandatory evacuations, boat haulin' and body bags and toe tags for those that didn't heed their hysteria. This was a Tropical Storm in the western gulf and boy did she kick up some surf. Even the San Antonio daily rag sent Rick Fox down here to cover the event, since he was just back from a Rawanda assignment with AP. He kicked back, got some shots and drank a bunch of Crown the right way, on the rocks.

Speakin' of which, the only casualties that Frances produced were three shrimp boats that played follow the leader and ended up piled up on Boca Chica beach cuz the lead boat didn't have radar and a Coast Guard bouy markin' the entrance to the jetties was a couple hundred yards south of where it was supposed to be. The Coasties responded to the may-day by sendin' out a rocket inflatable that promptly got rolled in the surf. If memory serves, the rescuers ended up being rescued by one of the Mexican crews and spent the rest of the night huddled atop the wheelhouse with the rest of the crew, but that's another story. Mr. Fox and a bunch of us bar rats were libatin' at Jake's, he's an ol' class mate of the proprietor, when l'il Debbie waltzed in. She'd been down at the old Coastie Station gearin' up to teach computers for a UTB-TSC class aimed at a elderhostel or hostelelder program that fall and winter, she was in a frisky mood sooo... she invited us all down to the tower to catch the view. What a sight it was! Twenty foot plus rollers crashin' on the beach and the Aquadog salvagin' what shrimp they could out of the boats before they completely broke apart. Through fog of remembrance, I do believe Rick got a shot that made the national wire service. We all ended up back at Jake's till tooo late. A few days later Frances hit an ol' fishin' buddy of mine west of Galveston proper. Being an 'ol hand at this, by the time the

GLO showed up for a recon he'd already dumped somethin' like fifty truck loads of dirt on the beachfront subdivision to semi-restore the vegetation line.

Folk's, the above was kinda fun in hindsight and so have a few other storms that I've stuck around for over the years, but there's somethin' ya'll really need to remember. The topography of the Rio Grande Valley resembles a drainage basin cuz that's what it is. Back when Slick Willy and his folks were runnin' things FEMA did an assessment that sent the powers that be in Cameron and Hidalgo counties into an epileptic fit that turned into a rage. Apparently these risk managers had the gall, the temerity and some other downright politically incorrect things to claim that the area had the same flood risk that them folks that got flooded out along the Mississippi back in '93 had. We're talkin' major caca here since the FEMA insurance pool standards were being revamped. The good ol' boys won and here we are today. The elevation ain't changed much since that storm in the thirties put downtown Brownsville under somethin' like fifteen feet of water and saw San Benito strewn with six foot long tarpon carcasses after the water receded. At that time there wasn't much between here and Laredo which has also seen its share of floodin' durin' storm time. Yeah, they've dug some floodways but use your common sense. If a storm looks like it's gonna make direct hit within twenty miles of the mouth of the Rio Grande go north or south out of the valley. Word is them genius bureaucrats that do emergency plannin' are followin' the same game plan with the Sarita checkpoint that they did for Charlie last month. Ya'll may not remember but the Federal Aviation Security folks packed up and split 24 hours before the storm was to sideswipe Key West. They gave no notice. That stranded mucho, mucho tourists cuz the airport had to close when they walked off. Who knows, maybe Grayhound can pay an extra dividend off that mess.

Talked to a friend up in the Big Apple; what a circus it's become. Claimed that a small group of lass's were seen proclaimin' that they were Hookers for Bush, Save the Free Enterprise System. The fact that his runnin' mate is an accomplished fly fisherman tells me something. I like pragmatism.

We welcome your fishin' photos. Drop them by 2600 Padre Boulevard on the Island, or mail them to I.B. Hooked, c/o Coastal Current Weekly, P.O.Box 2429, South Padre Island, Texas 78597. Be sure to include the name of the angler, weight and type of fish, where caught, and name of boat if applicable. Photos with SASE will be returned.