

## Dom Liboiron Q&A

Bio: In 2012, Dom canoed solo 3000miles from his home in Saskatchewan, Canada to New Orleans. His journey raised awareness for heart disease and to celebrate the life of his uncle Mitch Hamon who died from a heart attack at the age of 42. Dom paddled down the Frenchman River in Canada to the Milk River which empties into the Missouri River in NE Montana. From there, he continued down the Missouri to St. Louis and eventually New Orleans. This route possibly is a first recorded descent. Dom carried this uncle Mitch's ashes in his canoe where he deposited them at his final destination....a city his uncle loved! Because of his heartfelt epic journey, Dom was awarded the "Spirit of Adventure Award" by Canoe & Kayak Magazine during the Outdoor Retailers Convention in Salt Lake City in July of 2013. You can read more about Dom's journey Canoe to New Orleans in Honor of Mitch at: <http://www.canoetoneworleans.com/>

### Here is what Dom had to say:

**#1: What was the most difficult part about your paddle trip and how did you overcome (if you did) the situation?** *"The wind in the Dakotas was the most challenging part of the trip. It's not an element that you can beat or outmuscle, although I tried. Some days, the wind would push my canoe into harm's way or waves would break over the bow. Other times, I would spend all day paddling into fierce headwinds only to travel 6 miles. I had to accept that it was too difficult or dangerous to be on the water so I would wait for the wind to die, which it often did as the sun set. I was fortunate that the moon was full when I was on Lake Oahe. By the light of the moon, I would canoe at night when the wind wasn't an obstacle. I canoed half of Lake Oahe at night. "*

**#2 What do you feel was the most important thing that you planned for on your trip that you actually benefited from?** *"I knew my journey would be a grueling physical test. Before leaving, I got myself in the best shape of my life by doing months of crossfit, boxing and floor hockey. I felt strong and almost never had sore arms or shoulder from paddling, even after entire days spent fighting the wind. "*

**#3 Was there anything that you planned for then you felt was unnecessary or overdone? Explain.** *“I carried a lot of extra gear with me because I wanted to be prepared for any situation, especially in remote areas. For example, I had a hatchet, a saw and extra long tent pegs to brace my tent in high winds. I never used any of them. A lot of people told me I would need a gun to protect myself in the United States. I had planned to purchase a gun and am very glad that I didn’t. Having a gun escalates confrontations and increases the likelihood of getting shot.”*

**#4 What were the 5-most important pieces of gear you carried on the trip? Explain.** *“Earplugs. Rain, wind, barges etc are all very noisy and interrupt my sleep. I needed to be well rested. Neoprene boots. They kept my feet dry and warm during the fall and winter. GPS with inReach. This device would enable me to contact 911 in an emergency. It was comforting to know help was available if I needed it. Anchor. There aren’t always places to tie my canoe, especially in the treeless Dakotas. With an anchor, I didn’t have to empty my canoe and pull it on shore. This saved time. Also, I’ve seen water levels rise a lot at night. Years ago, I nearly lost my canoe when a dam release caused the water to rise. In the morning, only a few inches of the bow were touching shore. The rest of the canoe was teetering in the rising river. Another 30 minutes and I would have been stuck on an island in a remote area. I don’t mind the anchor’s extra weight in exchange for the peace of mind it offers. Weather radio. It’s vital to know the forecast and have advance warning of severe thunderstorms, lightning, hail and tornadoes. I would never canoe long distances without one.”*

**#5 Prior to your trip, what was your weakest asset or least skilled or qualified trait for the trip and how do you overcome this?**

*“Before canoeing from Canada to New Orleans, my longest canoe trip was only 4 days. Because I wasn’t familiar with long trips, I reframed Canoe to New Orleans as a short trip. In other words, I looked at it as a series of oneday excursions. All I had to do each day was canoe to my next campsite, which is easy. Anyone can canoe for a day. If I repeated that often enough, my one day trips would get me to New Orleans.”*

**#6 What was the least important item(s) that you brought and discovered there was never a need for?** *“I packed a hatchet and never used it. Considering*

*the weight and limited use, I wouldn't pack one again. A machete is lighter and does the job. "*

**#7: What was the biggest surprise of the journey? Something you did not anticipate.** *"So many people told me horror stories about the Mississippi's barges and whirlpools, neither of which I was familiar with. Looking back, I think people were repeating second and third-hand information they had heard from others who didn't have much canoeing experience. Yes, barges can be dangerous, but not if given a wide berth. At normal water levels, whirlpools aren't a hazard. In the end, barges and whirlpools weren't anywhere near as bad as people made them out to be."*

**#8 What kind of boat did you paddle and what were its good qualities and also the things you did not like about it?** *"I paddled a 16foot fiberglass Clipper Prospector. I chose this model primarily because of its versatility. It can be paddled solo or tandem. Ten people joined me on my trip, but there were also extended periods when I paddled alone. I wanted to support a Canadian company and Clipper canoes have shown their pedigree in many long distance journeys. I chose fiberglass because I was on a budget and because I know how to fix it. There are more durable materials, but I don't have experience fixing them. If I damaged my canoe, I wanted to be able to repair it. As with any canoe, each model has advantages and disadvantages. I liked the versatility and freeboard of the Prospector along with the style of the upturned bow and stern. The styling and freeboard made it more susceptible to wind, which I didn't like, but these elements also kept water out of the canoe. Paddling in a range of environments, from the shallow and meandering Frenchman River to the windswept Missouri River reservoirs along with the ample Mississippi River, meant I needed a canoe that performs well in a variety of situations. The Prospector does that."*

**#9: How did you plan your meals/food? Did this system work good for you and what would you change regarding this?** *"I could carry three weeks of food with me. I bought a lot of freeze dried and canned goods, but bought real food like fruits and vegetables whenever I could. A trip like this is physically demanding so it's important to eat well and eat right. I liked this system because I didn't need to stop often to get supplies and I could travel through desolate areas with plenty of*

*food. The disadvantage to this system was the weight. Three weeks of food and water weighs a lot. I wouldn't change my system, though. I don't plan my meals in advance. I decide what I will eat based on how I feel at that moment. "*

**#10 What was your system for obtaining drinking water and what were the benefits as well as the disadvantages you had dealing with water.** *"I bought bottled water. There's no doubt this added a lot of weight and slowed me down, but I knew I could trust what I was drinking. Given the amount of sediment, farm chemicals and flood debris in the Milk, Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, I doubt a filter would be of much use. Admittedly, I've never tried filtering water from those rivers, but given the amount of pollution I don't want to risk getting sick."*

**#11: If you were going to give advice for someone planning the same journey what do you feel would be best advice and things to consider that you now know about this journey?** *"A few things come to mind. I would encourage people to paddle within their limits. Make a budget, then double it. Be aware that the weather can change very quickly. Most importantly, I can't overstate how important it is to stretch your legs and walk at least 30 minutes a day. I didn't and now, even 8 months after my trip, I still have sore ankles."*



