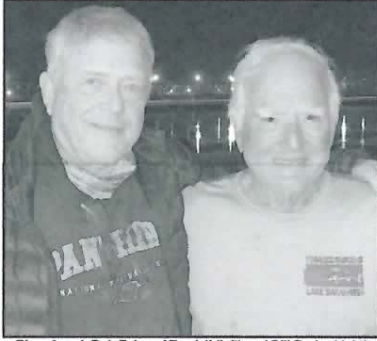


Burke - from page 1

Missouri," by David Miller. The guidebook offers excellent information on every stretch of the Missouri River, including river hazards, campgrounds, potable water and attractions, as well as historic sites. Bill keeps this book with him on his venture to review when needed and to recap what obstacles might lay ahead.

Bill's official first day on the water was May 22, leaving out of Three Forks. Bill has been documenting his journey along the way via blog posts on his web page www.eightsummits.com.

An entry from Bill's blog dated June 9, 2023 read, "June 7. Today was a milestone day on the river as I have now paddled over 400 miles-17% of the total journey. Every day is a grand adventure, full of total surprises and fresh challenges. The sky was clear of smoke, the current was swift and I arrived at the James Kipp Recreation Area ("Kipp") around 5 pm- a 7 hour day of paddling. I met a man in his late 60's paddling up river in a canoe loaded with gear and barrels. His name is Jim Kurz. He paddled up the Missouri River from Wisconsin to Three Forks and wrote a book titled "Out My Backyard." He was moving up river against the current, inches at a time. I felt sorry for him but admire his drive and determination. When I told him I need to re-supply at Kipp, he said the nearest city is miles away. Then, he told me his car is parked at Kipp and handed



River Angels, Bob Foley of Tyndall (left) and Bill Burke (right).

weighed over 17 pounds. The forecast was for more rain and thunderstorms so I decided to take another zero day on June 9. I drove 55 miles to Malta where I laundered my filthy clothes and got a shave and haircut. Thanks Jim for the use of your car." Bill has what he calls "zero days." Zero days are days that Bill is not on the water paddling, weather it be due to whether needing to restock supplies or just needing a day to recuperate. Bill also uses zero days to explore the area around him if possible, touring local museums and trying out the food establishments.

On July 30 Bill logged a blog post titled, "The Hardest Part of the Trip is Now Behind Me!!," Bill had made it across Lake Oahe, from Bismark, North Dakota to Pierre, South Dakota, tacking on another 230 miles, another notch in his paddle belt.

By doing the math, Bill's trip down the Missouri should be a memory at the present time, but we live in a world of reality and nothing ever goes as planned. On July 30, Bill had to return to his home in Costa Mesa, California to attend to important family and business issues, which took priority over paddling. By August 12 Bill was back at it, launching from Lake Sharpe in Fort Pierre and making his way down to Chamberlain and then crossing over onto Lake Francis Case, making his way down to Dock 44 Marina outside of Platte. However, another hiccup in Bill's journey arose when he received a phone call from a neighbor stating the Burke family condo in Palm Dessert, California had suffered severe water damage from Tropical Storm Hillary. Bill took zero days August 21 and 22 and then had to fly back home to deal with the damage of the condo.

Several weeks went by and Bill was still dealing with the damage from Tropical Storm Hillary. This was a major setback for Bill. He had planned on his paddling journey to be completed before October 21. Bill made his way back to South Dakota October 23 to continue his venture down the Mighty Mo. This time though, the weather was a little different than when he had left.

River Angels, Roger and Cheryl helped transport Bill back to Dock 44 Marina where he had left off. Bill launched around 2 p.m. October 24, paddling about 10 miles to Platte Creek Recreation Area. Bill described the weather as "bitter cold." But despite the undesirable weather, Bill managed to make it down to Pease Creek near the Fort Randall Dam.

Bill's time at Pease Creek was less than enjoyable. Due to rain the day before, Bill's clothes and gear were wet. To add to that, the temperatures were in the low 30s. Bill's blog post from October 26 read, "I set up camp at the Pease Creek Boat Ramp. The weather was extremely cold (in the 30's) and the wind was blowing hard, which increased the 'real feel' cold air temperature. Most of my clothes were wet from the rain at North Wheeler. In short, I was miserable. In fact, it was so cold I took shelter in a concrete vault toilet where I cooked dinner. I even thought about sleeping in the vault toilet instead of my tent in order to escape from the bitter cold." Throughout that evening Bill received texts from friends and River Angels notifying him of the bad weather and rough waters predicted for the next couple

days. Instead of sleeping in the bathroom, Bill called River Angel and friend, Bob Foley of Tyndall who had been lined up to help transport Bill later on down the river. Bob picked Bill and his belongings up from Pease Creek and transported Bill to Pickstown, where Bill stayed with friends of Bob's, Larry and Deb Lucas. October 27 and 28 were spent indoors, with the comfort of hot water and heat! Bill took this time to wash and dry his clothes and stock up on supplies.

Bill did not waste any time after the snow fell to get back on the river. October 29 he launched in extremely cold weather from the Fort Randall Dam at 9:30 a.m. The current was strong, which helped Bill arrive at the Verdel Boat landing, west of Niobrara around 4:15 p.m.

October 29, Bill updated his blog post with and entry that read, "October 29. I made great progress today on the Missouri River with a really strong current. I launched in extremely cold weather from Pickstown at 9:30 am and arrived at my destination, Blue Moon Resort (it's not a resort), at 4:15pm. I knocked on the door of a randomly

drag it into deeper water. After paddling about 10 miles, I passed under Standing Bear Bridge and entered Lewis & Clark Lake, the last Lake on the Missouri River. I missed the channel leading to Springfield and shot past Springfield in the strong current. I pulled to shore at the Santee Indian Reservation and called Bob Foley. He picked me up and transported my canoe and me to a motel in Springfield. We had dinner at Norm's Bar where I was interviewed by an Alex, a female Reporter from the local newspaper. I slept sound and well."

Editor's note: Before meeting Bill in person, and after hearing about him through Bob Foley, my mind painted a picture of an older version of Arnold Schwarzenegger. I thought - lawyer, so obviously dressed in a suit, mountain climber/ extreme adventure enthusiast, so he would be very fit and with looking at him you would be able to tell that he was a very active person with an athletic build! Instead I was faced with a short man with white hair and bushy eyebrows, you could tell he was "active," but by looks, not "summitting Mt. Everest active," and he definitely did not look to be 81!



Bill Burke sets up camp on a sandbar west of Sioux City, Iowa.

selected house along the River to get permission to tent camp for the night. No one answered, so I started to pitch my tent. A man then came out on his front porch with a shotgun and said "what's going on?" (I found out later his name is Duayne and he is 90-years old).

I explained my situation and Duayne gave me permission to set up my tent at the back of his house. Inside the tent, it was brutally cold-16 degrees-and getting colder by the minute. An hour later, Mike pulled up in his car and told me he has a cabin I can stay in tonight. I'm convinced he was sent by God. I was warm and comfy in the cabin and looking forward to tomorrow's challenges. Life is sure an adventure.

October 30, I launched from Blue Moon Resort at 11am. My launch was delayed because the Resort was deserted and I could not find anyone who could transport me from the cabin to my campsite. The current and tailwinds were fabulous and I sailed down the River to Springfield. It was cold during the day but it didn't bother me because the paddling kept me warm. Navigating was tricky because of the braided channels and numerous sandbars and tall reeds. Twice, I had to exit my canoe in the middle of the River and

While in Springfield, Bill enjoyed a Nomn's Philly, fries and a beer - comfort food to conclude a long day of paddling the river. The crowd in Norm's that night had no idea they were eating amongst a world record holder.

Thanks to Bob, Bill over-nights at the Springfield Inn, another night of getting a hot shower and cozy bed. Previous to Bill's arrival in Springfield, he ordered a drysuit and other supplies to stay warm and had them shipped to Bob. Bill expressed his gratitude towards Bob for everything he had done, and to all the other River Angels and friends who have helped him along his journey.

Bill talked of the spectacular views of the chalkstone bluffs while paddling under Chief Standing Bear Bridge, and the difficulty navigating the different channels on the water outside of Springfield. Bill stated he had not experienced such difficulty on any other part of his journey. Bill expressed excitement when talking about crossing over Gavins Point Dam. The Lewis and Clark Lake Reservoir and Gavins Point Dam are the last of their kind for the remainder of

the trip. This means the remainder of Bill's trip is all river and fast current, this will help with time and paddling efforts for the rest of the way. Bill has roughly 925 miles to go before he reaches the Missouri Rivers confluence with the Mississippi River. Tentatively, Bill thought he would reach his destination about four weeks after departing Springfield. Hopefully, all smooth sailing from here on out!

Bill departed Springfield at the Springfield Marina, October 31. With minimal current, tailwinds helped move Bill along to his destination on the west side of Gavins Point Dam around 4:30 p.m. where Bob Foley was once again there to greet him and help transport Bill and his canoe to the east side of the dam. From there, Bob and Bill said their goodbyes. Bill continued on down river for a few more miles to the Meridian Bridge where he docked for the night at Dennis & Ann Menke's. Bill had 806 miles to go!

As of November 4, and the end of this writing, Bill had made his way to Sioux City, Iowa, where he tent camped on a sandbar for the night.

A video posted to Bill's Facebook page showed Bill floating down the river with a line a interstate traffic to his right. A very different scene than what has been used to. There are also mile-markers along the river now, letting water craft know how many miles are left to go. Bill is also experiencing wing dikes, which keep the water channeled to the center of the river.

Bill will continue to make his way down river, relying on tailwinds, warm weather and River Angels for help when needed, and will continue to update his blog and Facebook page as cell phone service provides. You can continue to follow Bill's journey on his blog posts on his website www.eightsummits.com or his Facebook page, Eight Summits.

Upon completion of Bill's journey paddling the Missouri River from source to terminus, Bill's is set to hold the record of being the oldest man to complete such feat.



Bill's canoe honors his grandson's, Ollie and Danny



me a spare key. These are the kind of people I am meeting on the Missouri River-just like the Mississippi River. Everyone is kind, supportive and helpful.

About an hour away from Kipp, I heard the thunder behind me and looked to see deep, dark clouds closing in on me. I pulled into Kipp as fast as I could. Two kind gentlemen helped me unload my canoe and more my canoe and gear to the tent area of the Park. That's when I was hit with a torrent of rain, lightning strikes and thunder like none I have ever experienced. The thunder followed the lightning in just seconds, so I knew it was close. I set my tent up in the pounding rain and entered the tent soaking wet.

I found Jim's car, just a few feet from my tent. On June 1, I drove Jim's car to Zortman, which is about 25 miles from Kipp. I had a wonderful breakfast at the Miner's Cafe and purchased the supplies I need at Buckhorn Store. With cell and internet connections, I was able to connect with home and catch up with my emails. Once I got back on the River, I will not have these connections for many days.

When I arrived back at Kipp, I met several families vacationing and fishing. Two of the fishermen-Dave and Jim-took me out on their flat-bottomed fishing boat and showed me how they catch catfish. They drive stakes into the ground at various locations along the shoreline. They attach a long fishing line to each stake. The fishing line has 3-4 hooks and is weighted at the end. They attach minnows to each hook. They throw the line into the water and the weight drags the baited hooks to the bottom of the River. They leave and return to camp. At the end of the day, they check each stake to see if they caught any catfish. When we ran the lines, they caught 11 catfish, three of which

Unfortunately a few days after Bill's June 9 blog submission, Bill received the news of his new friend, Jim Kurz' death. Jim's wife was found June 11 downstream of Kipp, but his camp was found onshore upstream of Bull Creek. Since he was traveling alone, no one exactly knows what happened, but the evidence suggests that his campsite near Bull Creek was hit by a flash flood on the late afternoon of June 7, the same storm Bill speaks of in his blog post. Somehow, possibly while trying to secure his canoe in the storm, he was washed into the main river and drowned. Jim was 78 years old.

Fast forward to July 14, Bill has been in and out of cell service and posts when he can on his blog, about stops along the way, including paddling Ft. Peck Lake, Lake Sakakawea, North Dakota, and his next venture - crossing over to Lake Oahe.

A July 14 blog post read, "I have now paddled 1,016 miles on the Missouri River. Tomorrow, I resume my journey on Lake Oahe. This will be the most difficult and dangerous part of my trip because of the size off the Lake, the turbulent nature of the water, the weather and the persistent headwinds. Lake Oahe is 231 miles long and has 2,250 miles of shoreline. Lake Oahe is the longest lake on the Missouri River. As David Miller states in his book, "The Complete Paddler," "this lake will rest your skills, conditioning, judgment, and patience like no other body of water I have experienced." The typical time to complete the journey is 17-22 days."

When planning this trip, Bill stated there was no itinerary. Trying to judge how many miles you will paddle each day, where you will stop to sleep or restock

Bon Homme Middle School and High School October STUDENTS OF THE MONTH. Students are from left: Jacob Cuka (senior), Georja Pechous (sixth), Hannah Rohlfing (seventh), Olivia Kaul (sophomore), Taryn Crites (junior), Ethan Wagner (eighth) and Isaiiah Crowmover (freshman). Congratulations Bon Homme Students - Job Well Done! St. Michael's Hospital 410 W. 16th Avenue, Avera Tyndall - 605-589-2100