

Jeff Medley: Born and raised in Missouri, joined the navy after high school, returned to Missouri for college after four years in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean, moved to Japan for a couple years after college, then to Montana which eventually lead to a solo trip down the river in 2010. He departed from Three Forks, Montana in early July and arrived at the Gateway Arch in early September. Total of **59-days** including two rest days (one in KC and one in Hermann, both for family time) if memory serves...

#1: What was the most difficult part about your paddle trip and how did you overcome (if you did) the situation?

I guess any day there was a strong headwind. Sometimes I'd try to fight through it, but I learned to take a break and wait it out... especially if I was standing still or going backwards despite my paddling.

#2 What do you feel was the most important thing that you planned for on your trip that you actually benefited from?

The little mosquito netting that goes over a hat. There were a few nights setting up camp that would've been much more miserable without it.

#3 What was the 5-most important pieces of gear you carried on the trip? Explain.

-The long bending branches kayak style paddle made for canoes was critical for balanced cranking.

-my beloved Tilley hat for keeping sun off my face

-dry bags because eventually the sky will open up

-a comfortable enough seat cushion. I had a Crazy Creek.

-msr dragonfly stove because coffee and oatmeal in the morning was necessary

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

Experience taking extended canoe journeys or any canoe journeys longer than a day for that matter. I skimmed a few books about the subject a month before I left, made a list, got the items on the list and took off.

#5 What was the least important item(s) that you brought and discovered there was never a need for?

Two or three Watermelons. My boat was very heavy when I started and these didn't help. I ate them as quickly as possible within the first couple days.

#6: What was the biggest surprise of the journey? Something you did not anticipate.

That some of my finger joints would lock and click near the end of the trip and for a month or so afterward.

#7 What kind of boat did you paddle and what were its good qualities and also the things you did not like about it?

Wenonah Rendezvous made of "triple tough." It was the boat I had so I used it. Hindsight, something that tracked a little better would've been nice, but, like I said, it was the boat I had...

#8: How did you plan your meals/food? Did this system work good for you and what would you change regarding this?

I packed a whole bunch of Couscous, oatmeal, peanut butter, canned fish, produce, Olive oil, etc. It was fine for starters, aside from the watermelons I mentioned earlier, but I didn't pack enough snacks and I was paddling long days. I was definitely burning more calories than I was taking in. I'd pig out

at every greasy spoon/bar and grill I'd pass. At the confluence of the Yellowstone, a kind soul "Dave" who'd just finished paddling it gave me all his leftover snacks and it changed my life. Trail mix, energy bars, etc. I stocked up more wisely at any nearby grocery after that.

#9 What was your system for obtaining drinking water and what were the benefits as well as the disadvantages you had dealing with water?

I carried quite a few gallons at a time and had a... I forget the brand at the moment, but it was the only one or one of the few recommended by the EPA at the time. It looks like a Fisher Price toy, but it works well. I'd also top off my containers when I was near a decent spigot which ended up being fairly often.

#10: 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?

Don't rush it off you don't have to. I was under a time crunch as my then girlfriend had given me an ultimatum (she was ready for marriage and kids) and I set a goal of completing the journey in two months with a week or two of recovery time with my family in Missouri after to figure things out. We ended up breaking up shortly thereafter and I kicked myself for putting in some of those long hard days.

#11 Worst weather day? What happened?

A huge storm on Fort Peck Reservoir. I saw the clouds moving in later in the afternoon. I got off the water, set up camp and hunkered down. The wind in the night was incredible. The roof of my tent was nearly hitting me in my face as it flexed with the wind. It never was the right shape after that night. In the lightning flashes I could see what looked like ocean worthy

waves/rollers (I was camped up a hill in anticipation of such a thing). In the morning, my canoe was gone as was my cooler. There was a trail of food down the shore. I salvaged what I could as I walked to where the cooler stopped. I flagged down a passing motorboat and told them my predicament. Within a few minutes they were back pointing the direction I was walking. The bow was pointing up out of the water in an inlet not much further away and amazingly I found the military surplus ammo can floating on the other side of the inlet which was a huge relief as it held my wallet, money, maps, phone, books, etc.

#12: Biggest source of inspiration?

Probably Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Coppola's Apocalypse Now. Although I was going down the Missouri and not up Congrad's Congo nor Coppola's Mekong, anyone who's done it knows you're rarely going blissfully with any current. Even though a pleasant family visit awaited in Missouri, I added stickers to my boat said Wenonah Rendezvous WITH KURTZ.

#13: Something nobody really knows about you? (Hobby, skill, previous job, talent?)

On a whim and to get over lifelong stage fright, I'd started acting in community theater shows in Missoula, Montana, a little over a year before paddling the river. I've continued to perform on stage a bit (mostly Nutcracker and live stage version of Rocky Horror Show) and have even been in a few movies (mostly low budget talking dog movies):

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