



Larry Hazzard of Collinsville, Ill., begins packing his canoe at the Missouri River Boat Club boat ramp for a return trip down the river. Hazzard passed through the Sioux City area two years ago when the Lewis and Clark bicentennial was just beginning. (Staff photo by Jerry Mennenga)

A 'Hazzard'ous trip

Illinois man returning home after tracing Lewis and Clark's path

By Alicia Ebaugh
Journal intern

Whether he was fighting the heat, the current or just plain bad luck, Larry Hazzard has been determined to travel every inch of the path Lewis and Clark took on their journey through the Western frontier.

Fifty-year-old Hazzard, who is from Collinsville, Ill., said he wanted to make the trip to see if he could do it like Lewis and Clark did. And although it's taken him four years and just as many attempts, he has completed it.

"People told me I couldn't do it," he said. "I proved them wrong, I sure did."

On Monday, Hazzard docked his open-bow Mad Dog canoe at the Missouri River Boat Club in Sioux City to rest before he begins the last leg of his journey home today. He reached Long Beach, Wash. — where Lewis and Clark camped out after reaching the Pacific Ocean — just eight days ago.

"I got to see the sun set over the Pacific," he said. "It's something I've wanted to do for a long time."

OK, so he's had a little bit of a technological edge over the explorers throughout his trip. Lewis and Clark wouldn't have had access to state park showers, bottled

water, canned foods or the aging light blue Mazda Hazzard picked up for \$500, which he drove most of the way out west past Three Forks, Mont., and back to Sioux City this year. But Hazzard followed the trail as closely as he could, he said.

The last time he landed on Sioux City's shores, he was canoeing his way upriver in September 2003 and ran out of money at about the same time.

"My friend didn't come through with some money he owed me, so the nice folks here at the Missouri River Boat Club gave me \$60 and I got up to Yankton," he said. "That's how far I was going anyway, so I turned around and headed back home down the river."

But that wasn't the first or last time that his trip was halted.

In 2002, flooding rivers ended his trip only miles in after setting out from St. Louis, Mo. Last year, Hazzard reached Lake Oahe north of Pierre, S.D., and hurt himself enough to put an end to that year's attempt.

"I got out to take a leak and I stepped in a deep hole, severely twisted my ankle and got a rusty nail in my foot," he said. "There went my money for that year."

Bit by bit, however, Hazzard began where he left off the last year, canoeing and sometimes driving his way toward the West

Coast. The months in between he spent working in his hometown at the fast food restaurant Jack in the Box, saving as much money as he could to spend on his trip.

"I've probably spent about \$6,000," he said. "But it was worth it."

Hazzard said he doesn't really feel like he's completed the trip, however — when Lewis and Clark were traveling back home, Clark split off and took the Yellowstone River, which he didn't visit.

"I think next year I'm gonna try to convince one of my friends to come back with me and ride up the river," he said.

He said he expects to make it back home in mid-June, and going downstream will be easier for him. Hazzard expects to have some fun, too — he said he remembers a certain sandbar north of Omaha where he spent a day over Labor Day weekend in 2003 experiencing good old Midwestern hospitality.

"Since I couldn't canoe because of all the boats on the water, I sat up on this big hilly sandbar and wrote 'Help, need beer,' with some rocks," he said. "I sat there all day, and people rode up and threw them to me ... I'm gonna get back to that sandbar over Memorial Day this time. Maybe some of them will remember me."