

Missouri Bill Cottrell- Paddled the river the summer of 2023 at the age of 70.

Bill Cottrell (also known as Missouri Bill) Lives in rural Scotland County Missouri (northeast part of Missouri near the town of Memphis)

Start and end location:(Which Reservoirs did you bypass?) I left Three Forks Montana on May 17, 2023 (the day of my 70th birthday) arriving at Williston, N.D. 33 days later (June 18). Due to back problems (I had broken my back in 4 locations in December of 2021) I pulled out and with the help of Tom Boyko's family I traveled overland to Yankton S.D. (skipping lakes Sakakawea, Oahe, Sharp, Francis Case and Lewis and Clark) I would continue on to St. Louis (using the current to assist) arriving at the Arch on July 18.

#1: What was the inspiration or what sparked this journey, and how did you begin planning for it?

I first saw the Missouri River as a boy (grew up in Northwest Missouri) and always reflected on the adventure of Lewis and Clark. I often thought how neat it would be to repeat that journey. I never shared that dream with anyone (thought it would never come true). After building my first cedar strip canoe (the year I retired-2020) I began to put a plan together to fulfill that boyhood dream. I found the Missouri River Paddlers web site and read ever piece of info I found, Norm Miller found a copy of the book, The Complete Paddler by David Miller, and I read that book twice.

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

Getting the Garmin In-Reach and learning the use of this device. It gave my family a great sense of relief knowing where I was (at all times). The in-Reach also saved me when I became wind-bound on Lake Peck, thanks to the net work of "river Angels".

#3: What was the most difficult part about your paddle trip and how did you overcome the situation?

Every day was a new experience and I quickly learned that I would encounter events and have to deal with them (many times on the spur of the moment) The most challenging event happened on Peck Lake. I had been traveling with a father and son team (Tom and Jacob Boyko) since Kipp landing. I could not keep up with this team by paddling side by side. I would leave early in the morning (5:00 a.m.) and by the end of the day Tom and Jacob would catch up to me. On day 22 (June 7) I left Bone Trail campground (we had agreed to catch up at the Pines recreation area) and had a good tail wind. By mid morning the wind was gone and Lake Peck was pretty calm. I was paddling about 3 to 3.5 MPH and my black carbon fiber paddle was getting so warm I found myself dipping the paddle in the water to cool it off. Met a couple fishing and asked how far Pines was, they replied 4-5 miles on the left. They tossed me an ice cold water and I continued on. 9.6 miles later (it was now around 5 p.m.) I still was not at the Pines. Noticed clouds building off to the southeast and it seems like they were moving to the SE. I was paddling from lake point to lake point. As I was making a cut (I was over a mile to the nearest shore line) the wind blew in from the northeast and suddenly the waves were two feet tall. Although I had been paddling over 12 hours I picked up the pace (I was so tired). Then the waves were 3 feet tall, I paddled harder (it seems like the shore was not getting any closer). I had covers over the front and rear sections of my canak, but water was rolling in around the cock pit area, by now I was "riding the waves, I knew I couldn't let the canoe turn sideways to the waves or I would be sunk. I hope you believe that when we past that our spirit lives, because by now I was feeling very desperate and I called out to the spirit of my late wife (Cindy-my pet name for her is Angel) to give me the strength to get to land, as the shore seemed so far away and I was so tired, I called on the spirits of my parents, then grandparents, then aunts

and uncles. After battling the wind for an hour and a half (the waves had reached 4 feet) I made land fall.

#4 What were the 5-most important pieces of gear you carried on the trip?

Explain why.

1. Self inflating Sleeping Pad-with a bad back it sure helped to have 3 inches of ground clearance!
2. In-Reach-I had the Explorer plus. Tom had the Montana version. Tom's was the better device. Bigger screen and more features.
3. Solar charger-I had a 20 watt and it served well. I would only charge after making camp.
4. Good two person tent with Aluminum poles (withstands the wind better)
5. Mountain House freeze dried meals. Easy to fix (ad 2 cups of hot water and you are ready to eat)
6. Carbon Fiber paddle-weighs just a few ounces! I never took a spare paddle.

#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?

By far my weakest concern was my back. I spent the winter of 21-22 in a back brace and truly thought that my boyhood dream had been crushed. But I had the winter to heal and with nothing else to do I planned, read and planned more. I think my desire to make the paddle trip helped me in my recovery.

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

I quickly learned that everything has weight and takes up space! I brought a hatchet and only used it to drive in tent stakes! (never built a fire once) A lighter, smaller hammer would have done just fine. The 3-season sleeping bag worked great for the first part. By the time I got to the lower section I

needed only a light blanket and would make that change in St. Joe.

#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 used a Win-no-ha canak. It is a unit that is no longer made. It has only three openings. I had covers over the front and rear sections. Those covers were a must! (I truly think I would have went under in Peck Lake and again when I encountered rapids a day after Peck dam). It is light (37 lbs. empty). There wasn't anything I didn't like about it.

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

I ate only one main meal (evening) and that was a freeze dried Mountain house meal. In the morning I ate a couple of energy bars, mid-morning a piece of beef jerky, mid-day a couple of bars, mid-afternoon a beef stick. As the days got warmer and I drank more water by the time I was camped I was not hungry (drank so much). I forced myself to eat half the Mountain House meal, sealed it up and ate it the next morning. (I did miss not having fresh fruit to eat)

#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 had four pop bottles in the bottom of the canoe around my seat. I also carried 2-2.5 gallons of water in soft bags. (one in the front and one in the back of the canoe). By the time I got to Kipp we needed water. There were pumps there but the camp host said that BLM was not allowing them to be activated because they required sampling every day (he was not there two days/week). Tom and I convinced him to take us 30 miles to get water!

#11: If you were going to give advice for someone planning the same journey, what do you feel would be the best advice and things to consider

that you now know about this journey?

Read every piece of info you can find. Pick out what looks good for you. I did not take any maps other than The Complete Paddler and the In-Reach. They worked for me. Have all your supplies and practice packing your canoe. Dry bags are a must-keep your meals and clothes dry! I started with a white gas stove, had to switch to my back-up (burned alcohol) after two weeks. You will quickly find what needs to be left at home! I only had one change of clothes, took no razor and no deodorant (wanted the sun screen from my beard and the natural lube for paddling)

#12 Worst weather day? What happened and how did you cope or spend the day?

The worst day was the “storm day” on Peck. After making land fall I was forced to set up camp on a point that was only five feet above water and only 60 yards wide. The wind was blowing so hard the aluminum poles of my tent were bowing the opposite way. The wind shifted and hit me with hard rain. I kept a watch on my canoe (fear of the wind taking it for a ride). I drifted off to sleep around 5 a.m. and woke up at 1:00 in the afternoon!

#13: Did you adapt or change any of your gear to suit your needs such as modifications to your boat, water containers, tents, clothing or misc.

The only change was the sleeping bag for the light blanket. I was going to change canoes at Sioux City and switch to an open Cedar strip canoe I had built. On that day the wind was blowing constant at 40 MPH and I did not have enough gear to hold the front of my canoe down (the front on my strip canoe was actually out of the water). I knew I would have gotten spun around like a

top and switched back to the canak.

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

I have canoed in the Boundary Water Canoe Area (BWCA) on five different occasions, with the first week long experience in 1975. I saw my first canoe when I was a freshman in high school while at FFA camp. I am a retired high school Vocational Agriculture teacher, retired Vet Tech (worked for swine companies-Christensen Farms and Seaboard Foods), and semi-retired farmer. I have lived in Missouri all but the 3 1/2 years when I first started teaching in Iowa (that is where I met Cindy-she was the business teacher at Harmony). We have two sons and five grandchildren. I love wood working and make wooden toys for the younger grandsons.