

suspect in the incident is a Leavenworth.



**HOME TO STAY** — Bill and Penny McCullough sit in their living room in an order which both are quite used to. Penny in front and Bill in back. That's how they sat for two months while canoeing from Leavenworth to New Orleans. (Times Photo)

## River Journey Completed: Canoeists Home Again

By ROGER ROWLETT  
Times Staff Writer

The sign on the door reads, "This is my ship and I'll do as I damn please." Inside duck decoys, maps and other Missouri river memorabilia dot the floor.

Bill and Penny McCullough, 710 Columbia, have not had much time to unpack since returning from their canoe trip down the Missouri and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans. Friends and relatives have been coming over to hear the McCullough's tales of traveling on the river.

Bill has covered 3,650 miles in 17 weeks from Three Forks, Mont., to New Orleans. Penny joined him for the last 1,450 miles and seven weeks in the finishing leg from Leavenworth to New Orleans.

The journey shows its effect on Bill's deeply furrowed, weather-beaten face. A small gray-streaked beard hangs from his chin and the retired USP custodian's blue eyes seem both sad and happy as he recalls the trip.

"It really took something out of me. I really feel that I've lost something . . . and it was my summer. For 30 years I never missed the fourth of July fireworks display at the fort."

Bill said. He said it was quite a change to be going from the usual summer chores of lawn mowing and gardening to paddling down the river.

"I hardly ever sweated when I was on the river. In Leavenworth I sweated all summer," Bill said.

The physical effects of the trip have somewhat worn off Penny's face. The harsh sunburns she said she received have been replaced by a light tan. Her eyes still dance as she recalls the trip.

"I was glad that I did it, but I would never do it again," she said.

The McCulloughs celebrated their 33rd wedding anniversary while they were on the trip, but the night of that event was not particularly enjoyable.

"What a miserable and awful day it was," Penny recalled. "We only went 18 miles after fighting headwinds and getting no where." The McCulloughs spent their "romantic" night inside a midwiving tent on a muddy river bank in Louisiana.

The last part of their trip was made even more miserable by cold temperatures, fire ants in campsites and accumulated garbage dumped into the river by all the cities upstream.

"We had to scrape away the

garbage just to find a place to stay," Penny said.

Bill said that he could learn a lot about the personality of a city by looking at the garbage that they dumped into the river.

"A lot of cities will put on fronts, but we were looking at their back doors and saw what garbage they dumped into the river," Bill said.

"I learned a lot about human nature," Bill said. He said most of the people that they met were extremely friendly but some of the people on ships were discourteous to them.

"Those steamers just cadillaced on up there and didn't stop. They would get past you making a big wake and then they slowed down and yelled 'Ride em cowboy.' I wouldn't be surprised if they would run over you," Bill said.

The McCulloughs were able to ride the wakes and Bill said his boat never capsized during the entire 3,650 mile journey.

The reception that the McCulloughs received was not always hostile and they received an especially warm welcome when they arrived in New Orleans.

"I've never been important in my life, but when we arrived in New Orleans, we received a hero's welcome. The boats on

the river blew their horns at us and yelled 'Hello Kansas' and 'Hello little canoe on the river.'"

Bill partially attributed their hero's welcome to favorable publicity they received from The Times in August when he passed through Leavenworth. The Times story was used by the Associated Press, Newspapers, radio and television stations along the route picked up on the story and were waiting for them, Bill said.

The McCulloughs celebrated when they arrived in New Orleans on Oct. 7. For the first time during the entire trip the McCulloughs stayed in a building and had showers. They had been camping on sandbars and bathing in the rivers. They washed their clothes in the river and used driftwood as supports for a makeshift clothesline they built on the boat.

In New Orleans the McCulloughs said they had to take two showers just to get clean. "The first time just got the top layer off," Bill said.

The McCulloughs spent much of their time celebrating in the French Quarter of New Orleans near the wharf where they docked. They sent over 40

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