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MODERN EXPLORERS' COMPACT CARAVAN
Bill, Susan and Samantha Swartz Head for the Missouri

Lewis and Clark and Bill and Susan

By GEORGE BOWEN

It's 4:15 a.m. Sunday. Bill and Susan Swartz lead their canoe on top of their Honda Civic, ease into traffic on Highway 101, and head north.

It's "Time to go."

Once, when they lived in Pennsylvania, they decided it was time to move on, and they moved to San Diego where Susan got a job with the San Diego Tribune.

A few years ago they fell in love with Northern California. Jeff San Diego, and Susan wound up as a feature writer for The Press Democrat and Bill opened a photography studio in their Sebastopol home.

But at 9:45 a.m. on a recent Sunday they took off — this time for a 1,000-mile canoe trip along part of the same route the Lewis and Clark Expedition followed when they set out to blaze a new trail to the Pacific Ocean in 1804.

They'll trace the Lewis and Clark trip on the Missouri river — except they'll be going in the opposite direction.

To get ready, Bill and Susan Swartz held a garage sale to get rid of some possessions and raise money, sold their property home and apple trees on an acre and a bath, and stored the things they want to keep in a mini-warehouse.

They were set to canoe the Missouri.

Why did they pick the Lewis and Clark route? "Just because they had done it," Susan Swartz laughed.

"Their journals are very complete. You can follow them easily. You can get an idea what the river was like, what the mosquitoes were like, what the gnats were like, what the weather variations were.

"They took a virgin trip.

One man died — but I think," she laughed again. "It was because of something he ate."

"It wasn't the snakes that got him, or the Indians."

"We're not accidental buffs by any means and I'm sure people have done it, but I've never read anybody's account of the whole trip."

Bill, Susan, and five-year-old Samantha — who'll be six when the adventure ends — will drive to the mouth of the Columbia River in Oregon, and then follow the river by car to Fort Mandan, North Dakota.

There, at Fort Mandan, they'll put their 17-foot canoe — the S.S. Swartz — in the muddy Missouri, and canoe to St. Joseph, Missouri.

For a change, there'll be no deadlines for Susan Swartz — no South County Editor to meet, no pressure to get a story in for the final.

If they arrive at St. Joseph in September, fine.

If rain delays them, fine.

If they tire of life in a canoe, fine; they'll find a cushy hotel room and she'll take a bubble bath and watch television for a while.

Accommodations in the canoe and at campgrounds along the way will be a bit more spartan. They're taking a three-person backpacking tent, lightweight lanterns, two propane burners, sleeping bags, fishing gear, two cameras, several lenses for the cameras, and a featherweight portable typewriter. The canoe is rigged with a sail for use if they run into winds on wider bodies of water.

The cameras and typewriter are for use for writing free-lance articles for The Press Democrat and the Boston Globe. Several magazines have also expressed interest in seeing stories on the trip.

"I feel very excited about it," Susan said on her last day of work, the day before her year's leave of absence began.

"In the last few years we've become more materialistic than we thought we'd become."

"We bought a house over a year ago . . . and we weren't at all happy being settled."

"We've always taken off when we wanted."

"All the money we made went into the house, and weekends were devoted to tins and moving the lawn — which frustrated us."

"What made us decide we could do this was we set down one night and wrote down the places we had lived, our income, and realized we always stumbled in to things and a job was all ways there."

"To settle back and say we'd done it all just wasn't cutting it. We were both missing something. We feel if we eventually get to New England and run out of money Bill can always take school pictures."

"We're both 31 and not yet ready to settle down. Any money we make we prefer to travel with."

"Bill has always been the adventurer," Susan said, and "Bill was the first to have this fantasy."

"A friend — Bob Harrington — said if we had any guts we'd try the Missouri River."

"Bill started thinking about it and one day called me at work, and said 'What do you think of canoeing the Missouri River?'"

"We decided to give it a whirl and everything kind of fell into place."

"We figure it'll take us two months, the canoeing

part. We'll probably get out of the river at the end of September unless something unforeseen happens."

"The mouth of the river is where it's rough and turbulent and we've got expert whitewater canoeists, so we don't think about going on that part. Fort Mandan is more Sunday afternoon canoeing. There doesn't seem to be any real danger."

"It won't be desolate wilderness except in the northern part of Nebraska where there's 60 miles of wilderness, but canoe manuals say you can do 60 miles in two days."

"It's not what you'd call your wilderness trip."

"Usually you're in abouting distance of someone to rescue you and the Coast Guard patrols the whole river."

"The river basically goes through plains states. There are only a couple large cities we'll be paddling through. How we're going to get around dams is a problem. But we put the car rack in the canoe and hope to canoe by and the Coast Guard to carry us around rent a U-Haul trailer, or pay some one."

"The Swartzes will buy food — fresh vegetables and fruits and meat just for that day — along the way, but they're also taking "some freeze-dried emergency food for three days."

"Weather will be the unknown factor."

Harrington warned the Swartzes about tornadoes in Nebraska and the Dakotas.

"Bob suddenly calms and the skies turn yellow and the birds stop singing, it generally means a tornado."

"When those conditions appear, the Swartzes will get to shore as quickly as possible."

"The Swartzes will canoe

YOUR FIRST MOTORCYCLE—IV

License test is your friend

By HENRY GREGOR FELJAN

(This is the fourth of six parts adapted from the new book "Living with Your First Motorcycle" by Henry Gregor Feljan, G. P. Putnam's Sons, N.Y.C.)

As a new rider you probably view your state motorcycle license test as some kind of snooty, an obstacle that stands between you and the full enjoyment of your cycle.

The way things are now that test is one of the best friends that you as a cyclist have in the world.

It is a matter of record that most fatal motorcycle accidents happen to untrained riders and those who have been riding for fewer than six months. That is, to riders who are untrained, unskilled, and unsure of themselves and their cycles.

The main reason this happens is that we still consider learning to ride a cycle the individual cyclist's personal problem.

We used to feel that way about learning to drive cars. Now we believe it is society's duty to teach you how to drive a car. But the motorcycleist is shift for yourself.

With millions of riders on the street now, and more millions coming every year, every school that has auto driver training should have the same thing for motorcycle. Maybe more.

Since so many younger people ride off-road without a license while trying to learn without supervision or guidance, many of them are hurt in the woods. And when they ride the street, they bring all their bad habits into traffic. Motorcycle training probably ought to start in the lower grades.

Auto driver education hasn't eliminated all accidents, but it has reduced them, and it has saved lives. The problem, of course, is much more critical with cycles than with cars, for the cyclist has much more to learn than the auto driver.

What he must learn is more complicated. A car driver, for example, can wriggle, screech, lean, or slouch without affecting the balance of the car or his control of it. However, a

badly movement of the cyclist affects the balance. You want to be a good rider. You want to learn how to do the right things in the right way. How do you do it by yourself?

This is where a good state motorcycle test becomes your friend and guide. It not only tells you what you must be good at as a competent rider, but also shows you the way to go about it.

Next: How to become a creature of (good) habit.

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