

The Ordeal

August 11-12

Seems like once we got to the coast (Neah Bay and beyond) the locals seemed to like the idea of us rowing around the Peninsula a little more. Left for Tatoosh Island around 10:30am, hell of a day, sunny and good water and calm wind. Rounded Tatoosh Island and saw our bright blue pacific and its low but most certainly ocean swells. Light house and sea lions barking on the rocks. Rounding the rocks the rugged coast presented itself. Hour later the fog came in. Our course was for Cape Alava and we rowed into the white. Saw a sunfish. It was not silent, life, obscured was all around us. The evening came and the sun lit up the white orange. More sea lions in crescendo as we approached Cape Alava, too foggy to land and we rode over kelp beds. Erie, rocks appeared with the swells like rocky immovable whales. We were keyed up, and a shore landing was not an option, so we rode at night. Cooked, called mike of La Push coast guard, Assured him he would not have to stay up all night and told him we would see him in the morning. Dark came and so did the dreams or at least what seemed so. A strong moon that shown through the fog. Our paddles lit up with bioluminescence. And so it was, our longest day 16 hours of rowing and 40 miles. Fog lifted enough to see la push, closed in on our approach. We slept today.

Safe and sound and on the water with the morning. Hopefully no fog. I am so glad I have seen this place.

Crash Landing

August 13 & 14

The sign above the drift Wood below the South Beach camp ground two Miles South of Kalaloch: "stuck between a rock and a hard place." all things considered this was pretty funny.

Let me explain. Surf was calmer in the Morning and the tide way out. Greg and I knew we had a challenge getting the boat beyond the breakers and had a strong mixture of nerves that made breakfast hard to eat. We rolled the boat on logs Down to the Edge of the water and loaded and stropped all our gear in, put on Dry suits, waited for what looked like a small break and pushed out into the surf. The first few waves rolled right under the boat. Seemed like we were getting some distance and I hopped in to help Greg at the oars. We pulled and the surf got bigger, as the waves rolled under us water began to pour into the sides of the boat. No worries, I commenced to pumping. We expected waves. Three waves later and a boat full to the brim loosened all our gear and we were turning into an aqua yard sale. It was time to Retreat and regroup. Jumping from the boat we pointed the now very heavy mass towards shore and I proceeded to pick up our floating gear. We only lost a small sponge and our dry bags did their job. On the Beach a half hour later it was clearly time to rethink our strategy. Our boat could handle waves, but our hatch that keeps the Air filled sections of the boat was a splash hatch and not

designed to stay water tight in submerged conditions. Even if it had a boat so full of water would be nearly impossible to maneuver in the surf. Hindsight was telling us we should have stayed off shore till Grays Harbor. It also told us to thank our Lucky Stars for the fog two days ago that kept us going for La Push instead of allowing us to land along the shores of Cape Alava.

Fortunately we have a plan B, and as luck would have it we happen to have landed 100 yards from the Queets River, on which a half-mile up is a boat ramp. What it comes down to is that its not worth risking our lives or the boat to push out into the surf. Our new plan is to cut off a corner of our trip and have our generous friend Jeremiah, Pick up a trailer at GHBW and Drive us to Hoquiam. (Note, all the friends we called to help us as we were sorting out this conundrum were all ready to help us at the drop of a hat, again thank you all). Sure its not ideal and technically it means we wont circumnavigate the peninsula in the same boat, but, this is travel and sometimes you have to be flexible, and so we are today.

Up the Queets **8/ 15/ 08**

Last night Greg and I watched the surf roll in ominously, every few waves would come at least 15 feet from where we slept and would leave with the clinking of smooth river rock that made up the beach. High tide was at 1106 and our boat was as high as we could get it on the beach. The night before we had slept with relative ease as the surf came in, but tonight was a higher tide with a stronger NW blow and we were concerned that our boat not be hurt by the tide. More specifically the large logs and drift wood. One particularly threatening piece was a six by seven foot stump that was being tossed around like a chew toy by the pacific. This was just an average evening by its standards. Something had put the massive tree we hunkered under on the beach. That next day the landscape of the driftwood had changed. The surf was stronger than yesterday solidifying our decision to row up the Queets River and pick up the trip in Hoquiam. We dragged the boat, loaded our gear and pulled the boat past the confluence of river and tidal current. Despite our increasing distance from the beach the sides of the river were still littered with large logs and the riverbank was quite beat up. I can only imagine what a bad storm would look like. We pulled up without a hitch and Jeremiah was not far behind with truck and trailer in hand to take us to Hoquiam.

Bottoms up with Lori and Scott **August 17**

We put into Hoquiam tonight. Somewhat disappointed that we had to cut a corner on our trip but after having watched the surf today, quite confident in our decision. An old friend, Lori from Bottomsiders (boat seat cushions) who made the cushions for our ocean rowboat had been our mail drop for our food, in addition she found it in her heart to host us with a roof, home cooked meal and a beer. We rowed with a

west wind from Hoquiam to where the Wishkah and Chehalis rivers meet, up the Wishkah for a quarter mile through Aberdeen and under old bridges and pilings left over from a much more industrial time in the Grays harbor history. Lori and Her husband Scott live on the river with a very neat and ordered back yard that overlooks a large tree lined hill. They treated us to beer and Jerk chicken, a wash of clothing and beds. Tomorrow we tackle the interior, tides will chase us on the way up for about ten miles, and then we are out of the tides until bud inlet in Olympia. Between there we have two rivers, bayou, and lake and railroad track. Should prove interesting.... not that it hasn't been thus far.

Channeling a Little Tom & Huck **8/17/08**

Today the adventure took on a different flavor. At this moment, we're situated on a small island in the middle of the Chehalis River, and Jordan is busy making a hard-earned dinner for the both of us. On the menu tonight, beef stroganoff mixed with some mac-n-cheese. The clothes are airing out, and the temperature is pleasant. The coyotes just howled briefly.

We left Lori and Scott's Aberdeen house this morning at 9am. The first 20 miles of this 30-mile day went swiftly. The river is so flat and meandering in path that tides from the Pacific Ocean actually helped push us up river at about 5mph... Everything was quite straightforward, as the river is wide enough and deep enough to handle what was an intensely active logging and shipping port for the better part of the last century. Now we see mostly relics of old warehouses and crumbling pilings indicating a once bustling section of the now overgrown area around the river.

Up river, things started getting interesting as the river was now getting narrow and shallow. After passing a broad bank with a small herd of inquisitive cows, the rapids (and plenty of old cars swallowed up by floods of the recent era) appeared around every corner. Sometimes it was just deep enough to row... A few good, hard strokes and we were through. Other times not so lucky, we jumped out and had to guide it through - one man on bow, the other at the stern. With temperatures away from the ocean now reaching 90 degrees, the extra work jumping in the water was welcomed.

Tomorrow, 15 more miles and we're on the Black River and headed toward the South Puget Sound and Olympia. For now, dinner is ready and the racetrack in the distance provides the sole roaring connection with a bustling society surrounding our private oasis. See you tomorrow!

Untamed Spirits **8/18/08**

It's our second day on the river, and the sunset just turned the sky a violet pink. We are close to the mouth of the Black River, our goal and the expected crux of the trip.

Today was a hard-fought 15 miles of meandering river. Every corner seemed to provide some challenge that involved getting out of our boat to push, pull, prod or lift. Fortunately, the water was warm. Both our feet are wrinkled from the constant submersion. Every day I am still astounded that we could have a trip with so many dynamic challenges while still so close to home. I hear cars in the distance and a radio tower is visible on the hill to my left, but around me feels wild. Today we saw two eagles and a deer. Its not always that way; we also saw folks fishing and cars off the highway. However, looking at the high banks of the river and the huge trees it pulls down over the years, it seems clear that despite civilization's best attempts to harness and corral the river, it remains wild.

"In Latin, Jehovah is spelled with an 'I'"
8/19/08

There's a great scene in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade where Indy must spell the name of the Savior in Latin. Well, he made a minor mistake and almost fell to his doom... Today we had a similar experience. Let's back up, first.

Going upriver late in the season versus early poses its own set of challenges. There is less flow, and therefore more hazards to avoid underwater. Google Earth and charts can only paint so bright a picture until you are actually here. We made 15 miles up the Black River toward Olympia (10 more to go tomorrow). Miles 2-10 had us, again, in and out of the boat with extreme regularity to traverse shallow spots. Miles 10-14 were flat, calm, open, and everything the Black River is famous for. Thinking to this point how many different conditions we have put our boat through deserves HUGE thanks to the gentlemen who built it and donated its use for this trip.

Boat Builder Dave Robertson's Gig Harbor Boat Works (www.ghboats.com) sent us with a 16.5' Melonseed. This one can double as a sailing dinghy, but seats two rowers and our gear comfortably at about 200 lb. We've navigated the Puget Sound, Strait of Juan de Fuca, Pacific Ocean swells to 6', sandbars into seaports, surfed waves into shore, and finally a meandering river toward Olympia. Top Notch.

So, just before we found our riverside camp for the night, one final obstacle lay in our way. The river is too narrow for rowing, so Jordan is on the bow and I'm on the stern and we're paddling like Gondoliers in Venice. The boat, "Miss Adventure," comes to a halt in front of a wobbly mass blocking our route. A minor portage was necessary, and Jordan was the first one there... Enough growth accumulated on two separate swaths to make them wobbly, but somewhat stable. The gap was murky. It was a three step move... First step - good. Second step - SPLASH! He said he never touched bottom, and it was a frightening enough experience as a spectator. Yet once stable again, we hoisted Miss Adventure up and over another hurdle on our way to what we believe will be the first circumnavigation of the Olympic Peninsula.

Bogged down
8/20/08

It's raining, and has been since the day got easy. Since 5:45 in the morning we have been at it. Up until about six this evening, we had made about a mile as the crow flies, but since then some easy rowing and "gondolearing" has bought us probably another three. And to think we were going to call it quits at 8:50 this morning.

The machete in our supplies had almost been a joke, seeming to have been useful to this point only as ballast. But something made me insist we bring it along Glad we did, and believe me, it's a hell of a tool. Our first challenge of the day was to rule-out, by trial and error, two stretches of river. One was a dead end, and the other so thick it was impassible and smelled of dead things. Our third option was a pasture stream with about 30 cows guarding it. Fortunately, they wandered off, and we made our way through unrowable, but fairly navigable river. Then the navigable part ended, and the machete came out. We followed flow after flow, hacking through bush that had not seen man in a very, very long time. Fortune smiled on us as we came to a small pasture. With tall grass on either side, the flow was reasonable enough that it made sense to follow it. Again, no rowing, just the pulling of the boat over slick mud and clay.

Roughly noon at this point, we got the dry suits on and made slow and steady time. Then it stopped - the water, the flow, nothing but muck. Pig-headed, we continued on finding wet spots where we could until hunger beset with depression overtook us. We ate lunch feeling very sorry for ourselves and our predicament. However, a full belly always seems to renew the humor in the situation. We are in a pasture with houses distantly in sight. A river we know exists about a quarter miles away with nothing but grass between it and us. We look at the map, look at each other, and decide to straight-line it through the field. Yes, we pushed about 350 lbs of boat and gear through 4 foot of grass, then blackberries - they hurt, but tasted good - got to love this time of year. Then we struggled down a steep embankment to the river; oh, but it wasn't deep river; once in, we pushed the boat like we had on the Chehalis - at least we were good at it. However, later the river has momentarily opened up and we rowed for a fair ways. Now we sleep in our boat under an overpass. Dinner is ready.

P.S. HUGE thanks go out to David Birch today, the man who made our Atlantic trip a success through navigation assistance; he came through again today when Greg and I were ready to quit.

**We enter swamp.
8/21/08**

Sorry this post is a little late; we got caught up in the muck so to speak.

The morning of the 20th had come optimistically. The bridge we slept under was dry and comfortable. We rowed till the river got to narrow and then gondoleared our way along its channel winding in and out of lily pads until the swamp happened. Just

about like that; like coming up on a labyrinthine corn maize with no discernible path with only a few gps spots to guide us. Tall floating grass gave way to lily pads as big as dinner plates. Any rowing or paddling was out of the question, and quite literally in steps we were heaving our boat through brush; once the swamp proper appeared, we hauled it through lily pads. It smelled ripe, and we were in and out of the water in our dry suits hunting down the best lead; sometimes this meant up and over six foot beaver dams. Despite our determination and proximity to the lake, a half mile as the crow flies, the swamp decided we were going to keep it company for the night.

We fought the swamp.

We woke up amazingly refreshed for having slept in a swamp. Our boat was wedged between two trees and sat on saturated grass that was floating. We were half a way from the lake. It was much the same as yesterday, only more so. The going continued to get tougher, so we thought of tough things, like B.A. Baracas (FOOL!), Ivan Drago, Kit the Car, and Conan. I guess things from the eighties were tough.

Our last 500 feet was a thicket. We grabbed our trusty machete and made it happen. We heard people having fun on the lake before we saw it. When we saw it, we nearly cried. Our half a mile? It took eight hours.

The boat was dirty beyond belief, and it was cathartic to clean it. On the dock we met Drew, Cassie and Tim. They liked us, and Drew and Cassie took us in and gave us brats and beer and a washing of clothes. This kindness rejuvenated us.

Ridin' the Rails

8/22/08

We woke up early this morning, and it felt like this entire trip was about to end – in a good way. We only had about 45 miles of rowing to go and it was easy to be optimistic. That being said, there was work to do.

The path from Black Lake to downtown Olympia is fairly direct – just a short row north up the Black Lake Drainage Ditch, then about 1.5 miles of rail. The ditch was relatively easy with some walking and some gondolearing. Then we had to get down the rails. Here's the down-n-dirty: get boat from river to rail, remain inconspicuous while carrying a 16 ft. boat and lots of bright colors (as it is trespassing to be on the rail lines), affix rail sliders to allow us to slide the boat on the rails (only after we set off the flashing lights and bells at the nearest intersection), push 1.5 miles, avoid getting hit by a train, run back 1.5 miles for our stuff, walk 1.5 miles back to Capitol Lake with 100 lbs of gear.

Very tired, but our only complaint is that we were surprised it took as long as it did. Tonight, we row with the tides into the wee hours. We should be back in Gig Harbor

(and done!) tomorrow late afternoon. The beer and burger at Tides Tavern is calling my name.

Last Night on the Water

8/23/08

The officers laughed at us. I don't think they had seen a rowboat like ours in Capitol Lake before. We looked pretty homeless with our beards and now quite grungy clothing, so it's not a surprise they came up to us. But a quick look at the boat parked in the lake raised a few questions. They seemed to like us enough that we told them about trespassing on the train tracks. They did not bat an eye. They did ask us if we were on drugs. I told them no, but that I would have considered it in the swamp. Again, they did not bat an eye. This was today's second reference to drugs from people we had met in our travels. Two young men had passed us on the tracks earlier that day, observed our rather strained efforts to run a boat on railroad tracks, and offered up a bowl. We declined, but thanked them for their generosity, secretly hoping we could Tom Sawyer them into helping us move the boat. Alas, they did not bite.

We said goodbye to the officers, who, after 15 minutes were now big fans of the rowboat. We rowed to the rocky shore closest to Budd Inlet and the last obstacle before Miss Adventure's hull touched salt water. It was now about 1 a.m. and the tide was going out. A young man with a backpack walked up to us. He stared and spoke.

"I've been camping under the bridge for two weeks. This is the first time I've seen a boat."

"Probably won't see any more," said Greg.

"Having a good time?" he asked.

"Yeah, it's been great, hard, but, a hell of a time," I replied.

"That's awesome. You guys have fun, but, I'm pretty fucked up, so I'm going to go pass out."

This was kind of a fitting way to start out the row. We had been up for 20 hours working pretty hard. It was a clear starry night with nothing but bright lights and outlines of trees on shore. Phosphorescence was lighting up the oars, even in the moonlight. Kelp squiggled to life beneath the movement of the oar, and the drops of water lit up like dayglow paint. It was certainly some kind of altered state we were in. The air was cool. We rowed in one hour shifts and made good time with the tide. Fishermen were out, and the occasional wake would rock our otherwise glassy ride on the water.

Four hours later we found a shore to make a quick camp. Greg went immediately to bed. Having been in the off shift, I stayed up just long enough to see the pink that

appears before the sunrise lights up the sky and outlines Mt. Rainer. I love the Sound. Slack tide was in four hours. We planned to make Gig Harbor today.

Home Port

8/24/08

Heat of day woke us. It was time to rally and catch the tide. Four hours of sleep in 30 hours, but we are on nature's time. It was a calm day with lots of boat traffic. A plane buzzed us and waved. Seals followed us. Their gray spotted heads pop out of nowhere and stare curiously before disappearing.

The tide carried us easily through the islands of the South Sound. The Tacoma Narrows Bridge is geometrically pleasing from the underside. I am glad they made the new one green like the old one.

It felt good to be back in familiar water - salt water. A tall ship was in Gig Harbor with sails like a flock of birds. Dave and Jan from Gig Harbor Boat Works, Dave and Marie (Greg's parents) and Susan from the paper waited on the dock with beer and fresh apples in hand. The day was sunny and hot. Dave was impressed with how well the boat held up and had a good laugh at the photos of the boat in the swamp. We could not have asked for a better reaction. The trip started to sink in on the ride across the Narrows Bridge back to Tacoma and home. It was a lot prettier from the water.