

Rogue River Recap, Aug. 11-14, 1985

Well, boatpersons, I will thank you again for your guidance and counseling. I just got back from taking the family down the Rogue and it turned out great, in no small part due to your excellent tutoring.

After leaving Galice on the 29th of July I traveled to the guide house on the South Fork of the American. The next morning Zeke and I set out for Flag. The trip was enjoyable, I spent the night in the warehouse in Flag, took Zeke to the south rim the next morning and picked up the oars, frame and cooler. Everything looked in order so off to Tulsa I went.

I arrived in Tulsa on August 1 and immediately started to make preparations to send the boat off to Oregon on the 7th, a very short time to get everything together and at the same time pacify my clients. Everything worked out, although my UPS Blue bill got out of hand a little. I got the waterproof bags from Whitewater Mfg in Grants Pass and I ordered a Tahiti to be delivered to the Galice Resort so I could pick it up after normal business hours, Vlad gave me a pretty good price on the thing.

The biggest chore was the deck, I consistently misjudged how much time would be required to fit everything up and finish it. I finally got done with the deck on Sunday afternoon, but I still needed to finish sealing everything and I hadn't glassed the stop on the oars yet, panic was starting to set in.

All this time the boat had been inflated in the living room so I could be sure everything fit and I tell you, that boat is BIG!! We had friends drop in a couple of times so we got the little short chairs out (the ones like Mark and Judy had), set them up on the decking and had munchies and drank beer, really turned out to be a conversation piece but I don't think it will ever really catch on.

When all was said and done I had 6 rocket boxes on the deck, 2 drop bags, 1 in place of the front thwart and one behind the rear thwart which was left in place. We had 6 large water proof bags, we thought that was way too many when we first saw how large they were, but we ended up using one for cast iron, one for pans and the rest for bedding and clothes, so it worked out good. I never did find a waterproof box for the commissary so the bigger kitchen utensils ended up in one of the rocket boxes. We had a "J. Watt" box which we called the "Powder Room". I plan to get some radioactive warning stickers for this one in the near future.

As you may recall, I was driving a short bed Isuzu pickup in Oregon and that was what I hauled the boat, oars, frame and cooler home in, so I was sure that everything would fit in the truck when we got ready to leave. Also, since it is hard to fit 3 people in the truck, let alone 4, we got a camper shell so that 1 or 2 people could sit in the back and make everyone more comfortable.

Well, this was the worst point in the whole trip. Cheryl and the kids were scheduled to leave on Wednesday morning and head for Flagstaff to pick-up life jackets and then on to Sacramento where I would meet them on Friday evening and we would continue on to Galice, all this time hoping we would get a permit to do the river. At 1 AM Wednesday morning it became apparent that not only was the part about someone riding in the back of the truck not going to work, we could not fit about 25% of the shit in the little truck. Especially painful was the thought of not taking the 4 short lawn chairs, 'cause we had looked all over this !!***?! town for them. Well, this was really decision time. Cheryl had planned to have Leigh our 17 year old do part of the driving but it looked like the only way to make this deal work out was to take 2 vehicles, something that no one wanted to do because of both the expense and the extra driving, not to say anything about Leigh never having driven by herself on the interstate. On top off all of this, although we had been trying very hard to get permits we had none yet, so we were looking at a possible skunk even if we took both cars. We went to bed very fatigued and not knowing what would take place the next day.

The next morning, after lots of soul searching the girls decided to go for it and off they went. The trip turned out to be uneventful except for Leigh getting to Amarillo and thinking she could go no further and a big hail storm that did a real job on a brand new Leer aluminum camper top, no serious damage, just lots of ugly little dings.

The flight was an hour late getting into Sacramento but everyone was there, just as planned, they had a motel

and we retired for the evening. The next morning three of us stationed ourselves at pay phones and, using my telephone credit card we all got after calling at the usual 7 AM time to get some of the 12 permits that we knew were available (I had talked to the ranger the PM before, I was still after 8 so that possibly Skeeter could go). My credit card got cancelled over this because over 100 attempts were logged, but this is another story. We came up with a blank, by the time we got in they were all gone. Our contingency plan was to run the South Fork of the American if we got skunked on the Rogue, I was seriously considering doing it anyway at this point, but we all finally decided that we had come this far, we would go on and sit at the ranger station a couple of days to see what happened.

As we had been advised to do, I stopped at every opportunity to call and check on the availability of cancelled permits. Each time we drew a blank, each time getting more and more discouraged. Finally, just for completeness, as we were passing through Medford I stopped one last time to call, it was about 3 PM and the ranger station closes at 4, and miracle of miracle, there were 6 cancellations for Sunday, the next day. Cliff had already told me that he couldn't go because of a job and I recalled that Skeeter had said that he would have a hard time getting up there on such notice, so I skarfed 4 of the 6 and a jubilant band of Bunn's took off for the Rogue.

We did the food buying at the Sentry store, had to substitute chicken for the salmon and cut the mexican night since we only had 4 days planned, otherwise it was basically a repeat of the OARS menu, breakfast, lunch and dinner. We had bought the canned and non-perishable stuff in Tulsa. The Gott 120 took the 60 pounds of ice and all the food as well as the wine bags, all the pop allocation and most of the beer, I had allocated 1 case for the 2 adults for the 4 days, that worked out fine.

We ate at the Galice Resort, picked up the Tahiti, and camped at Alameda bar that night. There were lots of folks camped there, apparently a pretty big crowd from the comments at the ranger station the next morning.

We rigged the boat, we didn't get out until after noon because of a combination of late on the ramp, a car that had a dead battery from having the trunk open so long at the loading stage, and an empty gas tank that had to be filled up in Merlin, no unleaded in Galice (Is that true?? Seems odd to me, but that's what they told us the night before). Anyway, we got off on the river just shortly after the party with the two dogs wearing life preservers, a really comic sight since the dogs didn't seem to appreciate the benefits of life jackets, especially not on dry land at the put-in.

About a mile or less downstream we discovered the only thing that had gotten left behind - the Rogue River Guide Book by Quinn - SHIT!! I would almost have traded the beer for the guide book, but it was getting late, the water was flat and there was a dandy wind blowing upstream. We had to make Grave Creek that day and I was clueless as to just when that would happen, so off we went, my daughter navigating from the standard map, a lot better than nothing. Greg, the 13 year old, was having a blast in the Tahiti, he had convinced himself that this was really the boat for him. The water level was 2.6, it had been 2.45 when we were there on the 23rd trip.

After a seemingly endless amount of rowing, there the bridge was and of course just before the bridge is a little riffle. I cautioned Greg to stay well back of the raft going through the first big rapid and to hit it straight or he would get to swim, everything went well, it was great. I then checked with my genius daughter about where we were. She assured me that Grave Creek Riffle was above the bridge and that the large water we had just traversed was Grave Creek Falls. She said that we had nothing of significance until Rainey, so I told Greg he could go ahead or behind, his choice, but to stay close. He chose to go ahead and as we were watching, miracle of miracle the river god swallowed him and his boat!! Well, anyway, he and the Tahiti dropped out of sight, and as I was yelling "What-the-f*** is that Leigh?" it became apparent to me that the tripler had just let the youngest member of the passengers navigate Grave Creek Falls by himself and with no warning that the thing was coming up. Not too good, but everything worked out, Greg did the thing upright and asked in a slightly chagrined voice "What was that Leigh, I thought you said there was nothing until Rainey".

The wind was still blowing upstream, but I had been both looking forward to Rainey and dreading Rainey now for a number of days and at this point I only wanted to be downstream of Rainey, by any means that would get me there. My stomach was tight from a combination of the lack of lunch and apprehension of fouling up at Rainey.

Anyway, we finally arrived, I eddied out on the left and walked up to scout the center chute. I knew the water

level was slightly higher, and as I was walking downstream and looking over to the chute, I could see nothing that even faintly resembled the passage through the rocks above the falls. Lots of people were lining down the right, some of them getting loose and bridging, some of the smaller rafts just running the fishladder. As I finally got to the overlook downstream of the falls, I could just make out the familiar rocks around the passage. Boy, was I nervous. I really didn't want the trip to end there and even more I didn't want to pack all of our shit out if I trashed the boat, but I really did want to do the center chute. A little 12' Miwok was eddied out on the right, they had lined a 16' boat down. He rowed over to the left and scouted the thing, said he was going to run it, so I graciously let him. I kept a good eye on the chute as I went back to our boat and had a good picture of the run, especially the rock with the white stripe and the little black rascal at the entry to the run in front of the falls, so I was becoming more comfortable with doing it.

The Miwok had a perfect run across, a 14' blue boat from the same party had a good run across the top of the falls, but failed to enter the chute quite correctly, lost an oar but made it down OK, merrily chasing the oar down the river.

I took off by myself, I had the three folks hike it with the Tahiti. I was as calm as I could hope for at this point, I identified my landmarks and started the float across the flatwater. Everything went well, I cleared the rocks both fore and aft of the raft, I did start to go over toward the falls just a little but a few heavy pulls got me back up, I missed the large rock that sits to the left of the chute that I had hit when Mark had guided me in, really everything went really good. I entered above the chute and I guess I got a little high in the entry, where the water runs to the right toward the fishladder, anyway, the boat swung sideways in the channel and bridged right at the top of the chute. Boy, was I pissed, a really good run across the part that I had been worried about and I blew it at the last second!! Oh, well, now I had to get the raft off the rocks because there was no room to set up camp where I was at the time. I remembered the quiet, reserved comment that Mark had made the first time I bridged there, "DON'T GET OUT OF THE BOAT, DON'T GET OUT OF THE BOAT!!". I tried to no avail to get the really heavy beast to move by putting one leg over the side and pushing. Exiting the boat was the only way to even try to get it off, so after a few minutes of pulling alternately on the stern and then the bow the boat started to loosen up on the rocks. At that point I got back in the boat, gave a few sharp jerks forward, the boat came off, I sat down and enjoyed a perfect ride down the chute, I grabbed the oars in the pool at the bottom and eddied out on the right a couple of eddies downstream, picked up my passengers and away we went. They had had quite a thrill and everything had turned out OK, believe it or not, I was quite happy with my performance.

We stopped about .5 miles above Doe, it was getting late, and drank dinner along with the hor d'oeuvres. Greg had gathered wood and we had a fire pan, so we started a small fire and passed the evening reflecting on the hectic schedule that had gotten us to this point. We retired for the night, tired but happy.

The next morning we had a big breakfast to make up for a rather meager ration the evening before, packed up and took off, on the river before 10 AM. Greg was still in the Tahiti and did an admirable job through Tyee and Wildcat. Everything went great until what I believe was Howard Creek Chute. Greg must have let his good fortune to that point go to his head, because when we checked behind us at the bottom of the chute, there he was, paddle in hand ("you don't get back in the boat without that paddle") and a terrified look on his face. He was doing everything correctly, feet downstream, butt up, but he really wasn't enjoying being in the water. He swam right up under the upstream oar, so I was out of control going into the next chute, a little one to be sure, but not something I wanted to enter with only one oar in the water, so we quickly hauled him and his boat aboard and away we went. He was pretty scared, so we deflated the Tahiti above Upper Black Bar, probably in the vicinity of Bronco creek or Windy Creek chute and had lunch. We hiked Big Windy and got water well upstream above the pools and the toilet run-off, I thought this more prudent than taking it from the mouth even though it caused a little heavy hiking. I kept someone with the boat all the time, I guess this was overly conservative but I viewed the boat as our only means of gracefully leaving the river. The three passengers had a ball swimming in the creek, I got to brush my teeth again on the boat.

Upper Black Bar falls didn't turn out as good as it did the first time, the boat was really heavy and I couldn't move it out of the way fast enough to fully clear the rock in the middle of the right half, so I pivoted around that one, passed through the narrow channel stern first, swung around and pulled off the right wall, no contact, just a little too much going on.

We were hurrying to get to Kelsey Creek to camp that evening, hoping to stay in front of all the other trips, but

when we got there it was already full, apparently with some folks who had been there for a while, their boats were completely derigged. We went on down to just across from Battle Bar and I looked for at least an hour for the camp sight named "Ditch Creek", I mistakenly thought there would be a shitter, we had used our own shitter the night before and although it worked great, it was easier to use a park service shitter than to deal with the results of using our own. Anyway, the search was to no avail, but if you walk about .25-.5 miles downstream on the Rogue River Trail you will come to a fairy land of little trees, 2-4 inches in diameter with lots of moss around most of their diameter. Deer abound in this little piece of paradise, I recommend it for a short hike. Bear sign was everywhere, Cheryl was not really interested in smelling bear breath, so we rowed up the eddy, crossed the river and ended up at beautiful Battle Bar. Dinner was great, chicken cooked just like the salmon was with sweet corn and fresh vegetables dipped in dressing—Yum! We set out numerous containers of household ammonia to discourage curious bears, but lo and behold, there across the river was a little black bear ambling downstream across the golden meadow and down to the rocky bar near the shore. He scared up 2 deer in his passage and I think we may have gotten a couple of shots of him. We all took baths in the river here, washed our hair and dried off in the sun. We were all running around naked when we saw the bear in fact. Also when we saw the Osprey hit the water just across the river - a really good evening. Greg the pyro gathered more wood and after the chicken was done and the light had faded we lit up another campfire well out on the sandy portion of the bar. It was really great.

Mule Creek Canyon was fun for everyone and we had already stopped at Rogue River Ranch and they had hiked up and looked it over. I found out later that Mule Creek Canyon was quite a bit more exciting than I had thought it was. I had no trouble keeping off the walls in most places, although I did leave Coffeepot stern first and hit stern first when I pivoted out of that position. The folks were quite impressed by the currents there. We got water at Stair Creek Falls and my stomach started hurting again - The second spot on the river that I had a love/hate relationship with was not too far ahead.

When we arrived at Blossom there was no one around, we were the only party that was in sight. I scouted it well downstream, so I could get a good look at the chute and then the two little pour-overs at the entry on the way back. I wanted out of there before I had an audience, so we beat it back to the boat and away we went, stomach still aware that Blossom was coming up fast. I recalled the day I went through with Judy, it had seemed like an eternity for the boat to drift out of the eddy on the left and through the entry on the left, not so today - everything happened fairly fast, I set up a mild downstream ferry, broke the eddy line nicely, kept the correct ferry angle, hit a rock with the stern, the same one that Larry hit I believe, lost it for a second but recovered in time to enter straight but to the left of center, cleared the pour-over directly downstream, missed submarine rock and exited to the left, no contact after the stern contact event in the entry, I was really elated, the tough part of the trip was definitely behind me. It was then that I noticed about 500 people from RRRT perched on a high rock on river left vulching. Too bad, if I had known they were waiting for someone to foul up in Blossom I could have easily been what they were waiting for!

We eddied out on the left a little downstream of Blossom and had a great relaxed lunch in a truly beautiful little spot with a sheer moss covered cliff rising to a tree covered top.

We got ambushed by a small commercial trip just upstream from East Creek, our only good water fight of the trip. We scoped East Creek as a place to camp (after the commercial trip that ambushed us got Brushy) and went on down to the rocky bar about .5 miles below Brushy. I think I did a bad thing here, We were tired and millions of rafts were close, I was concerned about getting a place so I picked a good eddy and went left onto the rocky bar. We set up the kitchen right by the boat on the edge of the river and slept in what little flat sand the bar provided. I guess I shouldn't have stopped where no one had left tracks before, I don't think the few rocks we moved to have a flat place to sit will be out of place next spring, or even the next high water, but look and see if you can tell where it was next time you go by - But I just remembered, it will be a while for Mark and Judy. I will not commit this same error, there are really lots of places where human presence is already obvious, and if I'm not mistaken Brushy Bar has 3 separate places to camp anyway.

The evening was eventful from the standpoint that a doe and her fawn came through the camp and wanted our DO cake, which the 13 year old graciously provided a taste of. The stars were amazing, the moon was almost gone and the milky way was a white paint stripe across the sky.

The next morning was cold and clouds shrouded the mountain tops around the camp. By the time we got on the river the sun was peeking through and both kids were now in the Tahiti.

We stopped at Tate creek and did the slide, the kids really got a thrill out of that, the 17 year old girl spending lots of time contemplating the correct form before actually letting go.

I warned the kids, who were both in the Tahiti, that Clay Hill was a fairly formidable rapid and I remember Skeeter suggesting that avoiding the hole was not an un-manly thing to do, so I suggested that the kids watch me go through, stay to the left and DON'T HIT THE HOLE! Well, they hung back, I went on through, eddied out below Clay Hill and waited. Soon, here they came, picked a great run for a Tahiti down the RIGHT in the upper set of pour-overs and then, seeing what was ahead and remembering the admonition to DON'T HIT THE HOLE proceeded to try to get to river left. They almost made it. They were within 1/2 the width of the standing wave, in fact, because they hit the hole dead center, but very straight. The part of the Tahiti that we could see was almost vertical, perhaps 15 degrees off of vertical. I expect that the boat was bent substantially, we couldn't see the girl at all. Then up it came and there were the two giggling daredevils, sorry they had not followed instructions, but, being alive and uninjured, happy that it had turned out like it had. I expect that they will be more attentive the next time someone gives instructions on negotiating a rapid.

We stopped a Flora Dell for lunch, a little messy from the hikers cans and tampons, but so beautiful that it would be impossible to mess up completely.

The rest of the day was a lot of work, a headwind adding to the fun, I was getting so discouraged that we would make the take-out that I began to wonder if we had somehow missed it, realizing fully that it would be impossible to miss.

Finally we saw the landing and all 300 boats that were taking out. We partially derigged to the right of the ramp and when a spot came up we moved over. This was a really hilarious part of the trip. We had to take two vehicles to get everything in, but we only had one vehicle shuttled. Well, it was hot and we were all tired, however after 2.5 hours of putting in, taking out and trying again, we had everything either under the seats, behind the seats, in the truck bed or strapped to the open tail-gate. We really looked like Okies at this point, and the worst part was that there was no more beer. Fortunately, we missed the left turn at the highway and ended up in Agness. As we purchased the lifegiving fluid that sustains river trippers at the take-out, the store keeper asked about the action at Blossom the day that we passed through, about whether it had been a good day at Blossom. We informed him that since we had not had to use a rope to get through Blossom that it had been an outstanding day at Blossom and he readily understood.

The rest of the trip back to Galice was hair-raising but fortunately uneventful. We did have to stop one time to let the brakes cool, the right front brake was smoking heavily, I have never seen that before. We had a room at the Galice Lodge, a welcome shower and a good nights rest. The trip home was 4 days of hard driving through some really beautiful country, we checked out the access to the upper Colorado and the Arkansas in eastern Colorado.

Everybody on the trip really had a good time, including the trip leader, thanks again. If Leigh got some good pictures of the bridge at Rainey, I'll send you a copy. It should have the inscription "OARS Guide School Graduate In Action".

Thanks Again,

Richard

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