

## **Terradise to Cincinnati Expedition**

David Haldeman

### **Leg 1 - August 2, 2006 - Wednesday**

We have the canoe back! And I had a great 40 minute trip down the river. The aluminum canoe that belongs to my sister's boy, David Decker, and has been a fixture at Terradise since he left in the 1980s was inadvertently left in the river this summer, thinking no floods would come. Well, the first big flood came along and ripped it from its moorings and took it, half a box elder tree and some of the dock I had just built with it.

I decided that a search for the canoe would be a great way to start my expedition to Cincinnati from Terradise. After an inglorious launch, I was on my way on this expedition! I soon passed out of the newly formed Marion County Park, now known as the Terradise Nature Preserve. The stretch along Ralph Boger's pasture was interrupted by the discovery of the missing box elder. It, and an ash tree that had blocked the lower reaches of Terradise had caught here, just above the junction with Bee Run. I saw several pieces of dock, but no canoe. I retrieved the dock recycled plastic lumber, and took it back to Terradise and then continued on, portaging around the trees which were clogging the way. I passed the dam which in 1943 had taken the lives of two Marion County youths who tried to dare the river which was two feet above normal. The body of one was recovered immediately, the other when they blew up the dam with dynamite a few days later. The concrete rip-rap still lays along the right bank, a subtle reminder.

After crossing Mr. Boger's ford, a few turns down the river takes us to the long straight stretch which looks almost like a canal, with meadow on either side and sycamores lining the banks. It is one of the most picturesque scenes along the upper Olentangy (Whetstone).

As I approached the Roberts Road bridge, to my delight I saw Dave's aluminum canoe, neatly tied up and turned over, ready for pickup. I called Trella (mom) on my cell phone and asked her to bring Dave Matyak along to help load the canoe into the truck. After a close call when the canoe slipped off the truck and knocked Dave off the bed and onto the road, scaring us all but injuring no one, we headed back to Terradise.

As I needed to head back to my home in Cincinnati, I scouted the rest of the river and visited ALL the lowhead dams I will encounter. The most dangerous is the one visible from US 23 north of Delaware at Panhandle Road, but in low water is easy to portage on the left bank. They have removed the one south of Williams Street Bridge in Delaware, and poked a hole in the one above it. So that only leaves 2 in the Delaware area and they are no problem at low water. These dams are very low - one is only 1 foot high and the highest is about 2 1/2 feet, so at low water they are basically a step over affair.

The stretch along 315 is SO lovely I can't wait to get on it. I have decided downtown Columbus is a joke and will portage from the junction of the Olentangy and Scioto down to Greenlawn Ave. Then there are NO MORE dams the rest of the way to Cincinnati. The Main Street Bridge (closed) in Columbus has a 12 foot vertical drop dam and NO access to the banks on either side. Just impossible to portage locally.

## **Leg 2 - August 6, 2006 - Sunday**

Good trip today!

Arrived in Marion at Noon and visited Aunty for 1/2 hour. She said "Well, look who's here! And it's only 12:05!" Not sure what that meant, but I helped her with her meal and she ate some of it. (solid but soft food.) She fell asleep about 12:30 and so I went to Claridon prairie - no one there so headed to Terradise and met mom coming to prairie. I told her I had seen Aunty, and was going to continue the kayak journey.

So, I put my bicycle and the kayak in the truck and drove to Roberts Road. Then I unloaded the kayak and hid it under the bridge. Then I drove the truck and the bicycle to St Rt 529 (Marion-Cardington Road) and parked the truck and rode my bicycle back to Roberts Road. Then I hid the bike under the bridge and hopped in the kayak and started down river again. This segment is 6.3 miles and I did it in 4 hours. There was a 100 yard long log jam on Dick Cooper's land and many places where I had to wade in the riffles. Hoping I can make better time on future segments! Once I arrived at the bridge on 529 I put the kayak in the truck and drove to Roberts Road and retrieved the bicycle. Arrived back at Terradise tired and wet but with some nice sightings of ducks, turtles, great blue herons and carp (huge ones!)

My wife Karen and daughter Susannah were there, with a nice supper of Karen's entries in the "Heart Healthy" competition at the Ohio State Fair. We will all spend the night and then Karen goes back to the fair Monday for the Spam Recipe Contest. I will do the segment of the river from St. Rt 529 to St. Rt. 229 (Delaware Reservoir) Monday and then head home.

## **Leg 3 - August 7, 2006 Monday**

After two days straight adventuring, this intrepid ocean kayaker is ready to wait for about 6 more inches of water.

The Whetstone is beautiful, with Great Blue Herons, Wood Ducks, Kingfishers, various sandpipers, turtles, carp, deer and many mussels and crawdads. One of the advantages of traveling at low water is the ability to peer down and see the river creatures.

Today was the segment from State Rout 529 down to Newman's-Cardington Road. I was a little hesitant, as I had heard stories about the "Mile Long Log Jam" south of 529. There was NO log jam, just one tree to sneak under. However, when I got to Cardington Road (there are REALLY TOO MANY Roads named after Cardington...) which is the site of the old Black Feather Bowmen Archery Range, there was a large log jam followed by a really large log jam. Both required climbing over and pulling the kayak behind me. Good exercise, but really slows down the travel time.

Yesterday the geology changed. Marion County boasts a bedrock of Silurian limestone in most of the county, but here in the eastern-most portion, the Devonian Shales become exposed on the river bottom.

Sheets from 1/8 inch up to 3 inches thick give the ring of truth to the Shawnee Indian name for the river, Keenonsheconsepunk - or "Sharp More and More Tool River" Certainly no "Red Face Paint" (Olamtansipunk - Olentangy).

Soon the river started to pool out and the water laid higher on the banks. I was in the reservoir created by Kings Mills Dam, a 30" dam just above the St. James Road bridge. You must portage to your right, as Kings Mills Golf Course has fenced off any access to the left bank. My long pants came in handy as I waded out of the water and into a LOT of poison ivy. I had left the truck here this morning at 8:00 AM and bicycled back to St. Rt. 529 (Marion-Cardington Road) to start this leg at 8:30. It was now 11:30, and I decided to get the bike and head to Marion for a little lunch.

I took the truck down to Newman's-Cardington Road and biked back up to the St. James Road bridge. Hiding the bike in some weeds under the bridge, at 12:30 I was back on the river headed for the short 1 1/2 mile trip back to the truck.

This segment is marked by a lot of weeds in the river (note to self: find out what those weeds are - I have seen them all my life growing in Ohio Rivers, but have no idea what they are). The last 500 yards is all riffles over more Silurian Limestone. This would have been a great source of wall and foundation rock, and probably was the reason there is a road here (Newman's-Cardington Road)

Out of the river and headed home by 1:30 PM. I decided the next trip will be at a SLIGHTLY higher river stage. Claridon River Level reads 1.17 feet today. I'll try it when I see 2 feet. That should get me over the riffles without having to walk so much!

#### **Leg 4 - August 2006 (Date Unknown)**

I am writing this in June 2007, so will only remember the highlights. Following the usual leapfrogging routine, I drove the Nissan Pickup to Newmans-Cardington Road Bridge where I had ended the previous segment on August 7. Here the bridge approach from the northeast side is a long ditch ending at the top of the abutment with rip-rap down to the river. I almost twisted my ankle when I slipped and caught my foot among the rocks while man-handling the kayak down this obstacle. I recommend lowering your boat via ropes and then descending with both hands available for handholds!

After securing the kayak, I piled back in the Nissan truck and headed to the dead end Prospect-Mt. Vernon Road and the abandoned and removed bridge. This is now a fishing hole, and no doubt a lover's lane. The road ends at the bridge abutments, but a spur to the north leads to the very lowhead dam which apparently serves no purpose except to be an obstacle to navigation. Parking the truck among the detritus of many a Saturday night tryst (of course I'm referring to beer cans and plastic bottles), I climbed aboard the bicycle for the trip back to Newmans-Cardington Road. This requires a lot of back and forth along the county and township roads. Arriving at the Newmans-Cardington Road bridge, I hid the bicycle under the bridge and climbed aboard the Ocean Kayak Drifter.

I took a last quick glance upstream at the lovely 1 inch deep flow over the flat limestone beds which no doubt supplied early building material for the area. Heading downstream the river makes a wide bend to the east, trips over the very lowhead dam at the old Prospect-Mt. Vernon Road crossing (now a dead end with just the sandstone abutments remaining) and changes character as we approach the Delaware Reservoir.

I ended this trip here and loaded the kayak into the Nissan pickup and drove back to Newmans-Cardington to retrieve the bicycle.

#### **Leg 5 - September 14 2006**

Resuming the trip from the Prospect-Mt. Vernon Road very lowhead dam brought a new kind of river to the trip. Trees which threaten to clog the upper reaches of the "Old and Tangly" are here set back from the lower banks. Evidently 60 years of periodic lake status for this area has widened the channel and lowered the banks. The current is disappearing, and I am beginning to feel like I am paddling a lake. A few wide bends take me past the site of old Fort Morrow and a cemetery at the top of a high bank. There is road access here to a fishing hole or canoe access. (Take Brundige Road north from St. Rt. 229 just east of US 23 and follow your nose.)



*Looking South near Fort Morrow*

The lack of current tells me I am approaching the Delaware Reservoir and St. Rt. 229, and a wide bend to the east is followed by a narrowing, and then voila! - the end of this segment. At this spot, the river dumps it's load of silt during flood times. The water is only

about 1 foot deep in the pool above the St. Rt. 229 approach and bridge. The carp are thick here, with their backs sticking out of the water as they squirm around with noses in the mud. There is a convenient boat landing here, so it was easy to get the kayak to the truck and head back for the bicycle.

Here ends the 2006 adventure. A torn rotator cuff was scheduled for repair on September 25, and the ensuing immobilization and therapy would preclude any paddling until spring of 2007.

See you next year!

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