

Terradise to Cincinnati Expedition

Chillicothe to mouth of Salt Creek

October 16, 2011

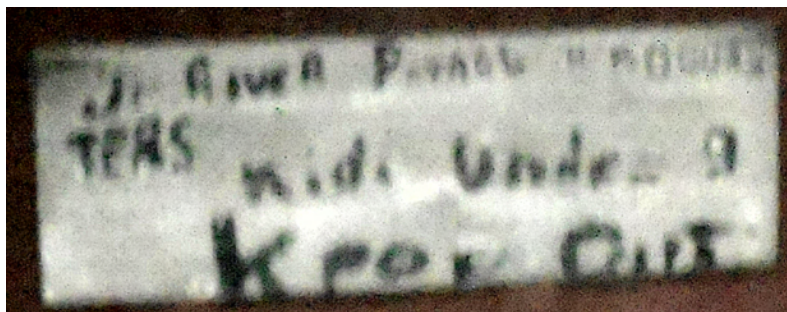
11:30 AM to 6 PM

The last installment (September 13 2009) said that I would return in a week and finish a short segment from Kinnikinnick Creek to Chillicothe. Two shoulder surgeries and two years later, I finally got around to it, and then decided to skip it, as the logistics are just a little too much to get to the spot we took out without repeating about 3 miles of that segment. So it will wait for makeup day!

This weekend started out with a visit to Terradise on Saturday to meet up with **Keith Brown**, my old childhood friend from Greenwood Street in Marion. Keith and I used to watch Captain Video and the Video Rangers on after-school TV in 1951-52 and then call each other on the phone and dissect the current adventure (“wasn’t that realistic how they made the smoke come out of the back of the rocket? You could hardly see the string that they used to move it along....”)

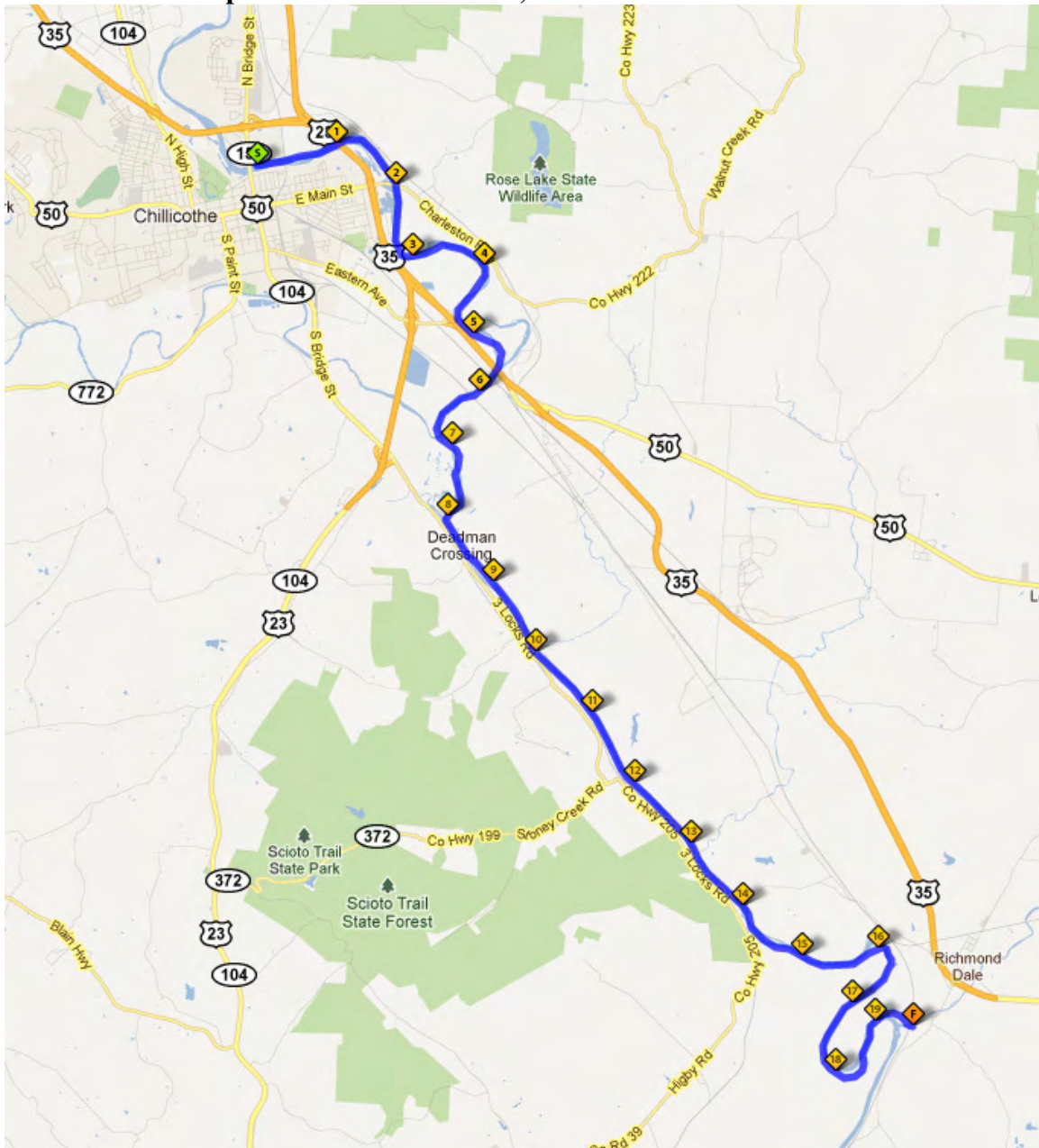
Anyway, we hadn’t seen each other since 1959 or so, until we met again on Facebook. He was attending is 1961 class reunion in Marion this weekend, and wanted to go see mom at Terradise and renew some old memories, so I was delighted to make the trip there and see him again after 52 years. He has a lovely wife, Diana, and we ran out of time filling each other in, so he plans to come down from his home in Sandusky on October 30 to help celebrate Trella’s 96th Birthday.

Keith and I visited the site of the old shack at Terradise, replaced by a new shed years ago, but still bearing the old sign we placed there:



After a fond farewell to Keith and Diana, mom and I fixed a few computer issues and decided on a course of action to get her autobiography finished. Then we settled in to wait for Jed to arrive. About 7:25 PM Jed called and said he had hit a deer just south of St. Rt. 95 on St. Rt. 746. I took mom’s Prius and went down to check it out. His car was on a steep embankment leading down to the ditch. It was driveable, so he tried to get it out, but the front wheel drive was causing it to spin. The farmer down the road approached and offered his pickup truck and a chain to pull him out, which worked fine. The deputy said it was ok to drive it to Trella’s and Jed did, although the radiator was leaking. Jed was going to get a new car anyway, so this clinched the decision.

Map of Route – October 16, 2011 11:30 AM to 6:00 PM



On Sunday morning, Jed and I rose at 5:00 AM to start off to Columbus to drop off some things at his girlfriend Sarah's, where I got to meet Jack – great kid at 2 years old! After getting away from Columbus about 8:00 AM, we made it to Chillicothe in her VW and my old Nissan Truck, into which we had loaded the old red Mohawk ("Les Poulets") pack canoe, which had been stored at Terradise.

We took Blake, Jed's new dog with us on this expedition – she loved it!

We decided to put in under Bridge Street in Chillicothe. Jed made the remark that this town is what Columbus would look like if Chillicothe had retained the status of Ohio Capital. Interesting thought!

It was a short walk from the parking lot at the Goldie A. Gunlock Memorial Park to the river access. We locked the pack canoe and my Ocean Kayak together to a tree and went back to the car and truck for the trip to the take-out point.

We hopped on US 35 expressway and drove for 10 miles to the Richmond Dale exit, where we spent a little time following the confusing directions on the boating map I picked up at the Dept. of Natural Resources at the State Fair this year. We finally just used the map app on my iPhone to check where a good place to take out was, and came up with this:



The oxbow near the end of this leg would prove to almost put an early end to this segment of the trip. More about that later!

After stashing the truck at the end of the gravel road leading to the mouth of Salt Creek, we headed back to Chillicothe driving on fumes in the VW gas tank. We made it back to Chillicothe and filled the tank, then headed back to Goldie's park to begin the day's adventure.



We put in just downriver from the Bridge Street bridge (what an original name for that main street of town!) Blake did not bother with a life jacket.

The first thing we noticed was the stench of sewage and the blackness of the water. I guess Chillicothe turns their treatment off on Sunday mornings!



The elevation of the river here in Chillicothe is 590 feet above sea level, and at the take-out at the mouth of Salt Creek it will be 570 feet. Spread over nearly 20 miles, that gives us a foot per mile advantage. Not much! By the time I get to Cincinnati, I'll be at 477 feet above sea level, so there's not a lot of danger from class V rapids on this trip!



We made a few rest stops and cookie breaks on gravel bars along the way, including this one visible from US 35 and US 50 intersection:

Blake had a great time chasing rocks and generally being a puppy!

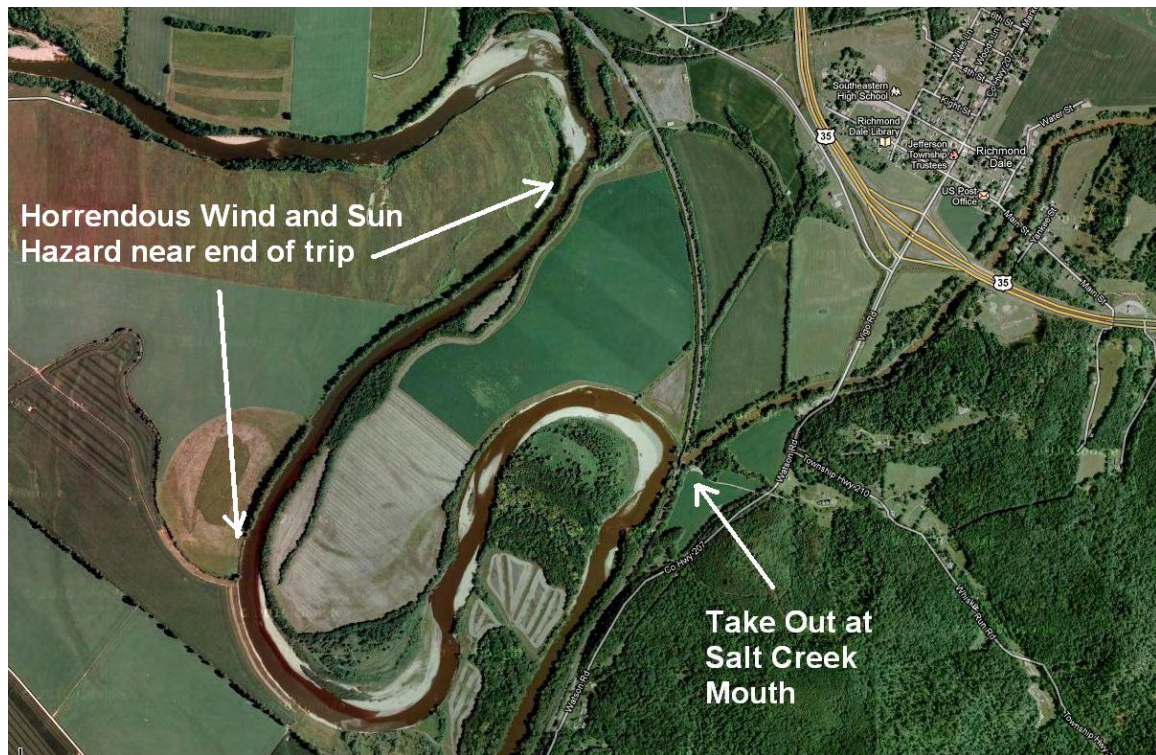
She also loved to nuzzle close to Jed while in the pack canoe and pretend she was a French Voyageur exploring this old Indian Route for the first time.



Around one of the bends, we came upon a stump sticking up out the river with a Bald Eagle perched on it. He let Jed get pretty close before swooping up with his enormous wingspan and beautiful white tail feathers to look for a less populated area to do his fishing.

We eventually came to the mouth of Paint Creek, which signaled the beginning of a long reach of river measuring 10 miles without a bend. This got pretty boring after a while, but eventually we reached the end of it, and took a wide left turn, which signaled the beginning of the oxbow. Things were fine until we reached a point where the river wanted to do a cutoff, but was thwarted by a farmer wanting to protect his fields. A huge embankment of stones was piled up directly in the path of the river, and the river grudgingly agreed to take the long way around. But not without putting up a fight!

Once we turned onto a reach which took us in a southwesterly direction, the wind hit us, the river became a maelstrom of white capped waves, and the sun was directly in our eyes, making the whole river a whiteout of choppy spray. Although we were going downstream with the current, it was almost impossible to make headway. Jed only had about 4 inches of freeboard on his pack canoe, and I imagined one large wave would swamp him and Blake and leave him struggling in the water. Scary!



I am sorry there are no pictures of this area, but every ounce of strength was being used to make headway. If we even missed one stroke the boats would drift upstream with the wind and lose any gains made.

We finally pulled over to shore and did a little exploration to see if we might portage over to the other side of the oxbow, but the soybean field barring our way had not yet been harvested, and we didn't feel like pulling the boats that far. We re-entered the river, hugging the shoreline and finally, after an hour of hard paddling made it around the bend and had the wind to our backs and some rapids to help us along.

We soon rounded the last bend and saw the railroad bridge at the mouth of Salt Creek. Jed pulled my kayak up the bank, as I was too exhausted to do much to help. We loaded the truck up with the two boats and headed back to Chillicothe around 6:30 pm. We went back to Goldie's park and split up from there; Jed heading to Columbus and I back to Cincinnati via US 35 and I-71. I was in bed by 9:30 PM, and actually felt less sore than I expected. The only after effect was a cold, which I'm sure was picked up from the river blowing up my nose on that stretch from hell!

Once I was home and could look at a Google Earth view of the area, the reason for the high wind became evident. We were at the end of a long stretch of the old Teays River Valley, where the wind has a good 20-mile flat valley to gather its forces before hitting the hills and the end of the valley. It was the "Perfect Wind Tunnel".

Next, I hope to go back and cover the skipped 12 miles north of Chillicothe.

David and Jed Haldeman
October 16, 2011