**Savannah River Trip:**

(January 25th-January 30th 2015)

*Marty Thompson (Jackson Big Rig 13’)*

*Jimmy Thompson (Jackson Cuda 14’)*

*Michael Semple (Jackson Cuda 14’)*

*Eric Jackson (Monarch Canoe 14’)*

**Augusta Lock & Dam 🡺 Ebenezer Creek Landing (141 miles)**

Day 1: (*Sunday*) 18.13 miles

Awoke: 0530hrs

Breakfast: 0930hrs

Embarked: 1100hrs

Break: None

Lunch: 1330-1400hrs (on bluff)

Break: 1530-1545hrs

Ending Time: 1700hrs

Dinner: 1930hrs

Sleep Time: 2130hrs

* We drove from Marty’s house in Brunswick to Rincon and met Martin who selflessly drove us (*Marty, Jimmy, and Semple*) up to the August Lock & Dam. Martin is a nice guy, sorry for causing everyone to roll their window down.
* The day was perfect for paddling, nice breeze, clear skies, and enthusiasm.
* Semple realized he had bitten off more than he wanted to chew, sadly this was about mile 12!
* Having gotten a late start we wanted to push the envelope in regards to daylight, we settled on camping in an oxbow having a 1.5 miles detour.
* We were all so tired we just munched on a few things and didn’t breakout the heavy foods.

*Sunrise: 0738hrs*

*Air Temp: 44°, 55-60° average*

*Water Temp: 48°*

*Barometer: 1032*

*Wind Speed: 2mph (North), 10-12mph gusts (South)*

*Water Gauge: 5.5’*

*Drift Speed: 1.5-2.0mph*

*Water Clarity: 50/50 (2-3’)*

*Cloud Cover: Clear*

*Sunset: 1802hrs*

Day 2: (*Monday*) 28.31 miles, 46.44 miles overall

Awoke: 0630hrs

Breakfast: 0700hrs

Embarked: 0900hrs

Break: None

Lunch: 1130-1200hrs (floating)

Break: None

Ending Time: 1630hrs

Dinner: 1900hrs

Sleep Time: 2115hrs

* We woke up to beavers slapping their tails as a warning to other beavers that we were present.
* I forgot to spray my cookware with non-stick spray and paid the price during clean-up!
* We waited 20 minutes on Marty to filter his water as we exited the oxbow. Apparently he was having o-ring issues with his Sawyer water filtration system.
* We noticed the forbidden Savannah River Site on the left (22 miles) which were easily discernable given the obnoxiously large Department of Energy “No Trespassing” signs every 100 yards. We also passed Plant Vogtle on the Georgia side as well.
* We all enjoyed an 18mph tailwind!
* Marty’s secret weapon (bow mounted umbrella) prolapsed in the high winds giving us all a good laugh.
* I goofed on the location of the first Artesian Well and we pushed a bit too far for the day. Thankfully we were able to make up for the 1st day’s shortage of miles and even bank a few for the remainder of the week.
* We eventually paddled to a friend-of-a-friend’s property and found a beautiful campsite, aptly names the “Garden of Eden” by Marty.

*Sunrise: 0736hrs*

*Air Temp: 42°, 55-60° average*

*Water Temp: 48°*

*Barometer: 1025*

*Wind Speed: 10mph (North West), 18mph gusts (North West)*

*Water Gauge: 6.25’*

*Drift Speed: 1.5-2.0mph*

*Water Clarity: 50/50 (2-3’)*

*Cloud Cover: Cloudy*

*Sunset: 1804hrs*

Day 3: (*Tuesday*) 21.10 miles, 67.54 miles overall

Awoke: 0630hrs

Breakfast: 0700hrs

Embarked: 0900hrs

Break: 1015-1030hrs

Lunch: 1200-1230hrs (floating)

Break: None

Ending Time: 1430hrs

Dinner: 1815hrs

Sleep Time: 2300hrs

* We woke up at 0300hrs and again at 0530hrs to the sound of howling coyotes. We estimated the first cries were about .5-1 mile away while the second were about 250 yards away. It made for interesting breakfast conversation.
* We saw a feral hog on the South Carolina side of the river, it was spooked and ran off.
* We arrived at the first Artesian Well which was, as previously reported, exactly .25 miles up an oxbow. It was laborious to reach given the wind in our face and the opposing current. It was worth the paddle. The 65° water was a welcome surprise. We contemplated bathing in it as it contrasted with the frigid water temperatures.
* Knowing we’d be meeting up with Eric Jackson on Wednesday morning, Semple & I out-voted Marty at pushed on to the Highway 301 bridge area to ease the logistics. I must admit, Marty was right in that there wasn’t too many “choice” camping spots. We did find a suitable location about 200 yards North of the bridge on the Georgia side of the river. This allowed us to easily access the Artesian Well also located at this landing.
* Marty, staying positive, dubbed the landing “Troll Bridge”.
* We stayed up later than normal as we all got a little too deep in the alcohol. We paid for that decision the next day.

*Sunrise: 0736hrs*

*Air Temp: 35°, 55° average*

*Water Temp: 47°*

*Barometer: 1029*

*Wind Speed: 8mph (East)*

*Water Gauge: 6.75’*

*Drift Speed: 1.5-2.0mph*

*Water Clarity: 50/50 (2-3’)*

*Cloud Cover: Clear*

*Sunset: 1806hrs*

Day 4: (*Wednesday*) 19.76 miles, 87.30 miles overall

Awoke: 0600hrs

Breakfast: 0800hrs

Embarked: 1015hrs

Break: None

Lunch: 1220-1240hrs (on beach)

Break: None

Ending Time: 1530hrs

Dinner: 1900hrs

Sleep Time: 2100hrs

* Marty claimed to have heard trucks crossing the bridge all night long despite wearing ear plugs, Semple & I reported not hearing anything.
* Eric arrived at 0800hrs just as we were having breakfast.
* Marty spilled his raw eggs onto his shoes.
* We rendezvoused with Eric at the Highway 301 landing. Eric resupplied us with two cases of beer and some ice. Interestingly enough Eric neglected to get himself any ice and only brought ¼ roll of toilet paper for the remainder of the trip (4 days)! Eric said he planned on eating MREs the entire trip and they stop him up.
* Eric pulled out a trolling motor from his canoe! Eric also came equipped with a solar charger to reduce the overall drain of the battery and extend the life as well.
* Eric was averaging 3-3.5mph in his canoe while Marty averaged just over 4mph and Semple & I were hauling the mail at a blistering 4.75-5mph on the river!
* At some point Marty turned to check on Eric who was lagging behind and couldn’t see him. Marty drifted until Eric caught up only to learn he decided to stop and fish. Marty explained the amount of paddling required to make out daily mileage of 20 miles per day.
* Eric began to paddle although he still brought up the rear of the flotilla. Thankfully this reduced some of Marty’s frustrations and angst for the trip as he feels it’s “demoralizing” to be in the rear. Yet, he’s in the slowest kayak.
* We passed Cohen’s Bluff Landing which unbeknownst to me housed a third Artesian Well! This would have been a welcomed sight given that we’d drank all of our other well water which extends the life of our filtration systems (Semple & I used Katadyn Vario with great success).
* We saw a boat on the South Carolina side of the river and I joked about climbing aboard and taking a crap on it given my stomach pressure. Apparently the owner of the boat heard my satirical remarks and walked out onto his deck with an unappreciative gaze. It took several salutations by the group before we received a grumbled “how ya doing” in response.
* Nearing the end of a long day we met to discuss where we’d land to make camp for the night. We ventured into an oxbow only be disappointed and had to return to the main river thus costing us .75 miles from what we’ve banked, this was dubbed by me as the “Sucker Hole”. We settled on the beach landing on the South Carolina side opposite the entrance to the oxbow.
* Eric had the audacity to complain that his right shoulder ached from the angle at which he had to make to operate the trolling motor. Us paddlers we none too impressed. We also learned of Eric’s frozen tundra exploits where Eric claimed to have been abandoned by his Army-Reserve unit for 9 days in 17° weather with just a poncho, a wool blanket, a cot, and a case of MREs. Eric also claimed there was a light-restriction that forbid fires.
* I changed clothes for the first time and was able to relax an hour or so given out ending time. It was well needed!

*Sunrise: 0736hrs*

*Air Temp: 28°, 49° average*

*Water Temp: 46°*

*Barometer: 1042*

*Wind Speed: 12mph (North East)*

*Water Gauge: 6.75’*

*Drift Speed: 1.5-2.0mph*

*Water Clarity: 50/50 (2-3’)*

*Cloud Cover: Clear/Cloudy*

*Sunset: 1806hrs*

Day 5: (*Thursday*) 27.6 miles, 114.9 miles overall

Awoke: 0700hrs

Breakfast: 0730hrs

Embarked: 0900hrs

Break: 1100-1120hrs

Lunch: 1230-1240hrs (floating)

Break: None

Ending Time: 1615hrs

Dinner: 1815hrs

Sleep Time: 2115hrs

* It was a VERY cold morning and all of our gear had a thick layer of frost covering it.
* The day was pretty uneventful and once again we pulled ahead of Eric who said “Don’t worry I’ll catch up”.
* We saw very high stone cliffs on the Georgia side of the river. We wanted to make camp at the base of one as many had a natural shelf but they were all posted “No Trespassing”, one even mentioned “video surveillance”. I remarked I’ve seen signs like that at the Dollar Store.
* We made camp on “Birch Point” which was a beautiful point covered in birch trees that made a bed of birch leaves which to walk upon. The point was off the main river as to not be concealed from Eric’s view. What a shame it would be for him to bypass us not knowing where we camped.
* Concerned about Eric not being able to arrive at camp prior to nightfall I prepared a light-stick to affix to my kayak in a “We’ll keep the light on for ya” gesture when all of a sudden here comes Eric only 45 minutes after we made landing!
* Marty offered Eric some real food (chicken breast) to make up for his daily output. Eric came with only MREs to consume for the trip.
* We had an uneventful night.

*Sunrise: 0736hrs*

*Air Temp: 26°, 58° average*

*Water Temp: 42°*

*Barometer: 1047*

*Wind Speed: 9mph (South-South West)*

*Water Gauge: 6.25’*

*Drift Speed: 1.5-2.0mph*

*Water Clarity: 50/50 (2-3’)*

*Cloud Cover: Clear/Cloudy*

*Sunset: 1806hrs*

Day 6: (*Friday*) 25.9 miles, 140.8 miles overall

Awoke: 0700hrs

Breakfast: 0800hrs

Embarked: 0900hrs

Break: 1000-1015hrs

Lunch: 1115-1130hrs (floating)

Break: 1205-1300hrs

Ending Time: 1525hrs

Dinner: ----------

Sleep Time: ----------

* It was a warm night which was welcomed given the freezing temperatures we faced the two previous days.
* We ventured out and made great time today. Semple & I decided to really take it easy today given the two other paddler’s time. We “pontooned” out boats together and ate snacks, told jokes, and drank beer most of the day while the others caught up.
* There were several loooooong straightaways where the wind was at our backs. It was very breezy which was an added benefit to us all. The two paddlers bringing up the rear rarely caught us.
* Semple & I decided to let Marty & Eric lead the pack today in hopes of reducing his negativity upon making camp each night. We stopped to take one of several bathroom breaks, did I mention the beer consumption? Marty & Eric pulled out of sight and we gave them a jovial “we’ll catch up” sending off.
* The river formed several frequent bends which put Marty & Eric out of sight most of the afternoon. Given the time, 1300hrs Semple & I decided to start paddling swiftly knowing we could easily catch them and thereby make group plans for the landing the night’s camping location.
* We paddled under the Highway 199 bridge and corresponding train trestle just as a train passed over the trestle. It was really neat, I’ll be anxious to view the video footage on the GoPro!
* Semple & I paddled for over an hour without seeing Marty & Eric. They would be impossible to paddle past given the size of the river. There was only one way they could’ve escaped our efforts and that was if they pulled off into a side-creek or oxbow, either of which was forbidden given the number of them and the past-practice of us deciding on the campsite together.
* It wasn’t until about 1500hrs that I was able to receive any form of cellular signal. I received a message from Marty stating “We are behind you”. This only confirmed our suspicions and raised our frustrations as we had now bypassed any feasible landings given the ¾’ bluffs on either side of the river. Additionally, we were only 4-5 miles away from Ebenezer Creek… The Finish!
* Semple & I voted to just push through another hour and end the trip a day early. It was confirmed that Marty thought it to be funny if he and Eric ducked into a side-creek to catch a glimpse of Semple & I paddling our butts off as they did the entire week. Semple & I informed Marty of our intentions to conclude the trip today. Marty wasn’t pleased and we had choice words for one another upon all meeting up which we floated to the destination.
* In the end, Marty felt responsible for Eric’s shuttle plans as his buddy couldn’t shuttle him back to the Highway 301 landing until Saturday. Marty loaded him up and took him back to the landing where Eric went home. In doing so Marty was very tired and opted to stay the night in a motel. Funny how jokes sometimes wind up costing the joker.
* Semple & I arrived at my house at 2030hrs and relaxed for the night. It was good to be home.

*Sunrise: 0735hrs*

*Air Temp: 50°, 61-65° average*

*Water Temp: 46°*

*Barometer: 1039*

*Wind Speed: 13mph (North West)*

*Water Gauge: 6.0’*

*Drift Speed: 1.5-2.0mph*

*Water Clarity: 50/50 (2-3’)*

*Cloud Cover: Cloudy/Clear*

*Sunset: 1807hrs*

Conclusion:

The trip was a wonderful adventure. The scenery was less than desirable as every bend looked the same. We saw minimal wildlife (5 deer, 1 hog, 1 hawk, and no alligators) compared to the Altamaha River in March-2014. We averaged 23.5 miles a day as we paddled down the river. The biggest thing to walk away from the trip knowing is that boat selection is paramount! Eric’s canoe lumbered through the river at a snail’s pace while Marty’s Big Rig came in a close second-to-last. Balancing cargo capacity with efficiency determined the outcome and overall attitude of this trip. I promptly returned the big-ass tarp in favor of a camp toilet. I discarded the compact whiz-bang “tube grill” in favor of a steel grate to cook on. I purchased some elongated tongs. I’m adding a 2m antenna to the front of the boat to aid in communications to eliminate/reduce future mishaps as experienced on Friday. I’m moving my flag to the front of my boat so I don’t have to rely on other’s flags to determine wind direction.