

# **A Canoe Trip Down the Missouri**

*Mobridge to Chamberlain, South Dakota*

*265 Miles — Eight Days*

by

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*Transcribed from the original typescript using AI-assisted OCR*

*Kim Bridges & Claude (Anthropic), May 2026*

Lazily watching a careening piece of driftwood slip soundlessly astern, my mind in fancy wanders back through the pages of recorded history into unrecorded time. Then a vast sea, the abode of strange and sometimes formidable creatures, flooded this very spot. Yonder sandstone block bears mute evidence concerning the fate of the denizens inhabiting that long since vanished sea. That ridge jutting out of the face of the cliff speaks worlds, or would if it could, of countless eons and years ere it became covered with the sediment of ages. Likewise it might recount stirring tales of wild and violent acts since it again felt the light of day. Away to the east you see the work of that ponderous bulk of ice which passed here before proud man set foot upon the earth. To the west, if you can see beyond the bluffs — — but why am I speaking so of the past? Because here more perhaps than any other place can one see the scars of time and feel the pulse of a mighty power harkening out of the past. Here, drifting down the "Big Muddy," one comes face to face with the signs of those wild and primitive forces which prepared the world for a habitation of man.

I am an agent of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, an Eagle Scout, very much addicted to the outdoors and possessed of a very great yearning to do some camping. My pal, "Bob" Sabs of Mobridge, South Dakota, is also a Scout, and likewise finds camping and the outdoors quite necessary to his continued well-being. Such having been agreed to be the case we made all the necessary preparations and now we are enroute from Mobridge to Chamberlain, South Dakota, via the Missouri river, a distance of 265 miles. "Bob" is in the stern, I am in the bow and most of our equipment is between us in the bottom of the canoe as we paddle downstream toward our destination.

To retrace my steps somewhat, it has been my privilege to be stationed in Mobridge this year while on duty as District Supervisor for Grasshopper and Mormon Cricket Control. While there I became acquainted with a portion of the Missouri river and became as interested as wishing to see it from its surface. I did not expect to do so, however, so dismissed it from my mind until the night I left Mobridge. Since I fain would tarry in the city I had learned to love, my departure was delayed until the very last minute, and almost in this last minute the suggestion of a canoe trip downriver to Chamberlain evolved. The idea was pleasant to us from the start, and when all the obstacles to it fell aside I returned to Mobridge and we forthwith set about preparing for the trip.

The canoe was made available by the good graces of a gentleman I am proud to call friend. Only one paddle was obtainable, however, and "Bob" made another, a beautiful thing to behold, made of sturdy ash and as graceful to the hand as to the eye.

We next set about preparing a list of indispensables. It included the following:

A waterproof tarpaulin  
A waterproof tent  
Bedding  
A water keg

A map of the river and adjacent territory  
Jackets  
Inner-tubes for added buoyancy to heavy packs  
A canteen  
Matches (some in waterproof cases)  
Cushions for kneeling in the bottom of the canoe  
Soap  
Cooking and eating utensils  
For myself I also required two of my best pipes and a good grade of tobacco

Next we set about preparing a menu and a list of necessary articles of food. The following we obtained in Mobridge:

1 peck of potatoes  
4 loaves of bread  
4 medium cans of condensed milk  
1 No. 2 can of tomatoes  
1 No. 2 can of spinach  
2 No. 2 cans of lima beans  
1 large can of corned beef and cabbage  
1 can of grapefruit juice  
1 can of apricot juice  
1 can of orange juice  
1 can of pineapple juice  
1 lb. of bacon  
1 lb. of "American cheese"  
2 large cans of vegetable soup  
2 medium cans of pork and beans  
1 large can of sweet potatoes (these turned out to be yams)  
About 1 lb. of lard  
2 large onions  
1 lb. of dried apricots  
1 coffee can filled with oatmeal  
Pepper  
Salt  
Sugar  
Coffee  
1 glass of apple jelly wheedled from "Bob's" grandmother.

Our clothes were not extensive. We each included shorts, shirts, trousers, socks, shoes, a hat, boots, and underwear in our list. In addition to these we carried a slick suit (or "slap suit" if you prefer) for use when we arrived at Chamberlain.

By this time we felt it might be well to check over the list and see if anything should be added. It seems, after due consideration, that fishing ammunition for our lips, a haversack, and some sort of sunburn lotion should be included in the indispensables. These we obtained and this completed the arrangements prior to packing.

The bedding was packed in the tent. All of the foodstuffs but the bread, along with the extra clothes and the frying pan, were packed in the tarpaulin. The remainder of the odds and ends went into the haversack.

Of course, such a trip as we proposed would not be complete without our cameras. This puzzled us for we had no desire to have

thing packed we hied us off to bed.

Again allow me to retrace my steps and mention a few other things I have neglected in my attention to the details of preparation.

The Missouri river is very swift and has been given a reputation as a treacherous watercourse. This is far from the truth for it has no rapids and no quicksand, and no large whirlpools. However, it is swift, has a large number of snags, especially along the shore, and is filled with bars which rise unexpectedly from the river bottom and fall off sharply again into deep, swift water. Therefore if one wishes to go onto it he must take it into full account and be well prepared for its vagaries. First of all one must be able to swim, for he might be unceremoniously precipitated into deep, swift water. He must be able not only to swim but to keep his wits about him. Everything must be packed in such a fashion as to facilitate its rapid recovery should it be plunged into the water. One must appreciate fully the consequences of too much exposure to the merciless, blazing sun and realize when such a point is reached for on that river there is no escape from it. The refraction is very efficient and thereby the illumination is nearly doubled. One must be fully able to care for himself and his partner if anything should go amiss. In this respect, however, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and every exigency must be considered and methods of forestalling them prepared.

Both of us had spend a large amount of time in and upon water. My training was spent on Big Stone Lake; "Bob" obtained his on the river. Both of us had camped a good deal and knew what must be done and how to do it. We had both packed camping equipment for transporting a good many times. We had both worked long hours in the sun and understood its full force. In order to minimize eye strain our equipment included sun-glasses, and these we wore regularly. Our training also included extensive cooking over campfires and otherwise, so we were well prepared to cook for ourselves. We understood that food must be well and properly cooked to keep us in good health. This we did not neglect to do.

Water is of first importance. The water of the Missouri river is heavily laden with sand, (hence its nickname) and useless unless settled for human consumption. Even so when settled it is likely to contain myriads of bacteria, and if one is not highly resistant to them many serious illnesses might well result. So that was ruled out. We obtained an empty five gallon wine cask, which was first sterilized with live steam and then used for carrying water. As an added precaution we carried chlorine tablets for purifying it if we found ourselves obliged to use river water. These could also be used to prepare a powerful antiseptic if such proved necessary.

In preparing our menu we determined upon a well-balanced diet as being essential to the success of our expedition. We could not carry fresh meat so we substituted foodstuffs high in protein content. Fresh milk was obviated, but this was no handicap for canned milk is nearly as

good. Eggs were also out of the question but other foods served our purpose as well. For breakfasts we carried fruit juices in the belief that they contribute much to a proper diet. Coffee for breakfast is a good booster for the system when vitality is at its lowest (as it is just after arising) so it also was included.

tions; viz, canvas and pitch for repairing the canoe, a fresh set of dry cells for the flashlight and a spare lamp should the one already in use burn out or become broken. The canteen required repairs and I set about making them. The bung for the wine cask had been inadvertently pushed inside and a new one was necessary. This we purchased after much chasing from drugstore to drugstore in search of a cork large enough to fit. With these final touches we called the job complete and there we let the matter rest.

One other task remained, one involving the use of tact. I was aware that my family would not fully approve of this vacation for their acquaintance with the "Big Muddy" was very distant and they felt it was a treacherous river. However, in order that they might know my whereabouts and how to reach me in case they needed to, I had written them of my plans. Two other letters were promptly dispatched. One to the little lady awaiting my arrival in Chamberlain with ill concealed anxiety, and the other to my friend and boss who viewed the prospected trip with some interest. While I was occupied, "Bob" was engaged in a similar enterprise which he prayerfully hoped would be well received when it reached its destination for he too knew a little lady who would be concerned over our progress.

When the appointed time arrived, at 4:00 A. M. on August 10, we crawled sleepily out of bed. Our minds had been so completely occupied with preparations the day previous that sleep came slowly and consequently we were/already eyed pair in the morning. However, that passed quickly for at last the day of departure had arrived. We prepared a breakfast which for the excitement we felt was not well received, but in the full knowledge of necessity we forced ourselves to eat heartily. While "Bob" was putting things in order at home I gathered together a picnic lunch for we did not intend to stop at noon to prepare a meal. Our friend, Herman Bergman, arrived with the automobile and we loaded our dunnage. We stopped at the filling station which is headquarters for our gang, filled the water keg and inflated three inner-tubes. When this was done we set off for the river in high spirits.

The canoe was lying where it had been left after its last voyage. It was properly launched in a backwater and with the help of "Hercy" and "Bob's" brother "Pinkie" who had accompanied us to the river, the dunnage was soon transferred to the canoe. We were then obliged to pose for a picture and with final adieux we took our places and shoved off.

From here our log takes up the story and I shall draw upon it as well as my well-stocked memory for the details of the next eight days.

The first entry in the log appears at 8:15 on that memorable morning when it laconically observes that we left Mobridge. We had expected an upstream wind and in this we were not disappointed, for after rounding the southern tip of the island near which we set out we encountered a stiff southerly breeze. Coming upstream it broke against the current and we were well occupied with avoiding rough water. In spite of this, however, we made good time and passed the mouth of the Moreau river at 9:40 A. M. By this time we had both fallen into the routine of paddling and it became a mechanical function not requiring our undivided attention.

We wore shorts on this morning and no shirts. Shortly we realize that bodies exposed to the rays of the sun with oil of Sesame. This minimized the action of the sun in burning our skin.

We encountered some persistent insect pests which annoyed us the full trip. First of these were the flies, houseflies and stable flies. The former annoyed us by walking up and down on our

arms and faces. The latter annoyed us by "biting" us at any point they found convenient. The second were a certain species of wasp unknown to me but certainly plentiful along the river. These persisted in buzzing about our ears and before our eyes. The third, as you might expect, were mosquitoes which annoyed us occasionally by day but chiefly by night when the others gave us peace.

For flies, we found no means of control. The wine cask had become so permeated with fruit juices of a nature most attractive to the flies and they systematically followed us all the way. This of course refers to the houseflies. The stable flies were out for blood and they pursued their task with a right hearty good will. The wasps were another story. They were swift but unwieldy beasts and rather dull when it came to making an escape when we attacked them. Sometimes they would come one at a time or in pairs, but frequently whole droves of them would come blundering out to look us over. We finally devised a defense against them. Usually they flew up before our faces and hovered there. When in that position it was an easy matter to clap our hands together and eliminate the nuisance. We both became adept at this method of anti-aircraft fire. Our best defenses against the mosquitoes were oil of citronella which is a very good insect repellent (sometimes), a smudge (excellent so long as one can keep it going), and crawling head and all under the covers if they proved intolerable. The only objection to the latter is the problem of fresh air.

While passing the mouth of the Moreau we ran aground for the first time. As I have already pointed out, the river has numerous sand bars throughout its length. Some of these rise above the water surface and others do not. It was one of the latter that we found ourselves. For this there is only one cure, we climbed out and walked beside the now floating canoe until the water became deep enough to float it. Then we clambered aboard and proceeded on our way. Incidentally we always proceeded most gingerly under these circumstances for the bottom usually fell off abruptly from such bars and one might well step from four inches of water into forty feet if he were not careful. However, if the water were not too much broken up by the wind one could easily tell from the ripples where it became shallow or deep. Generally we avoided the bars if possible for it slowed us down, but sometimes we could not. At times we rather welcomed these brief dances to stretch our legs.

In a canoe it is absolutely essential that the center of balance be as near the bottom as it possible. Doubly so is this true of travel in a river as swift as the Missouri. Whenever we ran aground in a swift current the canoe turned broadside to the current and forthwith proceeded to tip. Had the center of balance been high in the canoe we must certainly have been deposited in the water. In order time to have our own weight as well as that of the packs placed low in the canoe we knelt or sat in the bottom. In the former position one shoulders and back can be brought into use while in the latter only the arms can be used. Thus it was possible to paddle for much longer hours from a kneeling position without tiring than from a sitting position. Also one could exert a greater force on the paddle and

kneeling position. By the end of the week, I had become so used to the kneeling position that I could paddle from it for three hours without stirring.

Except for occasional observations on items of special interest and matters pertaining to the proper navigation of the river, our conversation while in the canoe was very desultory. In point of fact we traveled long distances quite frequently without exchanging a single spoken word. This was not true while in camp for there we generally engaged in lively conversation. We did, however, amuse ourselves by singing which songs and snatches of others. We did not perhaps sing wisely or well, but it could not be denied that at times we sang lustily indeed. Now and then we found ourselves giving musical vent to two widely divergent themes and tunes and the result must have been discordant to anyone on shore though we didn't mind at all.

There is nothing gentle about the Missouri river or its surrounding scenery. But for rugged majesty it is difficult to match and this accounted in part for our lack of conversational interest.

The riverbeds do not make sharp bends or turns. They are all long, wide bends that stretch away into the distance and give ample food for long continued reflection. What was that cataclysmic force which first laid open this gigantic scar upon the face of the earth? Did it have its birth in that great frozen solitude of so long ago? Would that I could have witnessed in sequence the might events that so inexorably carved their history down through South Dakota.

Our schedule called for stopping several miles upriver from Whitlocks Crossing on the island, however, we made such good time that we determined to travel to the crossing before stopping. With this in mind we kept moving along rapidly all morning. We stopped at noon for lunch just a short distance above the island. Our lunch consisted of sandwiches of cheese and some of jelly. We chose cheese because it was high in food value and this we knew would be little enough even so.

The lunch hour passed uneventfully enough. The grass on which we rested was nothing but stems for the grasshoppers, plentiful all along the river, had completely stripped it of leaves. Opposite the place we chose to stop, the river was heavily wooded and this against an azure sky set with swiftly moving clouds of dazzling white was a picture of rare beauty. The only thing I might have requested to complete the feeling of transcendency would have been a full symphony orchestra rendering a masterwork.

We set out again after completing our repast for we were bent on reaching Whitlocks Crossing before nightfall. The landing at noon had been achieved only by dint of much wading through mud the likes of which one can find only on the shores of the "Big Muddy." So we were obliged to rinse the mud from our feet before heading downstream once more.

We passed the island shortly after starting out. By this time the sun was really warming things up and we literally steamed ahead. When we ran aground, as we did rather regularly, we took occasion to cool ourselves a bit and to dip our shirts in the river. Needless to say, this did not enhance the shade of our shirts. Particularly my was this true of "Bob's" white shirt. Mine was brown and showed the sand less readily.

up the ghost with a loud bang. Hastily looking behind him he announced that we had just had a blowout in midstream. This, we thought, was too much of a good thing but since there were no service stations at hand we were obliged to limp downstream on one tire. This one directly evidenced an alarming flaccidity and we realized that one of our preparations had miscarried and should we be so unfortunate as to upset, our activity must needs be of a high order. However, our fears were ungrounded for the afternoon passed without mishap.

The remainder of the day we paddled resolutely and were finally rewarded when shortly the wagon bridge at Whitlocks Crossing hove into view. Before reaching it "Bob" went ashore to bag two cottontails for our larder. We arrived at the camping place at 5:20 P. M. and set about preparing camp.

At Whitlocks Crossing there is the wagon bridge and a small cluster of buildings a few hundred yards away. At the shore there is a camping place among the trees and a good, cold well. We camped there glad of a chance to rest.

Our first task was to unload the canoe and carry it and the supplies ashore for a bar lay just off shore making a landing impossible. We waded through yards of mud. "Bob" prepared the cottontails for cooking while I set about building a fire and tidying camp a bit. When this was done he set off for the town and attended to the repairing of our two good inner-tubes while I continued the preparations for dinner.

While we were thus busily engaged in preparing our needs for the night we were paid social calls by several visitors. First of these were two gentlemen who had been engaged in some target practice at the expense of the "black marauders" abundant along the river edge. In addition to these were several of the neighborhood youngsters, both Indian and white, too numerous to mention, and a gentleman who came in search of water for his overheated automobile radiator called. They all paid their respects and departed, though the youngsters loitered.

By this time dinner was ready and we fell to without ceremony for we were both famished. Our menu was as follows:

Cottontail, first parboiled and then fried Boiled potatoes Lima beans Bread Dried apricots

Needless to say we "licked the platter clean" and looked about for more. Our appetites throughout the entire trip were enormous for we required much energy for paddling.

We washed our dishes in the fresh water from the well. Our camp was not very tidy for fatigue crept quickly upon us and we still had two things requiring our attention. First we walked to town and dispatched some postal cards, one each to our respective homes, one each to the little ladies and a fifth to our "press agent" in Mobridge. This completed, we shambled across the bridge to a shale bank where we bathed ourselves. Wearily retracing our steps we prepared our bed and crawled in. It seemed that the weight of the world slipped from my shoulders and I sank into a deep stupor. There is not the faintest recollection of that night in my mind. The proverbial dog must have

gives me an almost undeniable urge to sleep, for while I had been tired many times before I had never experienced such a sense of utter and complete exhaustion.

When at length I succeeded in goading my creaking frame into an upright position I laboriously climbed into my clothes. This time we wore trousers for it seemed unwise to expose ourselves a second day in shorts. I ran the ice-cold water from the well over my head and this restored me to normalcy. By the time I completed my washing, breakfast was ready and we devoured it forthwith. The menu was composed of Pineapple juice Coffee (oh blessed "eye-opener") Oatmeal Fried bacon

Again the dishes were washed and packed, the bedding was rolled. "Bob" set about washing an originally white sport shirt which had become tan colored from the sand in the river and from the oil he rubbed on his body. I prepared sandwiches for lunch. We refilled the water keg, packed the food stuffs, and repacked the haversack. Camp needed some cleaning before we left. This was duly attended to. Finally by eleven o'clock everything was packed and stored in the canoe and when we had taken some pictures we waded off the bar on which we had landed the evening before and set off downstream.

Some of our juvenile visitors of the previous day were there to see us off and as we drifted under the wagon bridge they bid us a final farewell.

If I have conveyed in some small measure the extreme weariness which we felt on the conclusion of our first day en route, I have not failed in my purpose. It is simply not within the realm of possibility to convey by means of the English language the full extent of that weariness. However, do not mistake me, it was a happy weariness and neither of us would so much as thought of regretting it. We had expected this to be the case and we were not disappointed.

Our muscles and joints, quite naturally, were stiff and very reluctantly took up the job of paddling. We were quite lackadaisical therefore and our progress was desultory. Just below Whitlocks Crossing at the bend we passed Forest City (1) on the east bank and the Cheyenne Indian Agency on the west bank. These we viewed with considerable interest, partly because it gave us an excuse to rest and partly because they were interesting of themselves.

At this point the river is quite swift and filled with sand boils. The current ran in against the west bank and we followed in close to take advantage of it and speed us on our way.

The sand boils of which I spoke are rather curious. They are formed by water which is more heavily laden with sand than is the surrounding water. It boils upward and breaks out on the surface in an ever widening circle. They disappear as quickly as they come and leave small, short lived whirlpools at the edge of the boil. Some are small and others are larger. The larger boils will turn the prow of the canoe off to the right or left depending upon its position in the boil. They break out unexpectedly on a perfectly placid surface. The sound is much like that produced by water in a rolling boil.

I had difficulty wearing shoes. The same was true of "Bob's" knees and while his clothes didn't bother them, kneeling was very difficult for him and consequently he was obliged to paddle sitting down.

The weather was warm and the sun beamed on us unceasingly hour after hour. The wind still hung in the south and this coupled with our stiff muscles contrived to slow our progress appreciably. By 2:30 P. M. when we stopped for lunch we had just reached the line separating Armstrong County on the south from Dewey County on the north. As usual we landed on a mud bank and were obliged to wade through a good deal of it.

At each landing on a mud bank we repeated the following procedure: the canoe was grounded and we went over the side to bring it ashore. Everything required was taken ashore and then we returned to the canoe, rubbed the mud from our feet, rinsed them and put on our shoes. Finally we picked our way gingerly from slippery rocks to uncertainly balanced ones and eventually to dry ground. Sometimes the rocks were not available and then we wore boots ashore.

Our lunch was composed of sandwiches again and these we disposed of in a leisurely fashion for our muscles were still loath to limber up. The place we chose was at the mouth of a small creek which had apparently opened forth its quota of water in the spring and promptly dried up. Except for the tangles of debris which gave evidence of a violent watershed one would never dream of the creeks flowing for it would put a bone to shame for dryness. A mere handful of trees graced the otherwise bare bank and we were grateful for the shade.

The rest was what we had required for when we set out again our muscles responded readily and we paddled continuously with but few rests of short duration the remainder of the afternoon.

A short distance downstream we came upon a large island. It occupied the center of our attention for some time. About halfway down its length we espied two animals which we took at first to be young goats playing in the river edge. While approaching them we had occasion to watch their antics with considerable interest. They played like two puppies, rearing and pawing and chasing each other up and down the shore. They were quite oblivious of our presence so engrossed were they in their play. We approached silently to within several hundred yards and were amazed to discover they were fawns. This intensified our interest for we hadn't expected such luck. I brought my camera to bear on them but since they were still some distance off did not use it. When finally they discovered us we were within 300 yards of them. With a startled snort they turned and fled over the bank and out of sight. I was fortunate enough to photograph two small white tails bounding over a log.

Needless-to-say we were extremely alert as we passed the remainder of the island. However, such a pleasure as repetition or duplication was denied us for our searching eyes found only the usual trees, vines, brush, grass, etc.

We had originally planned to reach the mouth of the Cheyenne river but decided to stop near Fairbank. The west bank offered no possibility of a decent camping place so we crossed to

the east bank and finally at 7:40 selected a good spot. Again mud was prevalent but "Bob" hastily improvised a corduroy landing, and we pulled ashore. While "Bob" prepared camp for the night I built a fire.

hoppers, paddled out to a bar nearby and set a fishline. This done we completed dinner and sat down to a repast of

Mashed potatoes Corned beef and cabbage Tomatoes Bread Dried apricots

By this time night had fallen, and we went gladly to bed.

We determined to go as far as the Cheyenne river the next day. I arose first in the morning and began breakfast. It was composed of apricot juice and oatmeal. We washed the dishes, prepared lunch, packed the dunnage and stowed them in the canoe. Our fishline had become sanded in during the night and so we had no fish. We bathed ourselves in the deep water near the bar, took in the line and coiled it. We pulled away from shore at about 11:00 o'clock. Downstream a mile or two we stopped at the old Fairmont hotel and refilled our water keg. By noon we were fairly on our way.

I have a vivid recollection of brilliant sunlight accompanying us all the way to the Cheyenne. It was as warm as the two previous days and the wind still blew out of the south. I must confess the unceasing glare of the sun annoyed me immensely that day and when we came ashore into heavy shade it was well received.

The bend approaching the Cheyenne is big and wide and it seemed we would never round it. The scenery, however, was interesting and we drank it in fully. This is one of the most thinly populated areas of South Dakota, and likely of the United States. Armstrong County, which is bounded on the south by the Cheyenne river, has a total population of 42 people. The entire county is devoted to cattle-raising.

The Cheyenne was reached at 4:30. We immediately fell to work preparing camp and dinner. "Bob" disappeared into the woods in search of cottontails for dinner. I had spotted an excellent camping spot and, better still, a hole already dug which I decided would be fine for baking potatoes.

There is absolutely no method that equals baking potatoes in a hole if the materials are at hand and are used properly. I built a fire in the bottom and fed it fuel until the hole was half filled with red-hot hardwood coals. When this point had been reached I placed a layer of three inches of wet, fine white sand on the coals. The potatoes were nestled in this and covered with more of the sand. I built another fire, this time on top of the sand and fed it fuel until a good bed of red-hot coals covered the sand. With this done, I dismissed it from my mind for I knew a delightful cache of well-baked moist steaming potatoes would be ready when dinner was served.

In the meantime I cleared a place for our bed. This required special attention as I had found the place fairly alive with cockroaches. Some very slovenly campers had preceded us by several weeks and the debris they left was well suited to the requirements of the insects. Red-hot coals raked over the area we required soon routed them and the annoyance they offered us was minimal when

and composed as follows:

Cottontail, prepared as before Baked potatoes Spinach Bread Dried Apricots.

The fresh meat we welcomed and the potatoes were everything I had expected. When they are taken out one need only dust off the sand and they are ready. The coat does not harden when prepared this way and it is as easily removed as the peel of a tangerine.

You will note that we regularly used dried apricots for our dinners. We felt that fruit was essential to a well balanced diet. Fresh fruits were obviated and so we settled on dried apricots as being light, for our pack was already heavy, easily obtainable, and palatable to us both.

Our repast finished, we prepared things as best we could against invasion by cockroaches, washed our dishes and retired.

It was here that "Cheyenne" came into our lives. While dining we were visited by a half grown female kitten. It was part Angora, and seemed not too far removed from human influence for it came quite close to us always keeping just out of reach. We tossed it some bits of food after an unsuccessful attempt to send it off. Occasionally during the night I heard it prowling about.

The mosquitoes were particularly annoying during the night, and we were glad to arise at 8:03. Our usual breakfast out of the way and lunch prepared we packed our dunnage and stowed it in the canoe. We were bent on reaching Pierre, the capital city, before camping so we managed an earlier start. The sky became overcast with a gray low lying, swiftly moving cloud bank about 7:00 A. M. The temperature dropped, and we feared a cool day was in store for us with the added possibility of rain and squalls. In that we were mistaken for by the time we had finished breakfast all but fleecy high flying clouds had cleared away.

The kitten was still about when we departed and by the prodigious use of meat for bait we "shanghai'd" her. She was dubbed "Cheyenne" and loaded into the canoe. Her experience with boats apparently was point zero for she unceremoniously circumnavigated the canoe several times precariously perched on the gunwale. Twice she narrowly saved herself from plunging into the river by wildly clawing at the sides of the canoe and twice she clambered aboard dripping wet. Both times she licked herself dry and the second time gave it up as a bad job. For awhile she prowled about the canoe peering inquiringly into all the nooks and crannies. She managed to get in the way several times and each time received a resounding thwack from the paddle as it came back. This discouraged her for she retired to the bottom of the canoe. Her curiosity, however, was not sated for she proceeded to rub against the bottoms of my bare feet. This was all right but when she recently sent me sailing over the prow of the canoe by licking my feet I objected. Undaunted she next jumped onto my sunburned legs. This I could not abide and convinced her of it in a forceful manner. Her patience thus exhausted she concluded I was a very unfriendly sort and she paddled off to annoy "Bob." When she satisfied herself of our likes and dislikes and learned all she desired about the strange

more difficult. By this time we had grown quite used to the exertion and were able to paddle long periods of time without rest.

All day we paddled without going ashore. Mile after mile and bend after bend fell behind as we steadily paddled into the wind. Our lunch, composed as usual of cheese sandwiches, was consumed while in the boat thus saving time. Several times we ran aground and frequently we took the opportunity it presented to refill the canteen for it was too hazardous to empty the heavy keg in the canoe.

Once when we ran aground we had a misfortune befall us. I held the canoe while "Bob" went ahead to sound the depth and while doing so I observed his progress to be able to help if he should drop off into deep water. During the performance his paddle slipped out of the canoe and downstream without our knowledge of it. When we set out again its absence became known. Downstream we went in a hurry looking for it but we never saw it again.

Shortly after this adventure we rounded a sharp bend between the shores and a bar and nearly ran headlong into the bank. The current was very swift and made such a sharp turn against the bank that there was a scant twenty feet in which to maneuver. We had been paddling furiously in search of the lost paddle and came into the bend so fast that we were obliged to backwater hastily to avoid striking the bank.

The sky was filled with fleecy clouds which often passed between us and the sun giving us welcome shade. The bluffs we passed grew increasingly before and sunset and their beauty grew more rugged. At the bends, however, the river was always wooded on the inside of the curve and barren on the outside.

Towards the latter part of the afternoon we looked expectantly for the appearance of the bridge at Pierre. However, we had misjudged our speed and it was late at night before finally the first one hove into sight.

About five o'clock we were treated to a bit of near tragedy. Our attention had been arrested by the frantic shrieking of what developed to be a Common Tern in severe distress. It had been attacked in full flight by a Prairie Falcon, the fastest of South Dakota birds. Only by the utmost of agility apparently, had the tern avoided the first stoop of the falcon and undertaken to escape. Again and again the falcon struck at the wildly dodging bird. Each time it narrowly missed its mark as the tern dove into the river. But for the remarkable maneuvering the tern must surely have furnished the falcon a meal. Finally the tern so exhausted it could scarcely fly, the falcon gave up the chase and disappeared. We approached to within fifteen feet of the tired bird as it rested on the water and I obtained a good picture on my cine' camera.

Just before sundown we opened a can of pork & beans and restored our flagging spirits. "Cheyenne" crawled out of her hiding place to receive a morsel and retired to slumber once more.

Presently the sun dropped out of sight amid a splendid display of color. We continued our way in silence as we watched the sunset die in the west. Our progress there inafter was lit by the "Harvest Moon" which hung just above the bluffs and shed its golden glow upon an

while in close to shore a whole chunk of the bank slipped into the river with a splash churning the water and sending us scuttling off.

At long last we sighted the brilliantly illuminated wagon bridge at Pierre. It was still several miles off but our destination was in sight. As we approached it we passed seemingly interminable lengths of bars which blocked our passage to shore. Finally we managed to get in close and carefully drifted under the railroad bridge and down to the wagon bridge. As we approached we could hear the water roaring over some snags and discovered to our consternation that it was a rock reef of dead ahead. Too late to veer off we passed over while holding our breath but our luck held for while we tipped precariously we did not upset and the canoe was not punctured.

For once we found a dry landing place, almost under the bridge, and came ashore. The dunnage and canoe were swiftly beached, and we headed for town. It was 11:30 when we landed and since we did not feel like building a fire and cooking dinner we walked to town and bought a meal. Both of us were so tired we could scarcely walk but we were also hungry and dirty so we coaxed our unwilling legs along till we managed to get a dinner and a hot bath. Then and only then, did we return to camp and unrolling our blankets retire.

True to our expectations, "Cheyenne" insisted on prowling around by night. The first thing she did was to rub against my sunburned face. This I discouraged and so she was content to purr loudly in my ear. Finally she desisted and crawling under the covers she too went to sleep.

Our bed was laid on one of the concrete piers of the wagon bridge. It was no harder than what we had become accustomed to and was level and free of rocks, sticks and stones so it was quite an improvement. The one we chose was partly on shore and partly in the river. The river side was fenced with woven wire so we didn't fear a bath. This served us for two nights.

The following morning we arose at seven, rolled up the bed (not the pier, however), hid our equipment on shore, washed and hastened down town without breakfast for we had dined only a few hours previously.

Our first concern was to replace the paddle lost the day before. We had carried with us a spare but it was next to useless. Carrying the remaining paddle, we began by looking for a friend of mine, one "Andy" King. He had become acquainted through our mutual interest in amateur radio. I expected "Andy" might help us locate the tools we required for making a new paddle. However, he was not at home and his places of business yielded no results, so still pondering our dilemma we walked down main street. Since we were carrying the paddle we occasioned some interest from the natives, and one fellow, a Western Union messenger, stopped to visit a while. Seizing upon the opportunity we asked if he knew any canoeists in town. Replying in the negative he did, however, direct us to a gentleman who did some sailing on the river. As luck would have it, we were able to purchase a light basswood paddle from him. "Bob" put a metal tip on it and we had solved our problem.

We stopped at the Post Office where there were three letters awaiting me. We sent off letters as before at Whitlocks Crossing.

who is an employee of the state highway department. He invited us to come to the office and chin awhile, which we agreed to do presently, and set off for the capitol.

My first interest in the capitol building was the Department of Game and Fish. There we introduced ourselves and visited a while with the new Director. Our next stop was the highway department where "Phil" awaited us. There are two other radio amateurs in the department whom I knew and we took the occasion to renew acquaintance. Our conversation as before was of radio and the canoe trip.

The afternoon then passed pleasantly in meeting old friends and chewing the rag. All too soon it was over and once again we found ourselves in main street. Our list of required provisions was small and we made our purchases in short order. There were as follows:

Pettijohn's Cereal 1 can of apricot juice 1 can of grapefruit juice 1 small jar of pineapple preserves 4 small cans of fruit

We ate downtown again and then carried our provisions out to camp. We had scraped the canoe bottom in crossing the rocks the day before so we put some pitch on the worn spots. Since we had slept but little the night before we turned in early and had a good night's rest for the hardest part of the trip still lay before us.

My experience with the citizens of western South Dakota has bound me close to them for they are the very finest of people one can ask to meet. Their creed is the "Golden Rule" and these are not idle words. They never pass any one who needs help even though it inconveniences them greatly. We experienced this hospitality on our canoe trip and it furnished us some of our most genuine pleasures. Whitlocks Crossing, our first stop, extended to us every courtesy, and Pierre was more than kind. Everything we required was freely given us, and we departed better for having been there.

"Bob" developed a disorderly stomach during the night and we were thus delayed in starting the following morning. However, as he seemed able to make the trip we prepared breakfast, packed up and left Pierre on the last leg of our journey at 10:15 A. M. "Cheyenne" had repeated her performance of the night before and disappeared so we left her behind.

Our course took us downriver over a long straight stretch which presented little variation. For once we were not obliged to battle the wind for it had died completely. The heat was terrific and as we labored over the paddles we fairly sweltered. "Bob" was feeling but poorly and this, coupled with the increasing heat and intensity of illumination, gave us some concern. I was at the point of suggesting that we put ashore until the heat let up a bit when a bank of clouds obscured the sun. This removed the danger of heat or sunstroke so we continued downriver, our speed

unabated. The illumination had been so intense that my arms had blistered under its glare, and this had never occurred before.

We drank a goodly amount of water for we perspired so freely.

to portage. The bluffs became higher and rougher as we had expected, and it looked as if we were in for a job. A stiff head-wind rose about 5:30 and the going became very difficult. Difficult or not, however, we would go forward and so we paddled resolutely without rest. By this time we were both very tired and when at last we landed on a mud bank three miles above Iron Nation I could scarcely get off my knees and go ashore.

We landed at sundown during the most glorious sunset I can recall. The sky was overcast and as the sun dropped below the bluffs it literally set the clouds afire. All the shades of red from pink to scarlet appeared. Blue, purple, yellow and orange added variation to the reds. The whole sky blazed down at us and the river mirrored it back. Gradually it faded to a dull glow and at last out of sight, leaving us in darkness.

Camp was speedily prepared while dinner was on the fire. The place we chose was not especially well suited for it was not entirely level, but there was no alternative except far downstream and we were weary enough. Our bed was downhill and during the night we frequently slid out of bed but we crawled uncomplaining back again.

Our menu for the evening called for

Vegetable soup Lima beans Sweet potatoes Bread Canned fruit

This disposed of we washed the dishes and hit the hay. The cloud bank threatened rain but we did not set up the tent. In this we were fortunate for though it looked exceedingly rainy all night long we did not get wet.

In the morning we arose at 6:45 with every intention of an early start. Breakfast was speedily prepared and eaten. Lunch also was prepared and the dishes washed. The canoe was packed and launched, and we set out at 10:00 o'clock. These was to be a busy day for our portage was just ahead.

We paddled nearly three hours until at 12:45 Noon we beached the canoe preparatory to portaging. We had expected a high, difficult portage, but when I have in sight we were appalled. The bluffs were steep, composed of gumbo and shale, and rose about 500 feet above the river. Unless we found a pass there was absolutely no chance of scrambling empty handed up the face of the bluffs, much less with all our equipment. Our luck held, however, and we have to at a narrow, steep pass over which we proposed to carry some 400 pounds of equipment. Optimistic? Yes. Crazy? Undoubtedly, but we were on a canoe trip which would not be complete without a portage. From all outward appearances our trip was about to be rounded out in grand style for there we stood at a portage which gave every indication of fulfilling our wildest wishes.

In past years when the Missouri river served as the principal avenue of travel and transportation, this portage was used by some. In recent years, however, it has not been crossed. Thus we were given the added privilege of following directly in the footsteps of the hardy pioneers who explored the West.

thirty miles. Our portage was three. All we had to do was to return and carry our canoe to the top and down on the other side where two and a half miles of comparatively level grassland sloped down to the river. On paper this sounds simple enough but, — — well, with 200 pounds of canoe to be carried over, we were faced with a mighty tough problem. Down we went, however, and right there the work began. We hoisted the canoe to our shoulders and started slowly up the hill. Hardly had we traveled 100 feet when two young fellows from the nearby town of Lower Brule came down and offered to help us. They were members of the Sioux Indian tribe and were at that

time occupied in mending line fences. We accepted their offer with alacrity and once more started up the hill. With the four of us the task was considerably less difficult but at its best one real task. At length we arrived at the summit and there we sat, our canoe and equipment 500 feet above and a half mile away from the river. It must have been a funny sight indeed.

We had put forth a large amount of energy and while resting we consumed part of our lunch. Thus fortified we started down the opposite slope with the canoe. We executed the descent with care for the ground was covered with shale just waiting to rip open the canoe. Then at last we laid it down on the grass below the bluffs we felt a major part of our task completed. To bring the packs down to the canoe was a mere matter of minutes and we then set out on the long trek to the river.

After spending five hours on the portage, we finally reached the river and the end of our endurance. The canoe was wearily launched and loaded, and once more we started downstream. We planned to stop at Lower Brule for the night and when we reached it at 7:30 P. M. there were no regrets. Again we hauled the canoe ashore and unloaded its contents. The bar here steeply fifty feet above the river to a fair camping place. This was "carrying coals to Newcastle" with a vengeance for we had done all the climbing with packs that we wanted. However, having obtained the permission of the townsfolk there was nothing for it but to hoist away and so we fell to work. About fifteen feet from the top there was a ledge upon which we prepared dinner. This eliminated part of the carrying.

There is no place I have been where firewood is more readily at hand than along the Missouri river. It is all seasoned, broken into any length you wish and piled in windrows on the bank. You may take your choice of hard or soft woods, depending upon your needs. Thus we had not been troubled about fires while coming down the river. On this particular evening, however, there was a dearth of firewood. The banks, as I have stated, rose steeply, almost sheer, right from the water and no driftwood had been deposited upon the ledge we chose for our fireplace. Had it not been for the fact that what firewood there was happened to be red cedar we would have been obliged to climb all over the bank in the dark searching for fuel. This is because red cedar coals are intensely hot and a little goes a long way. For the first time that evening also we cooked directly over the flame because of the shortage of fuel. As all good campers know, cooking directly over the flames will blacken the pots quickly while coals will not. We studiously avoided so doing except on this our last night out for we were hungry and tired, lacking all desire to gather more fuel.

Our menu I cannot recall for dinner was a secondary matter

it we crawled, head and all. The mosquitoes descended upon us in droves. Since there was no wind they could fly easily and they had a field day. So long as we stayed completely under the covers they were foiled but this was difficult to do for we had to come out for air. They droned overhead all night long and we slept little. Finally in the wee hours a breeze sprang up and we were allowed to sleep. Both of us were exhausted and slept as though drugged.

"Bob" awakened me abruptly in the morning at 6:30 with the information that it was about to rain. He further observed that we had better make haste and get breakfast out of the way before it did. One glance was enough to assure me that we would do well to get the equipment packed against rain before it started. Acting swiftly upon this theory we dressed in record time. "Bob" rolled the bedding while I dashed over the bank to a ledge where our food and clothing had been left the night before. Scarcely had the packs been prepared than it began to rain. They were speedily loaded in a nearby log-house which offered the most convenient shelter. During a lull we slipped and skidded down to the power house. Here the heat from the old diesel engine dried us while outside the rain continued to fall.

What to do? This query we presently answered. We were only thirty-five miles from our objective on the last day we had set for travel. Unless we appeared on schedule several people

would be greatly concerned. Unfortunately this was so we could not disregard it. Looking back on a thoroughly pleasant and successful trip thus far we asked ourselves what were the possibilities of completing the thirty-five miles before us with equal success and pleasure? Very slim they appeared, for a stiff wind had arisen and was sweeping down the river, the temperature had fallen and frequent rain squalls occurred. Since we were on a strictly pleasure trip we did not think it wise to set out on a river in a four paddle soaked to the skin under those conditions. With this in mind we called our friends in Chamberlain who came out and picked us up.

Before we left, however, we prepared breakfast and cleaned off the mud we had accumulated while bustling about in the rain. We shaved with water heated in the diesel engine. When all this was done and things were ready to go to Chamberlain we presented quite a civilized appearance. Except for the color acquired from the sun, we were essentially the same as when a week before we had turned the canoe into the stream some 230 miles upriver.

In order to come to Lower Brule from Chamberlain the river has to be crossed. There is a ferry for this purpose about a mile below the turn. To its landing across the river "Bob" took the canoe, there to be left till in the morrow when we would come for it.

Lower Brule we left with a feeling of regret for our contact with its people had been very pleasant. Everything we needed or asked for was given and we departed thence as from Pierre better for having been there.

There is but little left to tell. We arrived at Chamberlain about the middle of the afternoon. Our comfort and pleasure was well provided for by John B. Walt and his charming family. On the following day, Sunday, we returned to the ferry landing, this time with the little lady as companion, and paddled the canoe to Chamberlain completing the 265 mile trip from Mobridge.

poured into a cup already overflowing. Out of the hardships, labors and pleasures which we experienced together a deep friendship has sprung. When Sunday evening I bid "Bob" goodbye the realization was full upon me that time and distance might well prevent us from meeting again. Real friendship does not, however, take time nor distance into account, and as we separately turned away from the river I knew we would forever meet there on its inexorable course to the sea.

*— The End —*