

River miles from Ohio River to Memphis indicate 228 miles and the boat averaged 10 miles per gallon last year. There are no gas facilities so we have to be sure to carry enough.... We arrive at launch ramp in Wickliffe and can see rain sweeping across downriver so we put rain suits on... Mike pulls up weather radar on his phone and it looks to be clearing just downriver... we're almost ready to put the boat in when I remember we haven't bought ice yet... Quick trip to convenience store and we launch boat at 7:20



Our boat is a 16 ft Xpress aluminum flat bottom boat powered by a 25 hp. Yamaha 4 stroke engine. I've got a 24 volt 74lb thrust Minn Kota electric trolling motor and we have all the required safety equipment plus a Q-beam light and VHF handheld radio for communicating with towboats should the need arise.. We've got a Humminbird 788 combo depthfinder, GPS and chart plotter loaded with a Navionics chip showing the entire river... this unit shows the water depth, a map of the river and your exact position is indicated by a moving boat symbol on the map. In addition it shows your speed, elapsed time, miles traveled and water temp.. I added an Attwood bimini top last year prior to my trip and the shade and shelter it provides from sun and rain is invaluable.... Mike and I both have cellphones however we discovered there were long stretches of river where neither of us could get a signal... A little surprising since I-55 runs near the river the entire distance to Memphis... Mike also added a web

cam to our boat that snaps a picture every 30 seconds and we will turn that into a short video showing the entire trip.



The Mississippi is a free flowing river from St. Louis south so we won't have pass through any locks...On my trip last year on the upper Miss. river I had to pass through numerous locks and they ask for the name of your boat. This necessitated coming up with a name so I chose "Dumarse". Numerous people have commented on how appropriate the name is.

We head north and notice the boat seems sluggish against the current which is running strong against the Kentucky side.....I angle over to the Missouri side and apparently several towboats have come through this stretch because the river is stirred up (lot of waves and swells from different directions).....we continue on further north until the GPS indicates we are across from mouth of Ohio River..tried to take a picture but rain and mist obscured the view.

7:40 we turn south....going with the current instead of against it helps a little but boat still feels sluggish.....we attribute that to the extra weight because of all the fuel we are carrying and this proved to be true because the boat handling and speed improved throughout the day as the fuel tanks got lighter... for first twenty miles or so there are a lot of loading facilities and barges tied off on each bank and a lot of small and large towboats moving around the barges on both sides of the river..this likely is due to this area being right below where Mississippi splits and a lot of large tows(30-45 barges) coming up river are split up with part of the barges going up the Mississippi and part of them going up the Ohio...ditto for tows going downstream....result is there is a lot of boat traffic in that area which results in a stirred up river and caused us to have to slow down for waves and pick our path very carefully down the river.



the old saying "if you cut in front of a towboat, three things can happen and two of them are bad" really applies here... this is especially true if they are going downstream because they can't stop....tows coming upstream can stop but they might not see a small boat if you were close to the front of the barges. If you swamp your boat or hit something and disabled the engine, you risk having the current sweep you under the barges....."picking a path" is more than just dodging between boats on Mississippi river....there is always the risk of hitting a submerged log or something disabling your boat therefore you need to be aware of not only the towboats path but also where the current is going to carry you.....

9:40a.m. we pass mile marker 926....Memphis is mile marker 724 which means we still have 200 miles to go...I tell Mike that I'm concerned at the rate we're traveling, it's going to be 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. before we get to Memphis.We continue to run in and out of light rain showers...

10:00 a.m. no cell phone signal so we can't text a progress report....take quick bathroom break and refresh our mugs with ice tea...light rain still falling....

10:20 start getting a cell phone signal near New Madrid, Mo. so I text family and friends that we are 60 GPS miles downstream...apparently the recent flooding knocked a lot of the river mile marker signs down because we are not seeing very many and are having to use the elapsed miles on GPS to estimate our progress....river is still high and we are getting little braver about running outside the channel and cutting across some of the sweeping river bends to save running time....

10:40 wake up call...grounded on a sand bar...we got a little too far out of the channel, weren't paying attention to the depthfinder and motor starts bumping the sandy bottom....we get it shut off and trimmed up quickly..no harm done but we had to get out and drag the boat 20 yards or so out to deeper water...visibility was not good in the rain or we would have seen the tiny sliver of sand running out toward channel about 100 yards downstream and moved further out. Typically Mike and I both pay close attention to what's in front of the boat but this time we had gotten a little lax...this woke us up a little and we didn't let it happen again.

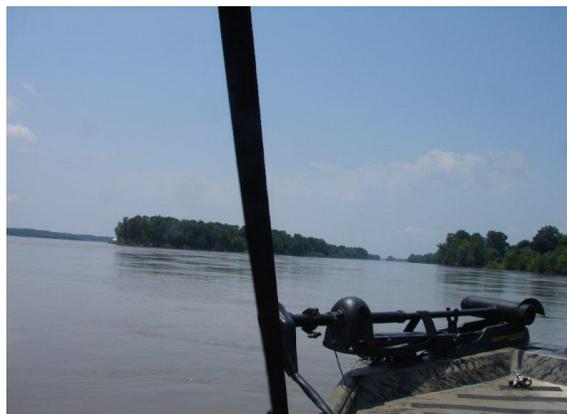
11:40 check gas level in tank and we've traveled 74 miles and used 6 gallons of gas....this means we are averaging close to 12 miles per gallon and we should have plenty of fuel to get to Memphis..

11:25 Mike changes to fresh battery for our web cam and plugs the discharged battery into a power receptacle on the boat...we also switch drivers....didn't notice it last year but my shoulder starts to ache a little after about two hours of holding the tiller....patches of blue sky are appearing so we take off rainsuits..

11:55 slow to a idle and eat lunch....the ham sandwiches are pretty big so we decide to to split one and save other for tomorrow...we've also got Pringles chips in a can and a plastic container of my wife Peggy's cookies.



12:40 sun pops out as we pass under the I-155 bridge(Dyersburg,Tn. to Caruthersville,Mo.)towboat traffic is heavy on the river and we seldom went over a few miles without one in sight either traveling upstream or down...tows going south leave almost no wake...the troublesome tows are the heavily loaded ones pushing hard against the current headed north....they leave huge swells directly downstream but the biggest problem is they create choppy water for 2-4 miles behind them that spreads all across the river...sometimes we could avoid most of it, other times we were forced to just slow down and run through it.



1:25 change from one 12 gallon gas tank to the other after 125 miles....fuel stick indicates there's almost two gallons of gas left in tank so we are averaging better than 12 mpg....with less fuel on board,our speed has gradually increased to 25-26 mph plus the river level is high enough to allow us to cut across almost all of the wide sweeping bends of the river...many of the large bends have a large island out toward the tip of the bend and our GPS would show us if there was a cut-thru channel behind the island that we could run down and shorten the distance by 1-3 miles.

3:10 we pass mile marker 775...Memphis is mile marker 737 so that means we are 37 river miles north of Memphis. Our GPS indicates we have traveled 165 miles...boat speed has increased to 27-28 mph....terrain along river has been mostly flat but we passed a few small bluffs on Tennessee side of river a few miles upstream.

3:45 pass mile marker 757 which means we are 20 miles upstream from Memphis....

4:20 we round a slight bend and spot Memphis in the distance....text family and friends "Memphis in sight"....I believe I've read that Memphis is sometimes called "the bluff city" .Apparently the bluffs are not very high and are underwater with the river level being this high consequently the city doesn't appear to be sitting much higher than the river.



4:30 p.m. pass under bridge at Memphis....skyline of Memphis is an impressive sight viewed from middle of river especially with sun glinting off the Pyramid building....happened to look up just before we reached the bridge and there was a Fed Ex cargo jet climbing out of the airport high above the bridge...tried to capture the scene with my camera but unfortunately the plane just shows up as a tiny speck...pleasantly surprised that there was no barge traffic around the bridges when we came through... tell Mike that we've got one more bridge at Helena,Ark. and he will have passed under every bridge on Miss. river from New Orleans to St.Louis....

5:00 p.m. enter mouth of McKellar lake south of Memphis where Riverside Park marina is located.We could have taken the boat out near downtown at Mud Island but that would have involved having to fight downtown traffic so we opted to travel another 20 miles south.

5:15 arrive at Riverside Park launch ramp where Scott already has trailer backed into the water...GPS shows 9 hours and 55 minutes travel time and 218 miles covered...

Scott has us already checked in at a Drury Motel in Southaven which is a suburb of Memphis located just across state line in Mississippi. Quick shower and it's time to go find some dry BBQ ribs..Had really wanted to go to Rendezvous for ribs. Used to go there back in the 70's and the dry ribs were the best I'd ever had but three different people told me that the food quality was no longer there so we decide to go to Corkys in east Memphis....Friday night and it's crowded but we manage to get in after about a 15 minute wait...We order their dry ribs, Mike and I split a slab and Scott manages to down a slab by himself.....not in the same league with what I remember at Rendezvous but still very good....didn't think I could eat another bite until Scott orders banana pudding. It looked so good, we forced him to split it three ways. ...it was a long day and Mike and I were sound asleep long before Scott finished watching the Braves game....

Saturday morning wake call at 6:00 a.m...Sun is shining and today should be easy day...187 river miles south to Greenville, Ms. and we plan to take 8-10 mile side trip up Arkansas river to see if the recent flooding has affected the areas we duck hunt in...Mike and I walk to nearby Cracker Barrel for a "big breakfast" which is scrambled eggs and sausage for him and sausage biscuits for me...we fill up tanks at nearby station and head to Riverside park to launch.

8:10 a.m idle away from marina as Scott snaps pictures....about a 6 mile run from launch ramp out to the river and bank is lined with industry including a huge Corp. of Engineers facility with numerous towboats, barges, dredge boats and even a "bank grading machine" mounted on a barge.

8:25 enter Miss. river and turn south...no towboats in sight and river is calm....quite a contrast to previous morning...

9:10 GPS indicates we have traveled 23.8 miles in first hour...

9:38 text family/friends that we are passing Tunica, Ms. take pictures of the huge casinos and hotels. Comment to Mike that I traveled through Tunica many times back in 60's and 70's and there was nothing there but a country store and cotton gin.....

9:50 pass mile marker 689 which means we are 35 river miles south of Memphis and 152 miles north of Greenville. light tow traffic so far down the river although we usually are always in sight of a towboat.....

10:50 text family/friends that we are passing Helena, Ark.. (pronounced "hell un nuh")...two towboats passing plus strong current has got river really stirred up....we are forced run slow so I take a few pictures.



11:15 time to slow down to an idle for a "pee & tea" break and we switch drivers.....sun is warm but it's very comfortable under shade of the top with temps ranging from 80-84F...(we were always wondering how cold it was during duck hunting season so I mounted a temp gauge on inside of boat under the gunnel).

11:25 pass mile marker 650 and up ahead spot two people in a canoe paddling downriver...we're fairly close to them and I comment to Mike that I don't think they are on a long distance trip because i don't see any supplies in the boat with them...as we get closer Mike comments he sees they have some stuff piled in middle of canoe so we slow and talk to them.Turns out they were Allen and Diane Roden from Noblesville,Indiana and appeared to be in their 60's.They built the canoe in their garage,launched it in creek in front of their house a month ago,paddled down the creek to where it empties into the Illinois River,followed the river to where it joins the Mississippi and were headed to New Orleans...they alternately camp on the river or stay in motels depending on where they end up at end of the day... they tell us they are fixing to stop and get under some shade until it cools off later in the day before resuming their trip,,we chat for few minutes,swap e-mail addresses and wish each other a safe journey.

12:10 p.m. we slow to idle for a lunch break and the combination of idling and current is still carrying us 6-8 mph downstream....last sandwich is a little damp but still very good....lot of sweeping bends in this area plus rock dikes.....rock dikes are piles of granite boulders the corps. of Engineers has piled up to form a dike that extend from the bank sometimes several hundred yards out into the river and forces the water coming downstream to be channeled out toward middle of river and helps keep the channel scoured free of sand...at lower river levels you are forced to go out and around them but with water still being high we could run over the top of most of them...in effect they have created an underwater waterfall which creates a lot of turbulence right below each dike even though the top of the dike may be 10-20 feet underwater.....you can spot the dikes a hundred yards or so upstream from the turbulence and as you go over them,the water dips downhill for 15-20 feet before surging up to the surface and creating huge boils and whirlpools.....little unnerving to feel your boat twist in the whirlpools but we crossed several hundred of them on our trip and after awhile you could estimate the depth on top of the dike by looking at the turbulence...we also saw several that looked shallow so we would run out and go around the end of the them.

It is a little harder to explain but same rules of observation apply to cutting across the numerous sandbars...with a little experience you can look at river ahead and tell if the water is deep enough to run across or you need to edge out closer to the channel....shallow water less than a foot deep usually has small ripples....generally speaking if river is running smooth and there's no ripples,you've got at least a couple of feet of water.....sandbars usually have a gradual slope toward the channel and we tried to stay off them far enough to run in 6 ft of water or more....if wind is blowing hard and waves are obscuring the small ripples-you better get out closer to channel and watch your depthfinder...

12:40 we pass mile marker 622 and pass the entrance to Desota lake near Clarksdale,Ms.Desota Lake is an old oxbow lake which means at one time it was part of the channel of the Miss. river...

1:50 we approach Rosedale,Ms. on left bank....there are some expensive and large homes built on top of a high bank bank along the river but still inside the levee. When I saw these homes a couple of years ago while duck hunting,I questioned the wisdom of building anything this elaborate on the river side of the levee.I was curious to see what flood damage had occurred...the houses were still there but there was a lot of sheetrock and paneling piled in the yards around several of the houses...Apparently the floodwaters had gotten in most of these houses.These houses were elevated on stilts or pilings and I really expected them to swept off the pilings or shoved sideways by the flood but they weren't....we did however see repair evidence in almost every home we passed that was built on the river banks all the way downriver.. Except for when we passed Helena and Tunica, cellphone service is mostly non existent from Memphis to Greenville. I get a weak signal but manage to text a progress report to family/friends but it took several tries to get it to go through...

2:10 we enter the upper end of a chute that will lead us into the Arkansas River and up to the areas we duck hunt in the winter...this area is primarily backwater,the water changes from muddy to clear water and the temperature goes up...while traveling down the river,we noticed the water temperature ran 80-81F and temperature in boat never exceeded 84F...the water temp. in the Ark. river is 91-92F and it becomes very warm even in the shade of the canopy....temp gauge in boat indicates air temperature has climbed to 92F... we continue further up the river and to see if the sandbars and willow sloughs have been changed by the flood waters and they haven't but it looks different with the leaves on the trees as opposed to duck season when the flooded willows have shed most of their leaves....when we slow down in the shallows,Asian carp are continually jumping all around the boat,some of them in the 15lb or bigger class....when boat was up on plane in Ark. River we had several jump beside the boat and a lot jump behind the boat after we passed over them...These fish jump 3-6 ft in the air and people have been seriously injured while riding in boats..we had to be really alert and ready to shield our face and chest in case one jumped into the boat consequently we didn't look back much but every time I glanced back, I saw splashes from the carp jumping behind the boat.

2:50 we are heading back downriver almost to the Miss. when we spot three deer swimming across the river...a doe and two fawns following her..the last fawn is tiny and has spots...we slow down to take pictures from 20-30 yards away,the doe reaches the bank and climbs out and two fawns are still 30-40 yards from shore....the little fawn gets confused and starts heading toward us and I start idling away from her..debate for minute or so whether to go back and try to help her but decided to get out of her sight as soon as possible in hopes she will turn and go on the way she was going....I hope the little fawn made it and regret getting as close to them as I did.



2:55 re-enter Miss. river and turn south....Mike and I have hunted and fished many times on the remaining stretch of river to Greenville so we start to see familiar places.....surprisingly it hasn't changed in the 30 years or so since we'd seen it.

3:25 pass mile marker 567 meaning we have 30 river miles left to go.

3:45 p.m. time for another bathroom break and refill our mugs with tea break...we swap drivers and take the long river chute behind Choctaw bar...I tell Mike this cut off saves at least a mile because years ago while fishing a bass tournament, I was following another bass boat running up this river and was half mile behind him when we got to the lower entrance of the chute..He took the long way around and followed the river channel,I cut through the chute and when I popped out the upper end,I was half mile ahead of the other boat.

4:10 round bend in river and spot grain elevators and power plant at Greenville,Ms. text family and friends "Greenville,Ms. in sight" ...islands on west bank of river that we used to duck hunt around look different until it dawned on me the different look was due to the islands being covered with willow trees and before they were mostly just sand.

4:35 enter mouth of Lake Ferguson and head up lake toward city harbor front...Bank of lake is lined with barges and towboat repair facilities.....probably been close to 30 years since I had been on this lake and nothing much has changed except the large marina that used to be at the city front has been replaced with a casino.



4:50 end of trip and Scott soon appears with van and trailer...

201 miles today and 8:45 hours travel time...419 miles from mouth of Ohio river to Greenville,Ms.

We load boat onto trailer and it's hot in parking lot....temp gauge in van said an even 100F....

Pete Herman shows up minutes later....Pete is an ex neighbor plus hunting and fishing buddy whom I've stayed in touch with over the years. I had called him prior to the trip and asked him to join us for dinner at Doe's Eat Place...I had included him in our progress texts to family and friends today so when we entered Lake Ferguson he left home to meet us.

We immediately head for Does to get out of the heat....Doe's is located in a not so nice neighborhood but we manage to find a parking place for both van and boat on street out front... Doe's building is an old wood frame, corner grocery store probably built back in the 20's . You enter through the kitchen and go into the back rooms which have linoleum floors and haven't changed at all since i first went there back in mid 60's. We order two T-bones for two which are really two porterhouse steaks with bone in....Mike and Pete like theirs rare and Scott and I like medium so it works out well....these are huge steaks and very,very good..The New York Times once said Doe's may be the best steak house in America....it was a great meal and great time reminiscing with Pete over some of our good times together...and it was good feeling to get the entire Mississippi River checked off my bucket list and most of it with my son...

We say our goodbyes to Pete and decide to head toward Georgia and drive until it gets dark....dark finds us in Columbus,Miss..... next morning we sleep in a little but get started about 8:30 a.m ...we switch stuff over and hook boat to my truck when we arrive in Montgomery...Mike heads toward Atlanta and Scott and I head home.....After the meal last night,didn't think i would ever be hungry again but as we approach Eufaula we both agree that we are slightly hungry and there was no better place to relieve that, than Phil's barbecue... a barbecue sandwich later we head toward Albany and arrive about 2:30 p.m.