

~ TEN DAYS ON THE RIDEAU ~ 2003

by Terry Sprague
(with contributions from the journal of Susan Withers)

The Participants

Norah Edwards
Terry Sprague
George West
Roger Culmer
Mike Carmody

Susan Withers
Robert Hough
Jane Hough
Jim Hair
Cathy Anderson



It started out innocently enough. Norah Edwards and Susan Withers are at Frontenac Outfitters in September of 2002 looking for new kayaks. They both settle on Formula “Escapes” and are pleased with their choices. Then the topic of “Paddling the Rideau” comes up in idle conversation. By April of 2003, the topic is no longer idle, and meetings are held to discuss the trip, and who wants to go. Despite the items on the agenda, the topic always comes back to food. Each person takes on the responsibility of some aspect of the trip, from where to launch to arrangements for pick-up once we reach our destination. I take on the task of setting up the itinerary and ensuring the services we need are available at each lockstation or site we arrive at each night. How many kilometres can we travel in a day comfortably, without making it an endurance test? I settle on about 20 km and hope that it works out. I also examine other possibilities too in the event we are held up by either wind or rain.

The completed schedule ends up being:

Aug. 30: leave Kingston, arrive Kingston Mills	7.1 km
Aug.31: leave Kingston Mills, arrive Upper Brewers	18.5 km
Sept.01: leave Upper Brewers, arrive Jones Falls	17.5 km
Sept. 02: Jones Falls, arrive Newboro	18.2 km
Sept. 03: leave Newboro, arrive Murphy's Point Provincial Park	21.4 km
Sept. 04: leave Murphy's Point P.P., arrive Smith's Falls	22.0 km
Sept. 05: leave Smith's Falls, arrive Merrickville	23.6 km
Sept. 06: leave Merrickville, arrive Rideau River Provincial Park	22.9 km
Sept. 07: leave Rideau River Provincial Park, arrive Long Island Lock	27.7 km
Sept. 08: leave Long Island Lock, arrive Hartwell's Lock	16.9 km
Sept. 09: leave Hartwells Lock, arrive Parliament Buildings	6.7 km

Ideally, we would reach each destination by 3:00 pm, or so, to leave us enough time to set up for the night and have a look around.

Saturday, August 30: *sun and cloud, moderate NW wind.*

George, Roger, Ingrid, and I meet at Susan's near Napanee. George and I load our kayaks onto George's truck, and I ride with Susan and her husband Ken and we make our way to Kingston where we are to meet Norah, and Robert and Jane at the Kingston Marina at the foot of Wellington Street. Looking it over for a suitable place to launch, we decide to launch instead at the nearby Cataraqui Canoe Club. We leave at noon, right on schedule, and head for Bell Island, then follow the Cataraqui River north to our first overnight stop, passing under the 401 and emerging almost immediately into the granite rocks of the Frontenac Axis. Bats are scouting for insects near the entrance to the locks. Along the way we see Caspian terns, minnows jumping like dolphins in the water ahead of us, and our first osprey - a young one.. The timing is great, and the short paddle gets us in shape, and allows everyone lots of time to become comfortable with setting up the tents and finding where everything is stored in their kayaks. What an adventure going through the locks as for most of us, this is our first time. As the locks fill with water, it froths and boils around us giving the impression that we are in some huge bubble bath. We find a good spot to camp for the night. A friendly family of ducks paddle near the dock in hopes of a handout. They would prove useful when I try my first freeze-dried dinner - mashed potatoes & cheese sauce. The freeze-dried ice cream wasn't much better. I don't know how people eat that stuff, and the ducks are treated this evening to supper. A small school of bluegills that rose to the surface to try the strange viscid concoction also benefits this evening. I have eggs instead. We check in with the lockmaster to obtain our permits, pay for the camping \$15.00/party of 10, but cannot get our lock transit passes as they are out.

As we are relaxing, a party of three canoes emerge and the occupants holler to us, "Which way to the next set of locks?" We wonder about these 7 kids in three canoes, who apparently don't know the purpose of buoys. One canoe is grossly overloaded with three kids and what appears to be two huge coolers and a case of beer. They have no lifejackets on and are bumping into each other, laughing and horsing around. We fully expect to see their bloated carcasses in Colonel By Lake the following morning.

At sunset, a flock of geese lands on the water across the lake. Fall is in the air! Most of us stroll around the manicured lawns until dark, exploring the history, visiting the falls, the museum and the blockhouse. That's what this trip is all about.

Sunday, August 31: *sunny, but clouding over later*

Up with the sun - actually quite a bit earlier as Roger and I are the first, stumbling around in the dark with our stoves. Night sounds were great. Some heard great horned owls, and the first of several concerts of crickets. Lots of steady hum from the 401, and trains must have passed through at least every 30 minutes. I had my bacon and eggs this morning. Norah has decided she does not like porridge, despite thinking that she would be hungry enough for just about anything on this trip. Ducks and fish are fed again. Launching went well at 8:00 a.m. with four of us carrying the kayaks down to the dock, and lowering them into the water. Wonderful morning to paddle, the water smooth as glass, but I am finding it difficult due to my inner ear problem and I feel like I am going to tip over any moment. I ask some of the group to paddle beside me so I have a point of reference and I improve as the day wears on and ripples begin to appear on the water. We find the canoeists not far along in Colonel By Lake, alive, and with tents still up in a pasture field along the water, but not much sign of movement within. Could have been the beer. At one point in our journey, a lady vigorously rings a dinner bell as we paddle by, obviously in approval of our mode of travel. We paddle past artist Keirstead's home and take in the incredible beauty of this area. At Pete Crow Island, in River Styx, we find the small island almost totally devastated by fall webworm. Never before have I seen such an infestation. As we enter the narrows of River Styx, a juvenile black-crowned night heron is spotted in the branches of an overhanging tree, and we take time to observe it. Stopped at 9:30 a.m. along an undeveloped shoreline for a stretch and noted closed gentians and turtleheads in bloom, then on to Lower Brewer's Lock where we obtain limited success in obtaining our lock passes. We all pay our fees, but only a few can get their decals for the kayaks as lock attendant is unable to get into the safe. Some of us end up with just paper permits.

We have lunch here, and shortly the happy canoeists arrive and portage through. It is here when we learn that they are expecting to go to Jones Falls and end their trip at the Davis Lock. Upper Brewers Lock is just a short paddle away and we arrive there at 2:00 p.m. We're beginning to realize that my generous itinerary is going to leave us plenty of time each day on this trip to spend most afternoons exploring the areas at which we camp. We note with interest two gorgeous cruisers - must be worth a million each, at least. One is named Atwork Dot Knot. Norah's husband, Jack, was at the locks when we arrived. Norah provided a delicious stew, after some of the ladies showered at her son's. A young muskrat came visiting at the water's edge this evening. One boater tied up to the dock with his children actually touched him and fed him a small apple. The happy canoeists arrive and portage their way past our campsite. One cooler is opened briefly, and we see that it is full of beer and other beverages. We wonder how the one canoe can possibly hold the weight of all their stuff as well as three people. Cooler evening. Lots of jokes being told around the table tonight. We are beginning to loosen up.

Monday, September 01: *Sunny at first, but light, wispy clouds later*

Up before the sun again. Left Upper Brewers Mills after our camp breakfast, getting on the water by 7:30 a.m. There was a light mist on the water which was like a mirror on the lake. Southwest wind but almost dead calm until Cranberry Lake. Nice breeze pushed us along. We are impressed with the boaters who slow right down and wave to us as we approach them. Went under bridge at Brass Point; some of us admit to having a fondness for bridges. This one we scoot under with just enough head room, but it has to be opened for a boat coming along behind us. Passed by lovely cottages and farms along the way as well as some forested areas. River traffic was light despite it being a holiday Monday. Entered Cranberry Lake and Little Cranberry Lake. Stopped for a rest and a stretch just before Seeleys Bay, then pushed on for Jones Falls. Passed the happy canoeists. One canoe was stopping at a small island and you could hear the distinct clinking of empty beer bottles as they unloaded their gear. Another canoe was idling out in the middle of the lake so we interpreted the whole exercise as a pit stop, and carried on ahead of them. We arrive at Jones Falls at noon. Several boats waiting to lock through, but they manage to squeeze us all in, beside 6 large cruisers. A big treat was being serenaded by Canal man Raymond LaForest and his accordion who played for us as we were being elevated in the lock. Apparently, he does this on a regular basis each time boats pass through the locks. He collects accordions as a hobby.

Jones Falls is beautiful, but we encounter some problems here. The lockmaster says the 45-passenger Kawartha Voyager is expected in shortly and will need the lower dock and the entire area where we were hoping to camp. We are directed to a narrow strip of grass, bordered by the lock on one side and a sheer drop to the turning basin on the other side. Anyone using the washroom in the night had better be sure of the correct direction to head for as the first step will surely be a big one. We eat out tonight, some going to the Hotel Kenney, and others, including myself, going to a small eatery across from the hotel where we enjoy fish and chips.

We spend until dark touring around. A fellow wandered in with his two dogs on a leash, and bellows out, "Is this the Sprague Encampment?" Turns out it is David Boyd who formerly published a little magazine, "Houndstooth and Feathers," and has published a recipe book on apples and another on turkey. I had e-mailed him to say we would be here this evening, and since he lives just down the road, decided to drop in. We take in as many of the sights as we can of this historic location, visiting the Sweeney House - home of the first lockmaster. I make a trek to the old Jones Falls dam - a truly remarkable engineering feat for its day. As I accompanied David back out to Jones Falls Road, I notice three kids standing on a high bridge in the distance, evidently working up enough nerve to jump off the bridge into the water. The bridge appears to be about 40 feet in height, and when I return 10 minutes later, the boys are still there, but within a few seconds two of them jump, followed by the third, their legs and arms flailing all the way to the water. The canoeists arrive again and continue on their way. They don't appear to be as friendly toward each other now. The trip must be getting on their nerves. However, to their credit, we do see them take their garbage and empty beer bottles to the garbage containers.

At one of the locks today, we met a very funny 11-year-old blonde haired boy with glasses as their boat was going through the lock just ahead of us. He kept us entertained with many witty sayings including, "friends welcome - family members by appointment." All of us except Norah were rafted together in the lock, and the boy asked her, "why are you way over there by yourself? You're no ugly duckling." Then he and his friend did some acrobatics by hanging from the canopy bar of their boat. I am sure we will see him in Parliament or on TV one day. Kept us in stitches. George paid for camping tonight. We were aghast when the bill came to \$82.60, and the lockmaster claimed that he had gotten "a deal." Norah and Ingrid went down to the lockmaster to see why we were charged so much this time, compared to the previous two sites when we were charged the advertised \$15.00 group rate. He said the \$15 was only for groups such as boy scouts, etc. and that it was necessary to reserve ahead. We are supposed to see someone about it tomorrow at Newboro. Before retiring, most of us go for a swim off the dock in front of the Kawartha.

Tuesday, September 02: *cool and overcast*

Left at 8:00 a.m. Passengers aboard the Kawartha Voyager leaned over the railing on the upper deck with their coffees, and watched as we sank into our kayaks, and started our journey. They are leaving at 8:20 a.m. As we enter Sand Lake, the Kawartha catches up with us, but we take a short-cut through some channels and keep pace with them for a bit. Rather rough water, but calmed right down once we enter the Davis Lock. George is not feeling well at all. Susan gave him a Graval to settle his stomach. The Kawartha had just gone through ahead of us. Crossed Murphy's Bay and headed for Chaffey's Lock, but stopped first at a boat launch and sand beach just shy of the lock as George needed to get out. It was here where passengers from the Kawartha had disembarked for a few minutes and wandered down to the boat launch to speak to us once again. We're beginning to feel like some sort of novelty as people in general seem most interested in what we are doing. Sun has come out and turning a bit warmer. George stretches out on the grass for a while, and we go around the corner and enter Chaffey's Lock. After we exit the lock, the lockmaster receives a phone call, and hands the phone over to Norah. She spoke to Mary Ann Ovington, Visitor Services Officer with the Rideau Canal, and they spoke for several minutes, Norah is holding her ground for the advertised \$15 camping fee when it was suggested that a 50% reduction in the new fees be considered. Norah remains polite, but is like a velvet hammer. We are all very proud of her. Norah explained that most of us were seniors and had budgeted for the trip and felt we should pay only the advertised fee. Mary

Ann said she would phone her supervisor and meet us at Newboro.

We follow the shore of Indian Lake and pass The Isthmus where a small barge-like “ferry” is tied up on shore that connects the road from the Mainland to Scott Island. I think that is really cool, but hope that people using the road are aware that the road ends rather abruptly. Gorgeous scenery through here with beautiful homes. Cross Clear Lake, then into Newboro Lake. Stop on a pile of rocks called Whitehall Island to get my bearings. George is not at all well, and in my efforts to cut some distance, I almost take us in the wrong direction. There are no markers, but in the distance I see near the edge of a marsh what appears to be marker and assume that it is the right direction. Norah heads off in a different direction, and I send Ingrid to scout out the mysterious marker. I head for a numbered red marker on Fingerboard Island and Norah and I meet up and decide that is where we should go. Meanwhile Ingrid has disappeared dutifully in the distance, circles Trillium Island, realizes I was wrong, and emerges again on the horizon, chalking the experience up to exercise she needed. She is a very forgiving person. As we enter the Newboro lock, George is deteriorating and throws up in the lock.

Once through the lock, we find our camping spot at 2:30 p.m., located up on a fairly high knoll and we set up our tents. George stretches out on the grass and stays there until at least 4:00 p.m., eventually moving to the tent which seems to be too warm for him, but he says it’s okay. It’s very warm in the sun now, but it is beautiful spot to be. Meanwhile, Mary Ann stops by and speaks to Norah and me. George will be refunded his money, less \$15.00, and she will make arrangements for us to pay only \$15.00 at each of the remaining three locks that we camp at. We are all very pleased. Robert and Jane walk into Newboro, and Ingrid and I go in a little later on to explore some of the shops.

Just before dark, Jim Hair arrives, his wife bringing him, then taking the car back home. The last few nights, I haven’t been sleeping that well, due to pains in my rib cage and cramps in my left leg. Hope this evening is better as I want to get enough sleep to enjoy this trip.

Wednesday, September 03: *some wind, overcast*

Looks a bit like rain might be working up, although the sky isn’t that threatening. Last night, I slept like a log. Must be getting used to the hard ground. Left at 7:30 a.m.. Entered McNally’s Bay and swung right into Upper Rideau Lake. I haven’t been looking forward to this part of the trip as we had been cautioned about the chain of Rideau Lakes and the winds that can sweep across them. However, it’s very placid and calm. Passed another “Big Island” and I am beginning to feel like I am home. We head for the Narrow’s Lock. There is a larger boat ahead of us and the lockmaster has to open a swing bridge to allow it through. Really cool device for doing it. The bridge must be perfectly balanced as all he does is insert a rod into a recessed nut in the wooden base, leans against the handle, walks a brisk 360 degree circle, removes the device, and the bridge pivots effortlessly to the supports in a completely opened position. The lockmasters here are very friendly despite the lock seemingly in the middle of nowhere. This is actually the first lock where we are lowered rather than raised as the river (from Newboro) now flows toward the Ottawa River.

It is here where we say goodbye to Robert and Jane as they head back towards Westport where they will be picked up by their son, Richard. Once we enter Big Rideau Lake, the water becomes very choppy even though the wind doesn’t seem to justify it. I’m a little nervous as the waves are hitting my kayak from the side and I have to be extremely vigilant. The water conditions are trying on all of us, especially George but he soldiers on. We stop at what appears to be a private cove called Muskrat Hole where some of us get out for a stretch, then continue on into the uncertain conditions of Big Rideau Lake. We are getting tired, but Norah assures us that the marker in the distance is Murphy’s Point Provincial Park. We are far enough out into the lake that I miss the landmarks I am looking for to identify the start of the park property since we are fixating on the red marker at the tip of the peninsula. Finally, I see some picnic tables and George, Jim and I head into shore to investigate. It appears that we have overshot our destination and must backtrack. First I ask two passersby in a canoe for the location of Hogg’s Bay, for once I am in there, I know exactly where I am. I blow

my whistle for the others on shore to follow us since I know the campsite is some distance away and we have to backtrack, but I guess the wind direction was wrong as there is no response. Roger and I leave the rest of the party at the picnic area and head towards the boat launch in Hogg's Bay where the superintendent just happens to come along. He offers me a ride to the campground office, some distance away, helps with the permit, and drives me back to the boat launch. Roger and I continue backtracking a bit to the site he has suggested and discover to our delight that it is vacant. I plant the flag by setting up my tent, and Roger returns a kilometre down river to gather up the rest of the group. By now, the sky has become heavier, and a misty rain begins to fall, but even after two hours amounts to practically nothing. It is now about 1:00 p.m. and are proud of the time we are making. Can't believe the number of loons we are seeing and hearing and some in our group are having fun imitating them and getting responses. I approached one today to within 10 feet. Of course, the camera was in the back hatch.

Tonight we have a campfire, and despite a provincial park creed of not gathering wood from the forest, we do so anyway as we know George will appreciate the cozy fire on such a cool, damp night. It feels mighty nice. George is still not well and gets no sleep tonight at all, and drinks water constantly.

Thursday, September 04: *sunny, light south winds*

Lake is calm as we get up at 6:00 a.m., so it looks like we will make it okay into the next stretch of Big Rideau Lake. George announces that if he doesn't improve by tomorrow he is pulling out at Manotick. Several of us recommend Smith's Falls as it is clear he isn't about to improve any time soon. He phones his grandson and arranges to meet him at Smith's Falls. Some of us heard barred owls early this morning. But other critters were about too. A raccoon removed George's pack of snacks from the top of his kayak, opened the zipper and consumed his Granola bars, then moved on to his bag of Werther's Originals. The Werther's company would have appreciated this for a commercial, as it appeared the raccoon had unwrapped each candy individually and delicately dropped the spent wrappers into a neighbouring kayak.

I remember Norah telling me that she wasn't rushing us, but she was going to putter along ahead and we could catch up later as she was a slower paddler than most of us. We all left at 7:30 a.m. and after paddling for a few minutes realized that Norah was nowhere in sight. Through the binoculars I could see an object in the far distance and what appeared to be paddle ends reflecting in the sunlight, but couldn't imagine it was her so far ahead of us. I began to worry that it was someone else, and she was still somewhere in Hogg's Bay waiting for us, and hadn't seen us go by. Still we forge ahead, keeping close to the east shore to keep out of the increasing wind as much as possible. We are really worried as she has had no training in self rescue and hope she is okay. That a rescue helicopter is hovering over a nearby field doesn't make us any less anxious either. We lose sight of her at Rideau Ferry where we simply have to find a place to pull in for a few minutes. We talk to an angler just getting out of his boat at a dock, and ask whether he had seen a lone female kayaker pass by. For the first time this morning I smile, as he says, "sure did - she passed me out on the water!" Just for a moment, I envision an angler casually trolling and this lone kayaker speeding by him! I assume he means that he was anchored at the time she went by. We pull into a boat launch at Rideau River where we go to a store for provisions, and I make a few phone calls. When we return to the boat launch, Norah is there, and had been waiting for us on the other side of the bridge somewhere. We are so happy that she is okay. For a "slow paddler," we all wonder what she had for breakfast, as even after two and a half hours of paddling, we never did gain on her!

Beyond Rideau Ferry, Lower Rideau Lake is a bit tricky at times with the winds, but somehow we make it to Bacchus Marsh where the channel narrows and paddling becomes much easier. We go through the Poonamalie Lock. Still, there are some wide areas where the winds make paddling a challenge at times. Finally, three km later, we see the raised bascule train bridge ahead of us and we approach the detached lock at Smith's Falls. We round a corner and see George's truck in the park to the left and we say a tearful goodbye as we part company. Through the Smith's Falls detached lock and we stop at Victoria Park where Jack Edwards is there to meet us and help us out onto the dock. He has his new trailer at a campsite there, and Norah manages to get the vacant site right beside

him. Jack uses his truck to transport the kayaks to our site where they will be safe. The site is only \$10.00 and we all manage to fit on the site along with our kayaks with room to spare. Susan did our laundry and we all had our first real shower. Sure did feel good. Then we all went out to supper at a Chinese buffet within sight of our campsite. Not sure how much sodium is in their food, but I had two cups of coffee, a glass of water, a beer, and later a Pepsi, and never got up to pee once in the night! Susan's husband, Ken, had also come out to see us, which was nice.

Friday, September 05: *overcast all day*

Took our time getting ready to leave this morning, as we still had the rest of the locks in Smiths Falls to go through, and they wouldn't open until 8:30 a.m. These locks were hydraulically operated and were huge. Susan and Norah had a good sleep in the trailer; I felt they were missing the spirit of our adventure by sleeping on a soft bed, but I said nothing. However, Jim knocks on the door and asks for Norah. "I'm having my porridge. Thought you might like to come outside and watch!" As it turns out, I slept very well. I seem to be getting better at it now. Today was a lovely relaxed paddle as we headed for Merrickville, 23 km away. We passed through Old Slys Lock, Edmond's Lock and Kilmarnock Lock. At the latter lock, Susan gave us some entertainment as she tries to exit her kayak at the dock like most of us had been doing. Normally she prefers a shoreline, as do I. Roger does his best to instruct her how to do it, and how to set her rear on the dock first, then bring out her legs from the cockpit. Somehow the kayak began to slip away from the dock, and as Susan ever so slowly began to settle bodily into the water, Roger very dryly instructs, "On the dock Susan.....no not down there." Roger and Ingrid fish her out of the water and I miss a classic photo. Then through the three locks at Merrickville, arriving at 2:30 p.m. Beautiful little town with heritage buildings. The lockmaster is busy singing the praises of Merrickville and pointing out places of interest before we are even out of the locks. The lock operators must all phone ahead to the next lock, as they always seem to be aware that we are coming. Trip is rather uneventful. Despite channel narrowing, some large expanses of water are subject to wavy conditions. Lots of opportunity to eat out, but decide to eat in this evening. Along the way, we continue to see lots of waterfowl, mostly mallards, many of which use private docks as resting areas. The plastic owls, designed to discourage this practice, are looked upon by the ducks as amusement pieces. Cathy Anderson and Mile Carmody are supposed to be meeting us in the morning. Ingrid and Roger go into town to look around and perhaps shop a bit. I walk up to the Friends of the Rideau Canal gift shop and get a cute raccoon ornament for Nola and a video on Colonel John By.

Saturday, September 06: *sunny, light wind*

We all nearly froze to death last night. Temperature hovered at around 6 degrees. All our gear was soaking wet because of the dew. Quite a heavy fog. Before light fully arrives, I happened to notice a fellow some distance away, walking toward the turn basin between the locks. Because of the mist, and the fact that he was a couple levels up, I couldn't see that well, but presumed he was going for a brisk early morning swim in the turn basin as he was wearing no shirt. About 30 minutes later, Jim comes back from the washrooms, located at the upper locks, and asked what might be living in the murky, dark depths of the turn basin. He had found a large wet spot on the concrete at the ground level of the turn basin, and was concerned that some large, prehistoric animal had just hauled itself out of the water, and was waiting somewhere in the bushes. He couldn't imagine anything existing in this black abyss, eerily silent, mysterious, still shrouded in mist, and covered in a scattering of dead leaves from neighbouring trees. I enjoy a bit of mileage from his concern before admitting that a swimmer had been there a half hour earlier.

Mike and Cathy arrive with their canoe, and after shuttling their second car to Rideau River Provincial Park, where will be stopping this afternoon, join us, and we are off by 9:00 a.m. The sun soon warms us as we paddle past picturesque farmland and marshes. Many herons, ducks, kingfishers, etc. along the way. As the sun rises higher the mists clear and it becomes a long and hot paddle. Many boats on the water, some very short on manners as they fly by us, throwing large wakes in our direction. Much of the action is due to a bass tournament at Rideau Provincial Park when we arrived at 2:30 p.m. Along the way we pass through Clowes, Nicholson's and Burritts Rapids locks. It seems to be a long paddle and at one point I can go no further, and since I am ahead, I

pull in along a shoreline containing a distant house and over five acres of mowed grass. Looks like some sort of golf course in the making. I work my way through piles of algae floating in the shallows and create a stink not unlike that of rotting hog manure. The landowner has a gigantic pile of grass clippings about 10' X 10' and seven feet high, or so, right along shore, with much of it having spilled into the water. The attitude at this end of the Rideau seems to be one of indifference as we also pass by garbage floating in the water. Later, we pull in at a boat launch near Becketts Landing beside the Highway 44 bridge to have a stretch before paddling the last km to the park. Most of us are quite tired since we didn't get much sleep last night due to the cold. Finally get to meet the girl at the park office with whom I had spoken a couple of times about facilities at the park. She had been so helpful in sending me material and answering my questions. We pick a couple sites fairly close to the boat launch where we can easily carry our boats to the sites. Cathy and Mike supplied some treats. The showers tonight felt positively wonderful and eased the pain in my increasingly troublesome back to the point where I actually jogged back to the campsite! After Susan had emerged from her shower, a couple of boys (8 & 6) rode their bikes around and around the outside of the comfort station, making all kinds of noise and general commotion. As Susan emerged from the building, one of the boys rode right in front of her, and she hollered, "HEY!" He stopped short, and I told him that people are going in and out of the showers and washrooms, and someone could get hurt. As he rode away, he said to his friend, "B-I-C-H." We got quite a laugh out of that. Lots of noise as the bass tournament wound up Day 1 of their event. Trucks were pulling the boats and trailers out of the water, gravel scratching and constant sound of motors along with a loud PA system. Things finally quiet down after 5:00 p.m. We have a nice campsite dinner and a fire afterwards.

We are so pleased at how everyone gets along. Ingrid is of German descent and we constantly call her everything from Greta, Olga to Irmgard, and Helga. It's getting to the point where no one knows who's being addressed, as Ingrid constantly refers to Jim as David, for no other reason except "he looks more like a 'David'."

Sunday, September 07: *overcast, light winds*

Left Rideau River Provincial Park at 8:00 a.m. well after 30+ boats roared off into different directions. If we had been out there in the water at that moment we would surely have been run over as it was clear they were stopping for no one! We say goodbye to Jim as he is being picked up sometime today at the park. The river is like a mirror and we pass many of the bass fishermen, now comfortably stationed at their favorite pastures. We paddle along at a comfortable rhythm and pass under the 416 and carry on to James Island. Longest paddle by far at 27.6 km. We make two stops - one at Baxter Conservation Area at 9:30, and again at The Taylor Conservation Area at 10:30 a.m., then paddle endlessly until we get to Manotick at 1:30 p.m. This section is known as Long Reach. Pass Long Island and stop at the Long Island locks at 2:45 p.m., with 15 minutes to spare before the locks close for the day. Mike and Cathy take their canoe out before we lock through and leave as we are going through the locks, since they already have their car here, having moved it here from the park early this morning. Sun finally comes out at 5:00 p.m., and it sure feels good. There are Oriental people fishing at the dock, along with an East Indian group having a reunion or party of some sort. One young lad about 17, comes over as we are being lowered in the locks, and hollers, "Ahoy down there!" Scares me half to death as I hadn't seen him approach the lock. Mike and Cathy leave, and as we are having supper, a couple of canoeists, a man and his wife, portage through. They are on their way to spend the night in a motel in Manotick. Sounds good. Wonder if there's room for me.

Monday, September 08: *warm and sunny*

Another cool night. My back is really starting to bother me, and I guess I am moaning and groaning a bit. It was here when Susan expresses some concern, "I am a little concerned about how some of us are going to get our kayaks in and out of the water from some of these docks. We're down to one good man and a cripple." Although I should be offended, the off the cuff remark is extremely funny (and certainly true), and serves to provide some humour to the day as we are starting to get a little stressed. It has been a very long

paddle this past week, and some of us are ready to get off this river. We set out at 8:00 a.m. on the final leg of our journey. It becomes very warm, very quickly. Planes, one after another, are passing over as we make our way, presumably landing at the Ottawa International Airport. Pass through three sets of locks - Black Rapids, Hogg's Back, and finally, Hartwell's Locks by 1:30 p.m. where we will be spending the night. It was a nice paddle today in spite of a brisk headwind. We set up our tents on a narrow boulevard of grass between a paved walkway along the edge of the canal, and a well travelled bike path. The strip of grass is so narrow that the back edge of our tents is almost on the bike path. We crossed over the canal and ate in the Residence Commons of Carleton University. The pizzas and everything else sure tasted good after all the camp food. Susan calls and leaves a message for Ken to pick up her and Norrah tomorrow around noon. Roger has already made arrangements with his daughter Wendy to pick us up at 1:00 p.m. Susan has destroyed her MasterCard on the paddle from it being stored in her life jacket which caused a permanent bend in the card. She has not been able to use it on any of her trip and had to make her phone call to Ken by using change in the phone. The hum of bike tires and the thumping of joggers continues all afternoon past our tents and even into the night. We are warned by a couple of passersby that we should take our paddles into our tents due to questionable night time types roaming around. We get nervous and take pretty much everything in and also lash our boats together. We also ask a boater, tied up nearby to move his boat and his nice big doggie down to our end of the dock. Ingrid's tent is closest to the kayaks and she goes to bed with one hand firmly gripping a paddle. Although there is a raucous group down the path a short distance during the night, they don't make it up our way. The night passes without incident.

Tuesday, September 09: *warm & sunny*

We take our time with breakfast and eventually leave. Susan and Norah head off toward Dow's Lake, and Roger and I continue on down the canal to see the Parliament Buildings. Ingrid loses us at some point, and mistakenly heads into Dow's Lake, although she had planned to join us for the final leg of the trip. People along the canal are very friendly and very interested in our mode of travel. We meet a tour boat, which returns a short time later. I'm a little nervous as I am already top heavy with my gear, and the waves hitting the concrete walls of the canal cause an uncomfortable backwash and I also have a camera to worry about. We arrive at the flight of eight locks with no incident, but find that the docks are so high it is impossible to get out of our kayaks to take a picture of the locks. We return to Dow's Lake to find Susan and Norah already gone, and Ingrid sitting forlorn on a bench waiting for us. We decide to have dinner while waiting for Wendy, and I am in the mood for liver and onions. Turns out to be the finest liver and onions I have ever enjoyed. Covered with onions and a few strips of bacon, the liver falls apart on the plate it is so tender. Wendy arrives at 12:30 and we load up and head for home. About 30 minutes of silence in the truck is broken only by Roger dryly commenting, "I'm not used to having my knees bent like this – feels like I should have my legs stretched out in front of me!"

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