

practicing methods of paddling Ruth Elvedt discusses in her book, *Canoeing: A to Z*. We did the side stroke, which pulls the canoe sideways. We did the back stroke, which makes the canoe reverse course. We also did the classic forward stroke to go forward. We became quite proficient in the art of spinning the canoe around in circles from combining the methods Ms. Elvedt discusses in her book. The numerous people who were floating close by laughed at us and called us idiots because of our unique practice of paddling.

We interviewed Rich's uncle, Earl Keys, who claims to have floated The Current over a hundred times, prior to our departure for the river. He had warned us when we questioned him about his numerous float trips down Current River to be extremely careful when we came to a fast moving bend in the river called Wallace's Point. He said, "Wallace's Point is lined with so many root wads (root wads are clumps of tree stumps, roots, branches, leaves, and whatever else might float down the river) along the banks, and it has so many sunken canoes and sunken logs along it's main channel that safe passage through it is impossible - unless you stick to the right side of the bend."

As we neared the end of a long straight away in the river, I noticed the speed of the water was increasing exponentially. A look farther down the river told me what I had been dreading this whole trip now lay before us, and we were going into Wallace's Point from the wrong side of the river! "Rich! Back-right stroke! Back-right stroke! Hurry! Don't you see that we're going in the wrong way? BACK-RIGHT STROKE!" I bellowed as a rush of excitement and worry hit me.

"Hey, take it easy man. We can do this. We'll just paddle like crazy to the other side. Got it?" was Rich's unusually calm reply to my maniacal outburst. So we both put our backs into it and made it to the other side of the river; however, before we knew it we were moving faster than most people can run, and steering the canoe was becoming very difficult. We transversed the maze of root wads without incident, but a couple of other canoeists who were near us when we were on the wrong side were not so lucky. They had went into Wallace's Point still on the wrong side of the river and struck a major cluster of root wads which capsized their canoe and lodged it beneath one of the wads. They ended up having to swim to shore and wait for a water patrolman to cruise by and give them a lift.

The rest of the float proved to be very relaxing. We spent the remaining five hours of the float relaxing and enjoying the many wonders Mother Nature had provided the river with. We looked at the smooth rainbow-like palette of rocks that lay beneath the sparkling transparent waters of the river. We watched the fish catapult themselves out of the river in a spray of tear-like gleaming water to invite low flying insects home for lunch. We studied the movements of a couple of squirrels that leapt from tree - to - tree as if they were trying to catch one another. We both knew that we had accomplished something that day that would provide us with a little bit of pride in ourselves anytime we needed some cheering up.

Rich and I went on several more canoe trips that summer, and our love of canoeing only increased every time we set off on one of our "floating adventures." Earl Keys told us something really interesting towards the end of our interview with him, "I only have one friend I can truly trust. I can always count on this friend to be there for me and give me help when I need help the most. This great friend is my canoe."

Works Cited

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