

“...can work as they are paid.” 2009 Ouachita River Trip

So wrote William Dunbar on Wednesday, October 14th, 1804 as he described the attitude on the soldiers on the Dunbar-Hunter expedition. Dunbar recorded his thoughts a day after the expedition had left the river ferry at what is now Jonesville, Louisiana. This year’s trip down the Ouachita River was to cover the River from Duty Ferry to a boat ramp just south of the Tensas Cocodrie pumping station, leaving on Sunday and arriving on Thursday. However, the trip was called short on Tuesday due to a wet weather front moving across Louisiana on Tuesday and night and all day Wednesday. Below is the log of our trip.



John Ed Bartmess in 1804 military garb

“This year’s trip actually began Friday night, December 25th, when I picked up Harvey and Mary Alexander at the Little Rock Airport at 8:45 pm. They had a connection thru Detroit, Mi, just after the “underwear” bomber tried to blow up a Northwest/Delta flight. On Saturday morning, December 26th, I left the house at 6:30 am, stopped for gas, and got to Chuck’s house around 7:30 am. Marvin Boyce came over from Dardanelle, AR and the two of us left Chuck’s, with the keelboat Aux Arc in tow, and headed for Duty Ferry, Louisiana. Norajean, Earl,

Harvey, and Mary left Little Rock around 9:30 am in Norajean’s car. Marvin and I stopped for gas in Monticello, AR and Norajean caught up to us there

and we travelled together, with the next stop for gas and lunch at La Beouf le Roi (aka., Burger King) at Monroe, Louisiana. Mary has great eye sight, Harvey cannot hide anything from her, as Mary had spotted numerous things on the trip, one today and later a missing boat. After filing ourselves with prime beef, we continued to head down the east side on the Ouachita River and crossed the Ouachita River at the ferry at Duty, Louisiana. We arrived at Jim Bowie’s Relay Station & Restaurant, our designated rendezvous location, at 2:30 pm. The remaining crew and the three fellows from ZET, Inc. (Ovid, David, and



Marvin Boyce & Harvey Alexander tending the

John) had arrived one or two hours before we did. Bowie's is closed the month of December, but the new owner, Ray Nugent, allowed us to sleep on the porch and access to bathrooms. ZET, Inc. had fixed us a batch of "Road Kill Gumbo", with cornbread, sausage squares, sodas, chips, and the works. What a feast!! ZET also brought firewood and we were able to have a very nice campfire our first night out. The three wise men of ZET left us around 6:30pm so they could make the ferry crossing before it closed. Thanks ZET!! All were tired and crashed to bed around 9pm. The restaurant is ½ mile from the ferry crossing and at 5am the first vehicles started crossing, with the ferry blowing their horn every trip.



Rowing crew 'B': Ed Williams, Norajeane Harrell, Bill Runyan, Earl Harrell & Mary Alexander watch the sand dial

Monday, December 28th, 2009

Again the cooks rolled out of bed at 6:30AM and got coffee and water cooking. Not having to compete with doughnuts, this morning's breakfast was Cream of Wheat with dried fruit, brown sugar and butter for toppings. Emilee Green, who lives just north of the Park come down to talk with us about what we were up to and our plans. Emilee's husband Jo is a graduate of the University of Arkansas. We left the Corps Park at 8:40AM. Air temperature: 41 degrees, water temperature: 48 degrees. We had 17 miles to travel to Jonesville, LA. After quickly passing under the Harrisonburg Bridge we raised the mast. The wind again was favorable

from the North West. This time we raised the sail with no mishaps. The river is not a straight shot south, but rather winds its way back and forth. Thus, there were times we had to drop the sail. At noon we stopped for a long lunch on a very nice sandy beach. While sitting on a sand ledge on the beach, Ed fell asleep just sitting there. Too short a night sleep wise. Once back underway we were soon hailed from shore by a man looking for his jon boat that had broken loose from its mooring. About two miles north of Jonesville we found the jon boat lodge among some trees. We stopped and tired up the boat. However, at the time of the original hail, no one on the boat had written down the fellow's phone number. Thus, upon recollecting, we come up with ten different phone number combinations and none of them worked. Later, we informed the mayor and other officials of Jonesville about the jon boat and its exact location. Just prior to Jonesville, the Ouachita River turns into the Black River. In addition, the Tensa River enters two miles about Jonesville on the east and shortly thereafter the Little River on the west. Thus, there is a confluence of four rivers at Jonesville, LA. We arrived at Four Rivers Park in Jonesville at 2:30PM. Most of the Park had been inundated by recent flooding, thus, there was about a foot of sediment over most of the Park. We decided to setup our tents on high ground near the Park entrance and proceeded to unload and carry our tents, etc to this high ground, which is about 150 yards from the river. We setup two tents and a fly. Michael Bethea and Laurine Williams both

arrived, while coming from different directions; Michael from the north and Laurine from the east, at around 5:30PM. Firewood and a portable toilet were delivered. In addition, we were



Landing at Four Rivers Park: Jonesville, LA

given the key to a nearby Methodist Church for access to real bathrooms, etc. Local residents picked us up for supper. Tim stayed in camp while the remainder of us went to the local Hotel own by Mary Edwards. She and two other ladies had fixed us a wonderful supper of seafood bisque and various side dishes and desserts. After supper, Michael took Tim back to Duty Ferry to pick up his truck as all of his show & tell stuff, for the next day, was in his truck. While at the Hotel, we watched the weather channel and the forecast was for rain starting late the next day and all day on Wednesday. Back at camp we had a Camp Meeting and decided to end our trip

this year after working with the public the next day. Our trip this year would be three

instead of five days.

Tuesday, December 29th, 2009

Norajean cooked up a batch of biscuits & gravy and sausage for our breakfast. Very, very good! WE also had a good dose of chicory coffee. The crowd started coming into the Park around 10AM. We had a reporter from a local web news site and a TV reporter from Channel 5 at Alexandria, LA. Over the course of the day we had about 50 people come by. Michael made rope. Tim had his tent setup with lots of flora and fauna items to display and talk about. Norajean was cooking all day. Earl dressed out as a Caddo Indian, and was a big hit with the crowd. Harvey ran lead and cast round ball over the campfire. Ed and Marvin ran the keelboat. The remaining folks talked with the public about various and sundry things. At noon Michael took several of us back to Duty Ferry to get our vehicles and the trailer. When we got back we bro0ke camp and seven folks to the *Aux Arc* about a mile up the Little River to another local park that has a ramp. We got the *Aux Arc* pulled out and headed for home around 2:30PM. We stopped for supper and true to the forecast it began to rain and rain hard. Ed took the *Aux Arc* back to Chuck's and got home at 11PM. The Alexander's flew out on New Year's Day. A very good trip, cut short by the weather. In 2010 we have 75 miles to the Mississippi River to travel.



Earl, Harvey, Norajean, Bill, Tim, Robert, Mary, Larry, Marvin , and Ed at Four River Park in Jonesville, Louisiana