

7/29/08

Dear Roy,

Well today started out pretty sticky, but ended very mild. The sky is cloudless late, but there were a few “phloofies”, as we call them, right after work.

Bev had a good day at her volunteering at CommonBond. My day was busy. Not as busy as yesterday. This is the end of the month. It can go either way. Sometimes the closers have all their ducks in a row for the end of the month and the last few days will be quiet. Otherwise, it is pretty bad like on 7/30. Then the very last day and the first day of the next month is usually easy. Now there!!! I’ve jinxed myself. We’ll see.

I will start the rundown of last week – Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Let’s see. On Wednesday, the large group went to a water park in the AM. Four of us --- Bev, Dawn, Becca, and I – went kayaking. We drove into Wisconsin Dells --- a real tourist trap. There we had reservations at a small operation that specializes in kayaking, biking, and rock-climbing. Our fee included equipment for the four of us, a female guide, and a 20 minute van ride to a quiet place to launch our kayaks.

It was really quiet. We launched the boats at a landing northeast from the Dells where some small river – Lemonweir -- entered the Wisconsin. Besides ourselves, we only saw another couple canoeing and on guy in a fishing boat. There were a couple guys fishing where we took the kayaks out of the river.

We each got our own kayak and life vest -- life vest very important. The propelling was very easy. Winds were light and had no effect on these low-sitting boats. Canoes would have been a different matter. I felt much more stable in the kayak.

The current headed south and we cut across it from the west bank to the east bank. The rocky sandstone was all along the shore, but everything was quite wooded. Very little seemed to be just rocky bluffs like one sees in the Dells. The most dramatic rock effect seemed right at the water line. The moving current cuts under the stone for several feet. It is probably just a matter of time – winter, flood, and more current wear – before the each ledge of rock falls into the river taking trees with it. Thus a young river becomes an old river. Check it out in another 10,000 years.

It was really great just gliding along. It took a little while to catch on that we were not going to go back to our entry point. In other words, we weren’t going to retrace our steps. However, we did get experience moving up river and that didn’t seem like it would be a problem. I guess the plan was to show us more of the river.

In one cranny off the river, the guide pointed out an eagle’s nest. Huge. You should have seen the size of the sticks they carried for that nest. Then off to the right in the tree branches was a young eagle --- brownish in its youth before turning black with the white

head. It too was huge for being a young bird. Its body was at least two feet long!! Ultimately, it opened its wings and flew away back into the woods.

Near the end of our trek, we landed on a sandbar – a work in progress. We could not go where the guide had planned. Only two days before she had paddled where a portion of the sandbar now blocked our passage. It wasn't additional sand but the water level was dropping. After our short stretch, we paddled around a finger of the sandbar and got back into a cove where the driver and van picked us up. On that finger of sand were two or three men fishing – and I remembered Pa talking about fishing from sandbars in the Kankakee.

They did not want us to take cameras on the trip for fear of dropping them in the river. The guide was supposed to have a camera, but her camera batteries were dead. No pictures. Oh, well. No problem.

They sent us a shot taken when we returned to their outfitter establishment.



From left to right is Becca, Dawn, me, Bev and the guide.

Next we went for lunch. It was 2 or 2:30 PM, I believe. We went to a restaurant on the ill-fated Lake Delton which drained in the flood on June 9 or so. Food was good. Here are two shots of the lake from the deck of restaurant. The shot at the right looks the length of the lake. In the distance is a victim of the flood. A house broken in half. I





tried to enlarge that part of the picture below, but it may just look fuzzy. You can just enlarge so much.

Here is a shot taken to our left from the deck. It shows the grandstand used for the Tommy Barlett Water Show. It would pack in up to 5000 people a show. Now no one.

One place you can see a road culvert buried in the lake bottom where it has been since the lake was created. The dam did not break. The earth around one end of the dam just became saturated and got carried into the Wisconsin as it rushed by.



After lunch we rode off to visit a state park. It was called Roche-a-Cre – meaning something like “crack or crease in the rock.” It was a little bit of exercise

walking the 303 steps to the top. Not all were 8” steps, but the climb still seemed



higher than the about 225 feet that number of steps might equate to.

To the left is a photo of the bluff – only the top being visible. To the right is a picture of the sturdy steps. Thank heavens for the steps.

End of Wednesday? Not quite. The four of us went back to the cabin and waited for the others. They had gone to a water park. It was a big attraction. We drove by it and the lines were long. However, apparently it was worth it. Well, the others left the park late and went to an Applebee's restaurant. For various reasons that turned into a 2 hour stint. The rest of our clan did not get back till 10 or 10:30. Tired from the long day.

Thursday dawned a little cloudy, but it cleared to be another beautiful day. Let's see. Bev and I went biking. (Forgot, we went biking a bit on Wednesday evening.) We went to the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. Sam, Dana, and Steve went golfing. Several went horseback riding and two stayed at the cabin.

Bev and I drove to the Refuge and planned to ride the roads to several remote flowages. However, we found that the roads were gravel – not fine and hard packed, but larger gravel and loose. In less that a half mile we opted to drive the paved road which was primarily the road into the park headquarters. We biked about 11 miles in the park. The sun was pretty warm. This park has several whooping cranes (they are nearly extinct) nesting here. This refuge is the starting point of that strange crane-hugging adventure where the young cranes are bought to accept the sounds of a small aircraft engine. When it is time to migrate south to Texas for the winter, a small one person plane --- more like a kite with a motor --- serves as the lead "crane" to take the cranes south. They have been doing this for several years. When we were in Texas we saw their winter digs. You can't see them except with high-powered glasses. We think we saw them in the distance in a big wetland. We probably used our imagination.

In this refuge we only saw two tall racks in the middle of another large wetland to the east of our biking road. Telephone poles with frames attached at the top. One had a large nest. There were other cranes here, but maybe it was a whooping crane next.

We were biking around 10 or 11 AM. As I road down the road looking east at the slough, a deer bust out from taking a drink in the ditch on the west side of the road. 20 feet away. It headed back into the brush.

Going back to the cabin, I got out 10 miles from the cabin on County Road G and biked back as Bev drove the car. It was very light wind and the road was pretty empty and smooth. It was a good ride.

We ate a quick lunch and started getting ready for the evening party at a county park called Castle Rock on a lake that was called --- Castle Rock Lake.