

SHADES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

We spent the night at Tom Sawyer's campground. We did not see Tom's girlfriend, Becky, or for that matter, Huckleberry Finn, but we did see the "Big Muddy". The mighty Mississippi ran right by our waterfront campsite! At this point it is only about a half a mile wide. It was flowing by at about 6 to 10 mph and was really muddy from all the upstream rains.

The park was out of West Memphis, ARK. We did not know what to expect when we traveled through dilapidated residential neighborhoods, and up and over a gigantic levee and then through heavily forested lanes until we burst out onto the banks of the river! It was a full service Park and they had park benches all along the riverbank that one could sit on and watch the river traffic.



The traffic consisted of huge barge conglomerates pushed by tremendous tugboats. These boats are powered by locomotive diesel engines and sound like railroad trains. They push these barge trains up and down the river at maybe 5 or 6 mph against the current. Traveling down the river they have to reverse the propellers to hold back the speed of the barges. Each barge is about 100 feet long and they are tied 5 and 6 together, end to end, and then the same number is tied beside this group forming a doublewide group!



The river at this point makes an "s" turn and it takes a little "watchin" to see how they make the turn. Going downstream they keep the barges at the speed of the current and they let the current carry the nose around the corner as the river goes. Going upstream, they power and turn the tug rudder to make the corner.

We have crossed the Mississippi many times. We have sailed the river on a paddleboat, but we have never taken the time to just sit on the banks and look at the life on the river itself. We would definitely return to here.

The morning departure planned for a 350-mile day. We wanted to stay at our home park in the Coast-to-Coast system. It is named Hidden Cove and it was sure the right name. We went from freeway, to State Route, to County road, to private road, in 36 miles. Once we got here, the park is beautiful. It is right on the lake!

This morning, we find ourselves smack in the middle of the path of Hurricane Bill. It is raining buckets all night and all day! This was unplanned!

Dave & Bonnie

7/1/03

