

Earl's Diary - July 13, 2015

Dear Loyal Readers;

I am in Coastal Oregon this week for the annual Oregon Coast Fiberglass Gathering. Many of my loyal readers will remember that last year I traveled north on Highway 101 - as far north as the Sea Lion Caves, and to visit sights in between. This year I traveled south on Highway 101 to the city of Gold Beach. The purpose for this trip was to take the 104 mile (roundtrip) jet boat trip on the Rogue River.

My reservation was for 8:00am on this Tuesday morning. The instructions were to arrive at the dock by 7:30. Gold Beach is 54 miles south of Bandon and Bullards Beach State Park, so I had to get up at 5:30am to meet the 7:30 requirement. Now you have to understand my arising habits. For me, 5:30am is the middle of the night! However, I persevered and made the 5:30. After doing the usual morning chores, I left for Gold Beach at 6:30.

I arrived in time to see the swarm of people lining up to board the boat. Come to find out, it was not one boat but three going all the way!!!! Not only were there three boats, but several others. You see, Jerry's Jet Boats has three different mileage destinations on the river. There's 64, 80, and 104 mile trips. Now that seems like an awful lot of miles, but when you think about it, it's all round trip. What goes up, must come back!

I entered the office, picked up my ticket (a red one) and entered the waiting line with about 90 other people all eagerly waiting to clamber aboard one of the waiting vessels.



The day was bright and clear with very few clouds in the sky. As we headed out of the harbor and up the river, the first thing I found was I couldn't wear my hat because of the wind whistling all around. So, even though I had my baseball hat on, it soon disappeared under a blanket for safe keeping. I took the option of sitting in the last row of seats figuring I might keep a little drier that way. Hooray! We were on the way for our seven and a half hour ride on the Rogue River!



Disclaimer: These are not my own photos. I was hesitant to take my expensive camera on a potentially wet voyage. You see, apparently part of the fun is to get wet! I purchased a real simple \$20 camera at the local store assuming that would suffice for the trip. NOT!! One of the important warnings that came with the camera stated (several times) DO NOT REMOVE BATTERIES FROM CAMERA! Pictures taken previously will be lost. About half mile into the trip, for some reason, the battery compartment came open. I figured, what's the use and relegated the cheapy camera to my shirt pocket for the rest of the trip! I found some of the same photos that I might have taken anyway on the internet. They serve as a vivid reminder of my trip anyway.



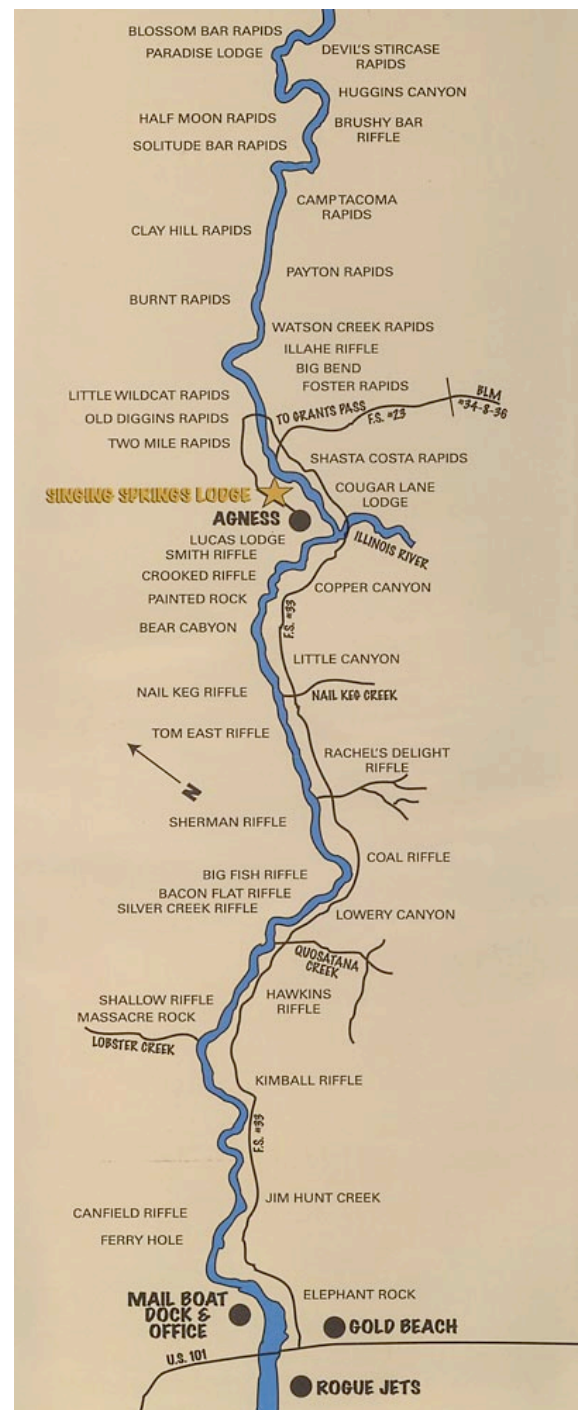
This is not us taking off, but our red boat looks just like it.



Our first sight was the Highway 101 bridge as we glided under it. It was not a silent ride as the water poured out of the jet engine's water tubes.

Here's your geography lesson for today: The Rogue River begins at Boundary Springs on the border between Klamath and Douglas counties near the northern edge of Crater Lake National Park. Although it changes direction many times, it flows generally west for 215 miles from the Cascade Range through the Rogue River - Siskiyou National Forest and the Klamath Mountains to the Pacific Ocean at Gold Beach, Oregon. Arising at 5,320 feet above sea level, the river loses more than 1 mile in elevation by the time it reaches the Pacific.

It was one of the original eight rivers named in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, which included 84 miles of the Rogue, from 7 miles west of Grants Pass to 11 miles east of the mouth at Gold Beach. In 1988, an additional 40 miles of the Rogue between Crater Lake National Park and the incorporated community of Prospect was named Wild and Scenic. Of the river's total length, 124 miles, about 58 percent is Wild and Scenic. The Rogue is one of only three rivers that start in or east of the Cascade Range in Oregon and reach the Pacific Ocean. The others are the Umpqua River and Klamath River. These three Southern Oregon rivers drain mountains south of the Willamette Valley. The Willamette River and its tributaries drain north along the Willamette Valley into the Columbia River which starts in British Columbia rather than Oregon.



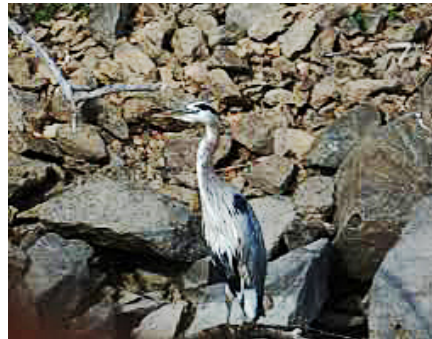


The first portion of the ride was on the wide slow flowing portion of the river. However, a jet boat ride is never what you would call slow as the motors poured gallons of water through its tubes.

Several times we came to a stop to see some of the wild life occupying the river banks. We were able to observe six to eight inch turtles sunning themselves on rocks. I'm assuming they must be water turtles because water was surrounding the rocks. Several species of birds seen were blue herons, Canada geese, and swallows making their homes under a bridge. We were pleased to see a couple of bald eagles observing the landscape below. I suppose they were looking for meals for their young. One of the nests had two young ones sitting on the edge flapping their wings. Our guide suggested they were about to learn to fly. We also observed several osprey nests located in tree tops as we glided by.



We observed many signs of habitation along the first few miles of the trip.



Jerry's Rogue Jets was established in 1958. Three brothers Jerry, Alden, and Court Boice revolutionized commercial jet boating. They were the first install and use hydro-jet pumps in commercial passenger boats on the Rogue River. Jerry's Rogue Jets became the first commercial jet boat tour company in the United States.



Hydro-jet technology was important because it allowed boats to safely travel in just inches of water while carrying a full load of travelers. The Rogue River is notoriously shallow and rocky. With the advent of the hydro-jet no longer did components of the propulsion system protrude below the bottom of the boat. A hydro-jet draws water in through an intake with an impeller, mounted flush to the bottom of the boat, and then a propeller forces the water out through a nozzle mounted from the transom of the boat. The volume of water being projected from the boat is what gives the thrust forward.

Steering is accomplished by directing the water nozzle to one side or the other. The hydro-jet was a major factor in revolutionizing jet boating on the Rogue River.

The original Rogue River jet boat tour traveled 32 miles upriver to the town of Agness, Oregon, known as the 64 mile round-trip. A lunch break at one the Agness lodges was routine before the boat traveled downstream back to Gold Beach. In the mid 1970's adventurous boatmen began testing their nerves in the 20 mile section of river upstream from Agness. In this section the river becomes rocky, narrow, and technical in terms of safely navigating a jet boat. It was considered by many to be not navigable. It wasn't long before Jerry's and competing jet boat tour companies began establishing themselves as experienced whitewater jet boat pilots.



At the thirty-two mark we stopped for a 25 minute break to climb the bank and head for restrooms and a snack shop for snacks, drinks and water and to stretch our land legs again. Then we continued on up the river for another 20 miles.



As we continued up the river, it became more narrow and we were passing by more rocks down by the river. Rapids also became more prevalent.

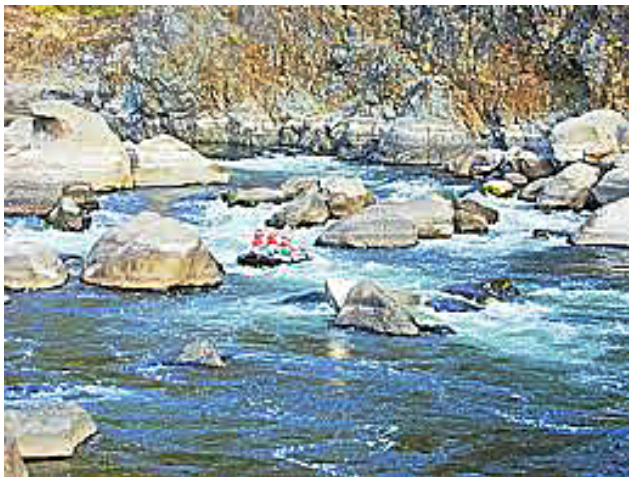
Shortly before reaching the turn around point we passed by Paradise Lodge overlooking the river. Our pilot mentioned we would be stopping on the way back to let two over-nighters off, and to pick up 6 who were returning down the river after a night's stay.



Part of the fun on the trip is getting wet! And THAT we did! We did ever so many, of what I would call “wheelies” or 360’s, or donuts. The pilot (that’s what they call the guy who drives the boat), guns the engines and does a sharp 360 degree turn across our own wake. Just imagine, in the picture above, where does all that water go as we head straight into it! Yep, a shower for everyone in the boat - even we who were sitting in the back row!



Watch out! Here it comes! Everyone from the front to the back of the boat enjoyed(?) the shower.



Finally at Blossom Bar we had to stop and turn around. There were too many rocks in the river to proceed safely. The rapids in this section of the canyon are rated as class 4, and motorized vessels are not permitted. Anyway, if they were, our boat would not fit between the rocks. Now is the good time to turn around a head for home.

This section of the river is also used by floaters. It was necessary for us to slow down in order not to sink them with our giant wake.





Here's your history lesson for today:

On our way downstream, we passed another boat heading upstream.

In the early 1800's settlers started arriving in the Rogue River Canyon. These settlers established gardens and orchards, kept horses, cows, and other livestock, and received occasional shipments of goods sent by pack mule over the

mountains. Until the 1890s, these settlers remained relatively isolated from the outside world. In 1883, one of the settlers, Elijah H. Price, proposed a permanent mail route by boat up the Rogue River from Gold Beach. The Post Office Department resisted the idea for many years. In early 1895 it agreed to a one-year trial of the water route, established a post office at Price's log cabin at Big Bend, and named Price postmaster. Price's job, for which he received no pay during the trial year, included running the post office and making sure that the mail boat made one round-trip a week.

In 1897, the department established a post office near the confluence of the Rogue and the Illinois rivers. The postmaster named the office *Agnes* after his daughter, but a transcription error added an extra "s" and the name became *Agness*. Propelled by rowing, poling, pushing, pulling, and sometimes by sail, the mail boat delivered letters and small packages, including groceries.

As of 2015, jet boats, functioning mainly as excursion craft, still deliver mail between Gold Beach and Agness. The Rogue River mail boat company is "one of only two mail carriers delivering the mail by boat in the United States"; the other is along the Snake River in eastern Oregon.

As we neared our second stop in Agness, the boat dock at Singing Springs came into view. This was to be our one and one half hour lunch stop. The beautiful restaurant with its large wooden deck sitting atop a large bluff overlooking the river beckoned us forth. I found an empty spot across from two ladies from Portland. Before I saw what they had ordered, I ordered a plain ordinary hamburger. When their orders arrived with barbecue beef brisket sandwiches, I wished I had ordered the same thing. However, the waitress had already placed my order. Oh well! I did enjoy the homemade blackberry cobbler with a single scoop of ice cream on it. That was way too much decadence for me! It's a good thing we had an hour and a half to let things settle!

We boarded the boat at 2:00 and sped downstream once again. With the wind whistling in our ears we passed landscapes we viewed earlier in the day. The jet boat trip down the river took one and one half hours. We tied up at the dock at 3:30. Our land legs started to appear once again as we headed to our respective destinations.

It was a most interesting trip and I'm certainly glad I made the effort to go. I thank all my loyal readers for the chance to relive my adventure with them and thanks for coming along with me on this trip - - Earl