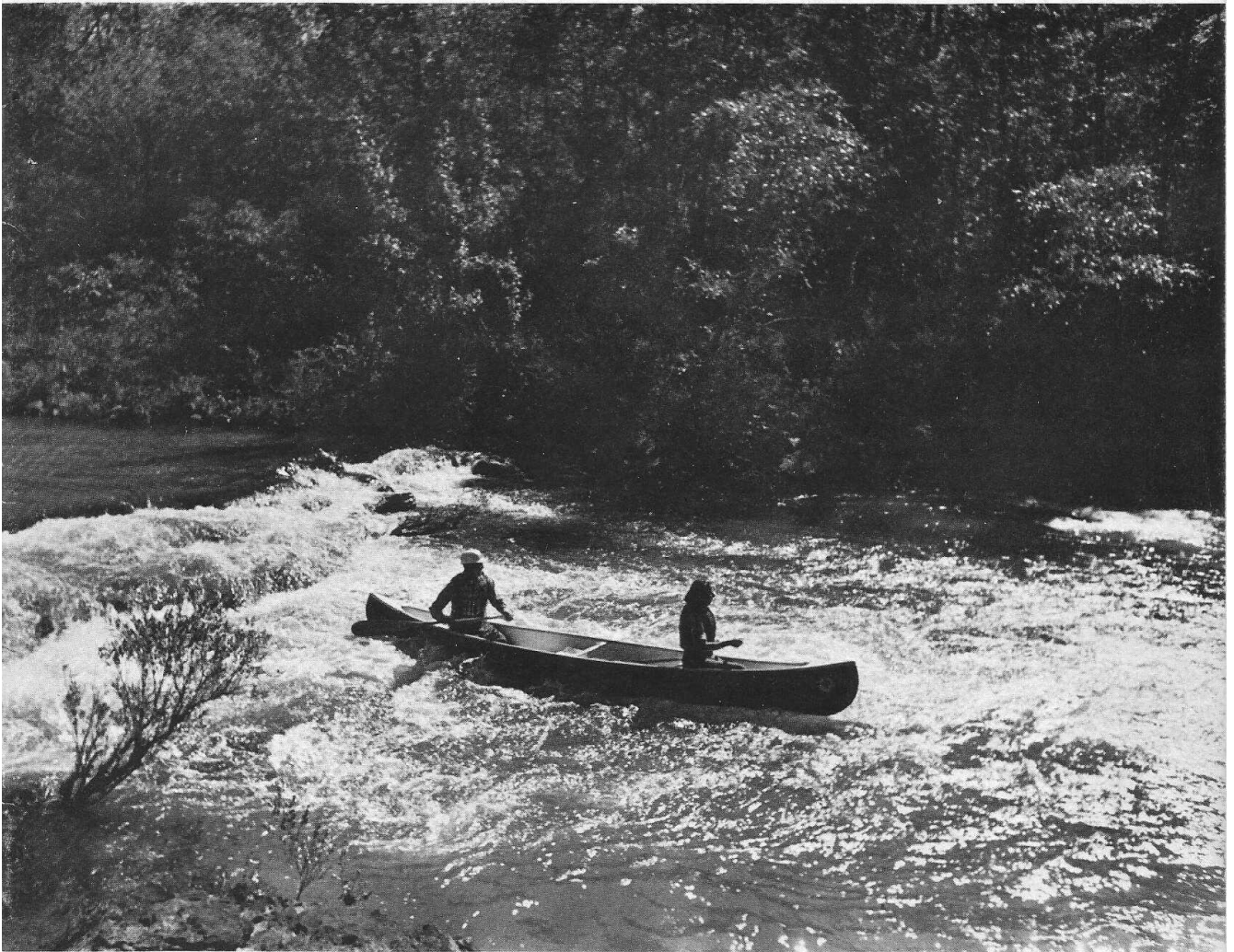


The MIGHTY MULBERRY



The Mighty Mulberry—Neil Compton

Price \$1.00

A Canoeing Guide

THE OZARK SOCIETY

Conservation

Ozark Society was founded in 1962 by a group of concerned, conscientious Arkansans in order to preserve some of the prime natural areas within the state. Under the able leadership of Dr. Neil Compton of Bentonville, the organization was instrumental in securing National Park status for the Buffalo River in March, 1972. During the ten year struggle to save the Buffalo from dams the Society became aware of other natural resources within the state in need of preservation. Today Ozark Society with its 1700 members is active on many fronts helping solve environmental problems. Bound together by a common concern for all

Education

conservation issues Ozark Society is now a strong voice against needless channelization of our streams, endless damming of our vanishing rivers, complete annihilation of our forests through rampant bull dozing, clear cutting and indiscriminate spraying of hard woods. God made Arkansas a place of exceptional beauty—Ozark Society is dedicated to keeping it that way through preservation of our remaining wilderness.

We invite you to join us in this goal. Your membership in The Ozark Society, the most active conservation organization in the Interior Highlands, will increase our strength and open new horizons of "Conservation,

Recreation

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About the Authors

Margaret and Harold Hedges live in the beautiful Buffalo River headwater country above Boxley. Before moving to Arkansas in 1968, they made countless weekend journeys from Kansas City to enjoy the rare, wild, rugged beauty of the Boston Mountains and canoe the clear, sparkling streams.

The Hedges form a team in conser-

vation circles in Arkansas and are dedicated in their efforts toward the preservation of our remaining free flowing streams and wilderness areas. Currently, they are working for the establishment of the Upper Buffalo Wilderness Area.

The Mighty Mulberry by the Hedges is presented by the Ozark Society for your enjoyment.

The Ozark Society

Send your check today to Box 2914, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203 or write for information. Memberships are for the calendar year. They are regular or family, \$5.00; contributing, \$10; sustaining, \$25; life, \$100. Student membership, \$2.00.

PUBLICATIONS

THE BUFFALO RIVER COUNTRY, by Ken Smith, available in paperback for \$6.95 and handsomely cloth bound at \$10.95 from The Ozark Society Book Service, Box 722, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701

The following may be purchased from The Ozark Society, Box 2914, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203. Inquire for quantity discount.

BUFFALO CANOEING GUIDE by Margaret and Harold Hedges, price \$1.00

THE MIGHTY MULBERRY, A CANOEING GUIDE by Margaret and Harold Hedges, price \$1.00

REPRINTS FROM OZARK SOCIETY BULLETIN ON CANOEING AND HIKING AND RELATED MATERIALS, price \$1.50, no quantity discount.

MAPS

Two United States Geological Survey Topographic Quadrangles are available at 75 cents each from the Arkansas Geological Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas 72204. Those in or near Fort Smith will find the Quadrangles available from the various Blue Print or Reproduction Companies.

The WATALULA QUADRANGLE is of the 15 minute series with a scale of 1 inch to the mile. It covers most of the river from about one and a half miles above Redding to near the Crawford County line. The MOUNTAINBURG SE, a 7½ minute, 2.6 inch to the mile quadrangle covers the lower portion of the river.

The Ozark—St. Francis National Forests, Russellville, Arkansas 72801 will furnish maps of THE MULBERRY RIVER and THE OZARK NATIONAL FOREST, ARKANSAS for the asking.

The General Highway Maps of Johnson, Franklin, and Crawford Counties may be purchased at 50 cents each from the Arkansas State Highway Department, Box 2261, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203 or from the County Surveyor or Engineer in the county seat of each county.

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The authors running Sacroiliac at high water—Joe M. Clark



THE MIGHTY MULBERRY

Margaret and Harold Hedges

The Mulberry River rises in northwest Arkansas on the south slope of the Boston mountains between the little towns of Red Star and Ozone and generally flows westward. Within a few miles of the birthplace of the Mulberry five other prime Ozark streams have their vague beginnings. Big Piney rises on the south slope of the Boston Mountains just east of the Mulberry and, like the Mulberry, empties into the Arkansas. The other four rivers rise on the opposite side of the watershed and empty into the White River many miles to the north. Thus the Ozark National Forest harbors the origin of all or part of Mulberry, Big Piney, War Eagle, Kings, Buffalo and White.

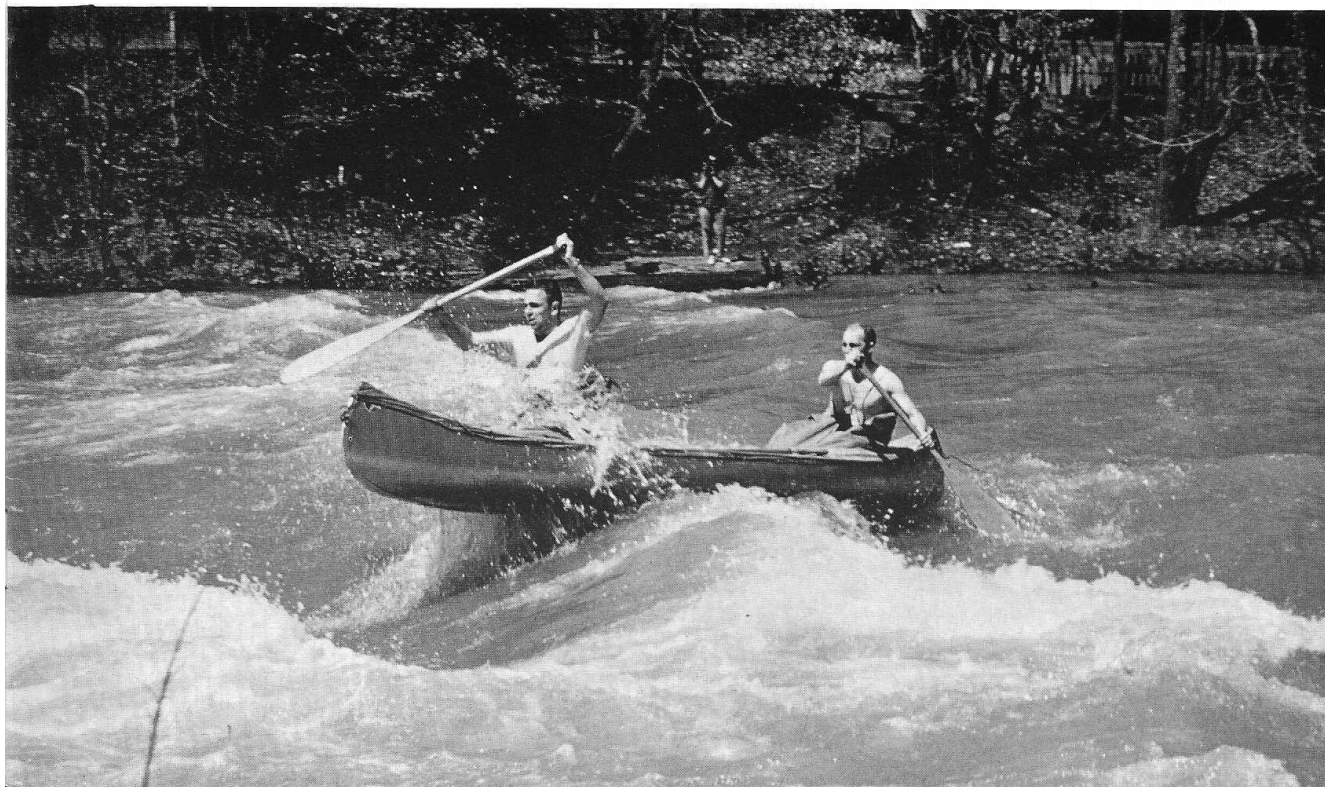
While all six of these rivers rise at approximately the same elevation those that drop into the Arkansas valley on the south are generally steeper and shorter than those whose waters flow into the White River drainage. The Mulberry is only about 70 miles from its origin to its mouth with some 50 or more miles of

canoeable water. In the canoeable portion the average drop of the river is about 12 feet to the mile. It is steep on its entire course and only flattens when it nears the mouth in the vicinity of the town of Mulberry. This stream is characterized by numerous willow jungles, sharp blind turns, enormous rock gardens and a beautiful flow of milky blue green water as fine as any in Arkansas. It is a moody river ranging from placid to violent. It can be extraordinarily serene one day and wild as a tiger the next. It can lie motionless for days barely flowing from pool to pool when the sun of summer burns hot and dry upon its watershed. Likewise in very early spring it can run wild and free for an equal time, crashing against the natural obstacles attempting to slow its course. In dry times the willows sprout, creeping across the gravel bars barricading the channel. These willow roots grow deep and strong against the day when rains will come and tear at the river bed. Often the boulders that dot the stream bottom are shoved about from the force of

these periods of very high water, and the rapids are increased or decreased according to nature's mood. Like many wild things upon this earth the Mulberry is not to be taken lightly. It is strong, mighty, determined - a river wild and free. It does not take kindly to efforts to capture or control it. The Mulberry is powerful, self-willed and unyielding. Ride on it, flow with it but always respect it.

Canoeing the Mulberry is great sport. It is wild, fast, beautiful, challenging and changing. It is never dull, never disappointing and never the same. It offers an infinite variety of fast water, slow water, roaring rapids, willow jungles, rock gardens, choppy chutes, twisty channels - all sandwiched in between pools of deep green milky water that is serene and beautiful. When you head for the Mulberry with your canoe, be sure you have had ample canoeing experience on other fast rivers. Don't try any of it without a life jacket and at least one other support canoe. Temper your urge for white water thrills with good judgment.

Air-borne momentarily by the forward thrust at Whoop and Holler, these paddlers ride in the "security" of a decked canoe.





One of the greatest challenges for the canoeer on the Mulberry is twisting around Sacroiliac.

If you've never run the Mulberry before you'll need a way to judge whether or not the river is too high or too low for good canoeing. Unfortunately, all past attempts to install an easily readable gauge on the upper part of the river have failed and you must rely on your own assessment of the river. If the water is muddy, full of debris and moving like a fast freight train you will know that it is in flood and not safe for any canoeist regardless of his ability. If the shoals are showing more rocks than water you will know it is too low.

Most canoeists consider the Hiway 103 bridge near Oark the topmost put-in point on the river. It can be canoed above this point but higher on the river in this case doesn't mean better. There is an easy put-in just south of Oark that will add a mile or two to your trip but the river is neither faster nor steeper just above Oark and many think it has more thrills after the junction of the Little and Big Mulberry. The bridge at 103 is an ideal put-in spot with an easy grade to the river, and it provides ample room to pull off the road and park your car.

The swift current here is typical of the river for the next few miles and the willow jammed turn immediately below the bridge is just one of many such spots along the Mulberry.

The Mulberry is divided nicely by Hiway 23 that runs north and south between Brashears and Ozark. This important crossing is the point that canoeists use to separate the upper and lower Mulberry. This point, known as Turner Bend, is a logical beginning or ending of a canoe trip and it is here that canoe history began on this fine river. No doubt men have been afloat on the Mulberry for many, many years but information about the users of the river is scant and mostly by word of mouth. Years ago it was used for rafting logs to the mill but not until the late 1950's is there any written account of running the Mulberry in a canoe or kayak.

When we first laid eyes on the Mulberry and made plans to explore it there was no one that could tell us whether or not it was a floatable stream. Few good maps were available but it appeared to be a remote and wild river even though it

looked pretty tame at Turner Bend when we first glimpsed it in the extremely low water of early August of 1958. Canoeists from Kansas City finally put on it in the spring of 1959 and their writings of the thrilling four day trip from Turner Bend to the town of Mulberry are classics. You may wonder how they could spend four days running from Hiway 23 bridge to near the town of Mulberry, a distance of not more than 28 miles, but they used every safety precaution on this exploratory trip and they scouted every rapid on foot before running it in their canoes. Many of the names now applied to the rapids were the results of events of that first trip down the roaring water of the Mulberry. Since that day there have been many, many runs on the Mulberry, and, eventually canoeers ventured upstream to determine what was in store for the white water fans above Turner Bend. To this day we are still making comparisons between the "upper" Mulberry and the "lower" Mulberry as far as degree of difficulty, speed of the river and challenge to the paddler are

concerned. Probably the net result of these constant comparisons is that the best part of the river is the part you are canoeing at the moment.

The easiest way to describe the Mulberry between Oak and Turner Bend is to quote from our log of a trip made on April 28, 1969, following a two inch rain on the previous day. The trip was organized by Bob Strosnider of the Ozark National Forest Office at Russellville with a camera man from a Little Rock TV Station along as guest.

"When we arrived at the bridge many of the Forest Service people were already there and several canoes were at the water's edge. There were rounds of introductions, the paring of partners (trying to put an experienced man in each canoe), waterproofing the lunches, fastening life belts, arranging car shuttle etc. Things went smoothly and we were ready to shove off on schedule. Harold (Hedges) was to paddle Jack Hallohan from TV 4 Little Rock and I was to paddle with Joe Clark (editor of the Ozark Society Bulletin and a good personal friend). Others in the crew included Harold Alexander (Arkansas Planning Commission) and his secretary, Joan, a darned good secretary, as Mr. Alexander put it, but a pure novice when it comes to canoes. Leonard Heman of Independence, Mo., a veteran solo canoeist with many Mulberry trips to his credit, was along too. Forest Service accounted for the remaining canoes - 8 in all.

Joe and I had elected to use a 15 ft. Grumman thinking it would be more maneuverable in the fast water but discovered at the beginning that it was a poor craft for such heavy water. The camera man perched himself on the bridge and Leonard Heman shoved off from the gravel bank, skinned past the willows on the left and disappeared around the bend in the river. Joe and I followed but without Leonard's graceful success for we had underestimated the force of the water towards the willows and rather than risk being swamped at the start, jumped clear of the canoe and pulled back for another shot at the first shoal. On the second try we did manage to get free of the willows but not with ease and already we were having some misgivings about our choice of this 15 ft. canoe. The river continued to be swift with many willow tangles and was much like a slalom course until we reached the area known as Three Chutes. At this point we scouted the river on foot but no way seemed right—trees were down, drift was piled high and the ever present willows blocked the channel. The center was picked as the lesser of three evils. We inched our

way into it only to find a sharp left turn with a narrow channel overhung by a heavy dead limb. It looked virtually impassable to canoes but some thought it could be run. Jack Hallohan walked to a good photographing angle and Leonard elected to give it a whirl solo. He managed beautifully so I let Harold (Hedges) persuade me that it could be done with two in a canoe. Abandoning my partner, Joe, I climbed into the bow of Harold's canoe and we crashed into the swirling water. We made it (I should have known we would for Harold rarely misjudges a riffle he has studied in advance) but I met my Waterloo as we pulled towards the bank. Underestimating the depth of the water and with no thought for the consequences I jumped from the bow of the canoe only to find myself armpit deep in ice water! Humiliated I returned to the 15 footer where Joe and I agreed to walk our canoe past the sharp turn and start our trip anew in the pool beyond.

Sometime after lunch at Wolf Pen and just below the junction of the Big and Little Mulberry I recall asking my sternman if the river was as exciting as he thought it would be and he answered that he really had expected it to be much worse than anything we had encountered up to that moment. No sooner were the words spoken than the canoe just ahead of us began to rock, splitting the huge haystacks in dead center before plunging into an enormous "hole" in the river. It was Leonard and he seemed to be taking a terrible beating as he disappeared into a giant

trough. With little time for planning our strategy we veered slightly to the left hoping this might prove less violent. Our short craft twisted and lunged, we took on water. My heart was in my mouth for we now were rocking out of control and I screamed to Joe to start to bail. Joe fell to his knees, lowering the bow into the haystacks like a scoop in a sugar bowl. We were nearly gunwale to gunwale with water. I knew our hour had come and soon we would be over and under. I made one tremendous draw towards the shallows at our left just as Leonard reached the bank. I yelled for help. Poor Leonard, trying to get his canoe under control and into the bank and all the while I am insisting that he abandon ship to come to my rescue. With the next lunge of our canoe we were all but over and I screamed again to Leonard. He came leaping through the water, reached us just at the point of no return, grabbed our bow and pulled us safely ashore, a "ship wreck looking for a place to happen!" No sooner were we ashore than I looked up to see Harold Alexander standing in the great trough. His bowman, Joan, and his canoe were both missing. Suddenly I spied the canoe almost entirely submerged and moving with the powerful current like an angry silver whale. Joan was not in sight but others assured me she had made it ashore and was safe. Others began to come through what I now recognized to be a rapid "PHD" (piled higher and deeper). No one else flipped but many filled with water, some came through sideways with hands on the

It's a downhill all the way at Picture Book Rapids.



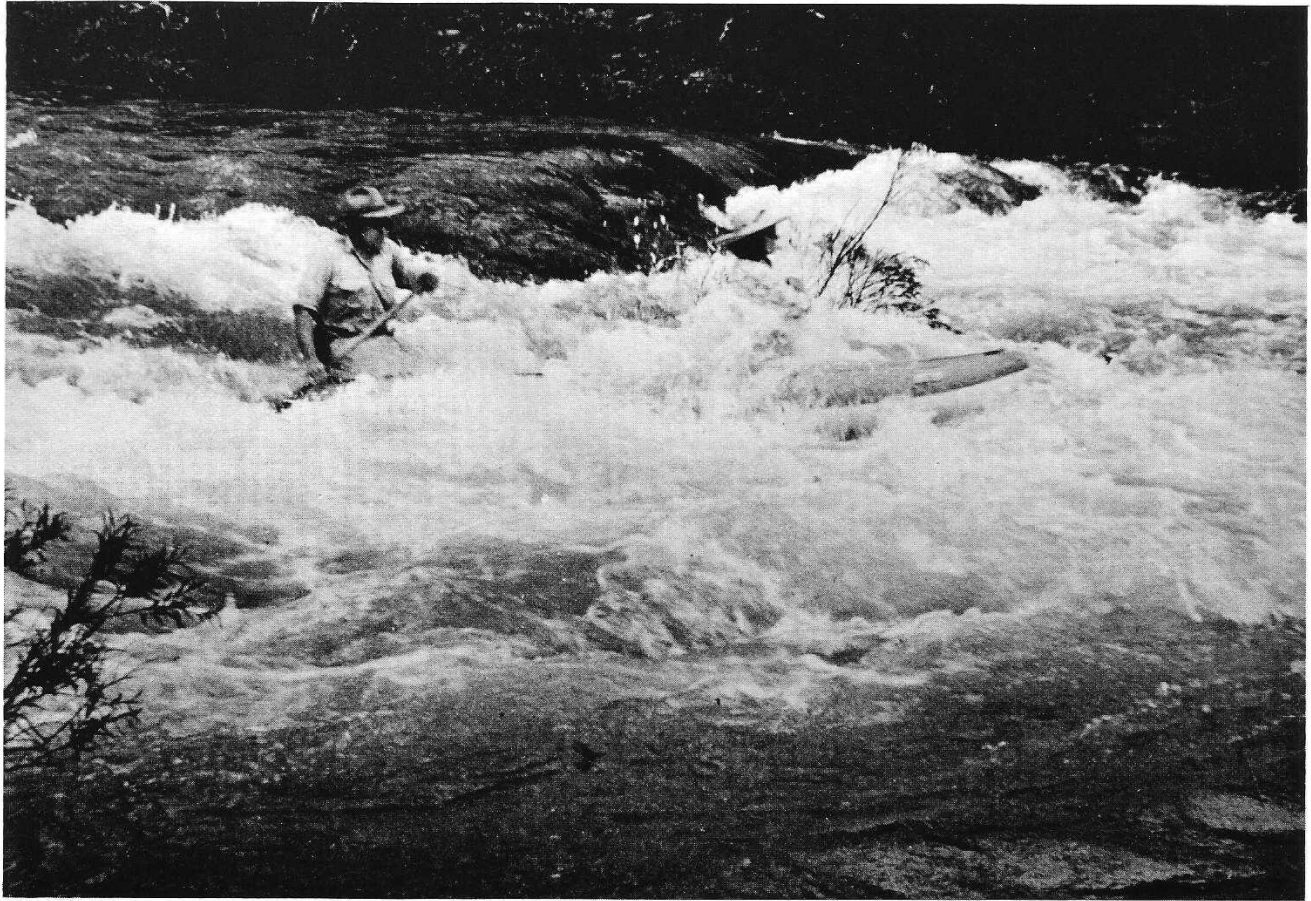
gunwales and no paddles in sight. Eventually we all pulled ashore, emptied the water from the canoes, re-hashed the wild run we had just survived and anticipated the rapids yet to come with rising excitement. With some apprehension we shoved off in the swift river, ready as we'd ever be for the jagged rocks that lay between us and our day's destination. The next spectacular event occurred in a willow area that had never been a problem to us before but high water changes things. Like so many river hazards, it looked innocent, and caught all the canoers off guard. I glanced ahead, trying to stay close enough to the lead canoes to follow in their wake but not close enough to be in jeopardy in case of a mishap. Suddenly I saw Harold (Hedges) plunge into the willows and disappear in the pale green foliage. I knew immediately what had happened! The

bow of his canoe was too heavy, lowered into the current by his heavy bowman, and without any help from the cameraman at the proper moment he could not make the quick turn. Harold "saved" his craft from swamping by plunging headlong into the willows with an experts ease and grace. We were close behind and I went to my knees braced for the cross bow draw that would help us around the corner. We made the turn and even though we smacked a dead willow midship, I thought we were clear when suddenly, we flipped. With knife like suddenness I was in the water and I recall even now how deeply I plunged and how quickly my life jacket bounced me to the surface. The canoe appeared in front of me and I grabbed for the stern, gripping it with both hands as I scanned the river for a glimpse of my sternman. Joe was now scrambling up the bank

while I was being pulled along by the river and a quick glance ahead told me I would have a long, cold ride if I continued to stay with my boat. Somebody screamed, "Are you all right?" and I hollered back, "Yes, but I have to let go". This I did without realizing that Leonard was still just ahead of me and when my canoe hit his it nearly dumped him. Somehow he held on to my canoe and kept his own upright while I crawled ashore. I huddled on the warm rocks a few feet above the water and pondered by first dunking in the Mulberry! I was shaking with cold when Joe caught up with me reporting that there had been a massive pile up in the willows where three canoes had rammed into each other and the spot had been proclaimed a "Disaster Area"! One canoe was so badly lodged it took 6 men to free it. The only casualty was an injured leg suffered by Harold

Twisting through Hamm Ford at low water is a test in rock dodging.





Nobody handles the heavy water of the Mulberry as skillfully as Oz and Dorothy Hawksley. Dr. Hawksley is the author of Missouri Ozark Waterways.

Alexander during the rescue efforts. The untangling took a good deal longer than the tangling and by the time we were water borne again one sternman announced his intention of taking out just above "Whoop and Holler" rapids. This idea caught on like wild fire and soon all canoers agreed enough is enough and we pulled ashore at a little cabin on the right bank just above "Whoop and Holler".* It was 5:30 p.m. and the chill of a spring evening motivated us to change our clothes and pull our canoes out of the river as fast as we could. Once dried out and reasonably warm I pondered the might and beauty of that rapids named "Whoop and Holler". Only in Grand Canyon movies had I seen haystacks to compare with these! It was a beautiful, roaring sight with the evening sun highlighting the white water and the deafening roar proclaiming its strength and its dangers. We didn't get to prove it but the odds were great that "Whoop and Holler", at that water level, could not be maneuvered in an open canoe. Our big day on the Mulberry was over and we were wiser and more humble for it.

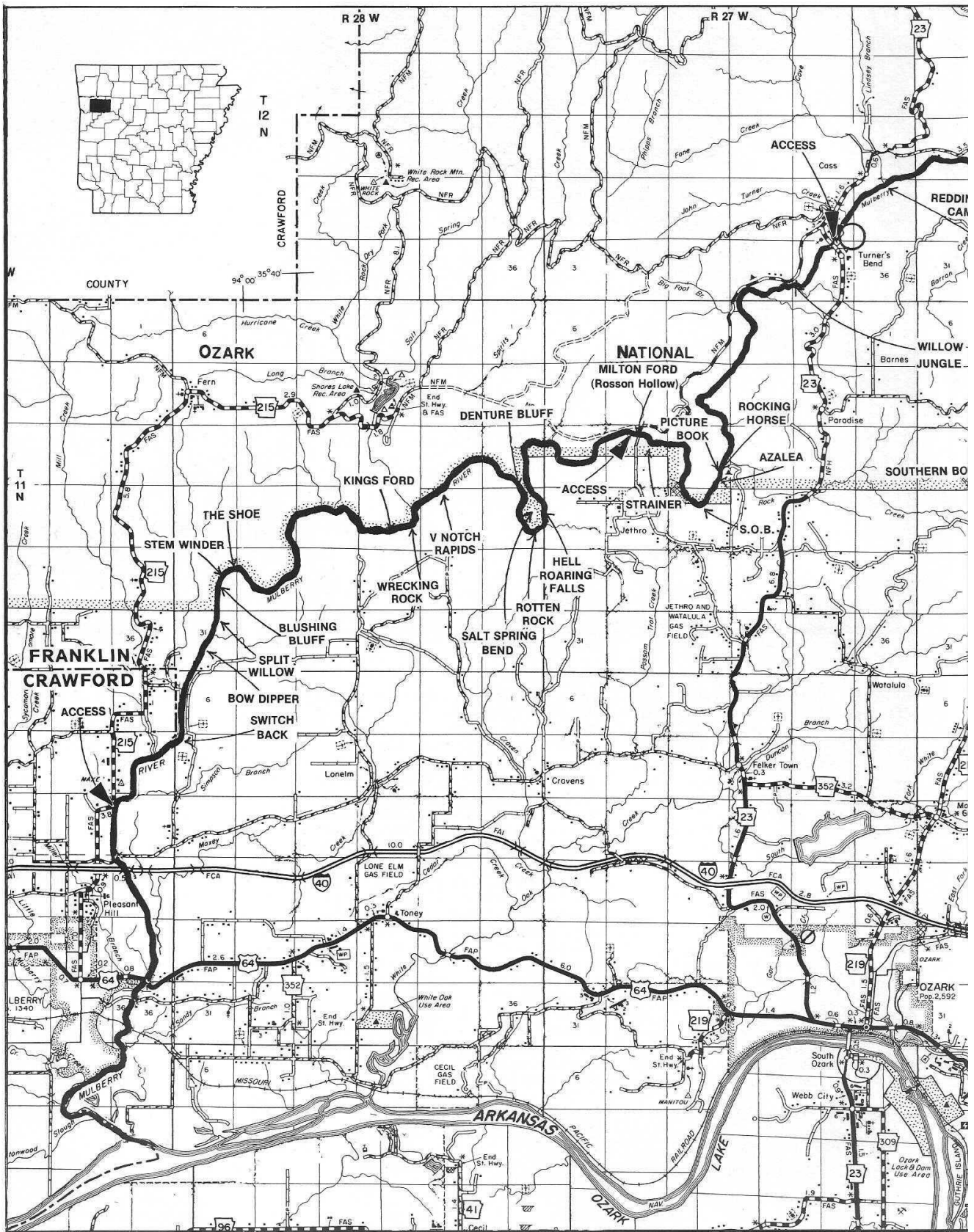
Driving back to camp we talked about the big one we had missed at "Whoop and Holler" and somebody asked how it got named. The naming came on our first expedition to that part of the Mulberry. We were on the river with one other canoe on a fine, fall day. The river was flush and ever so green. We had launched at Indian Creek and Harold and I had taken the lead thrilling to the fact that this was virgin water for us. In a short while we pulled over and suggested our friends take the lead, pick the channel and "pioneer" a few miles of this amazing river. No sooner had the other canoe pushed ahead than suddenly with a great burst of speed, they disappeared around a bend and let out the greatest whoop and holler of sheer delight that we have ever been privileged to hear. With blood tingling in our veins we pursued the same course only to discover that canoers instinctively let out a whoop and holler when plunged into the turbulence of this unforgettable rapids. No wonder the name has stuck these many years. "Whoop and Holler" is a natural.

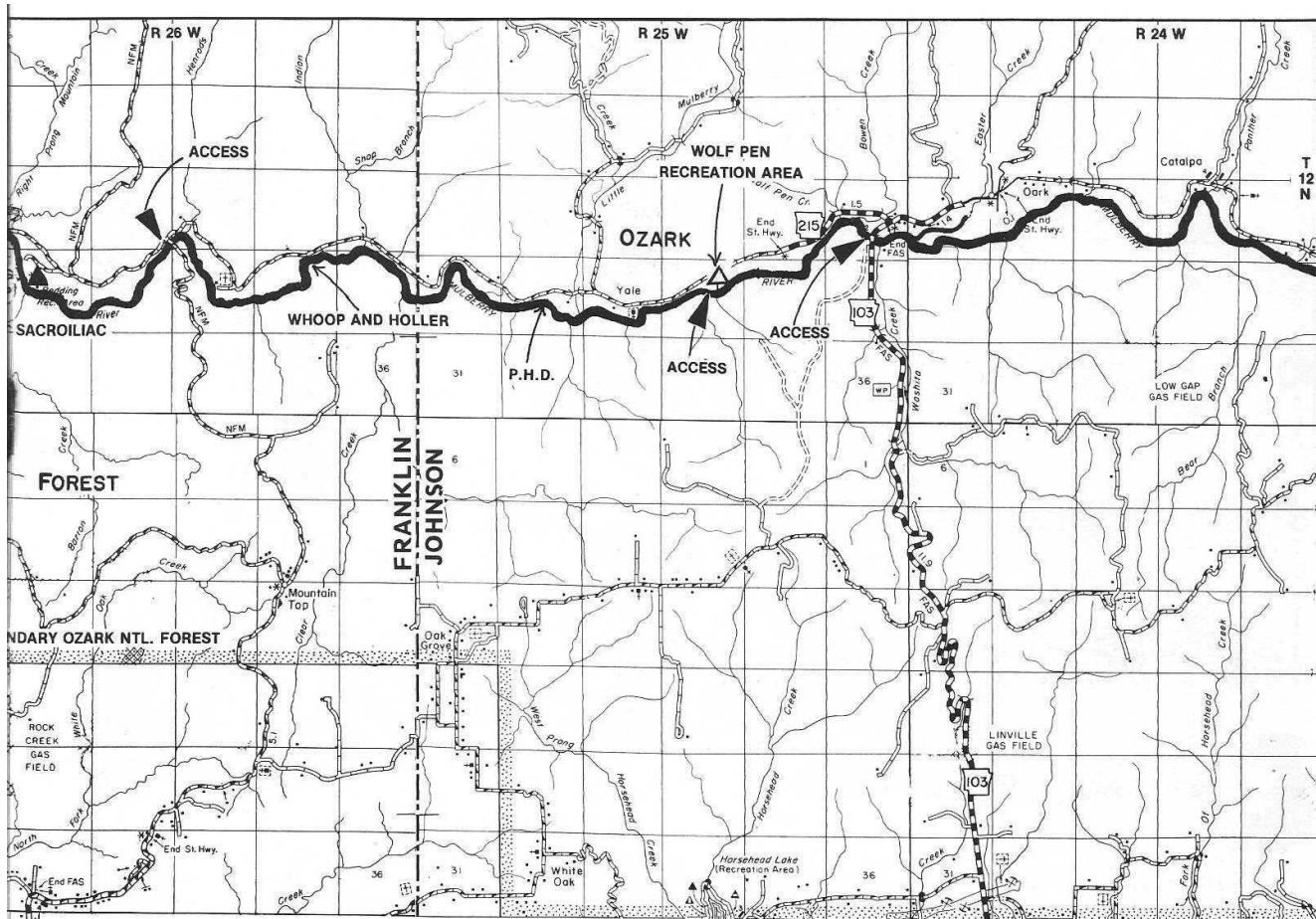
Below "Whoop and Holler" there are two hazards worthy of special

mention. The first of these is called "Sacroiliac". It appears about 2 miles above the Hiway 23 bridge at the end of a long pool. The first time we ever saw this place we pulled in on the gravel bar on the right to look it over and we still look it over even though it has changed very little since we first ran it in 1959. This dog leg run is a real twister as its name implies, and avoiding the imposing boulder (size of a small house) on the first joint in the dog's leg can put a strain on your sacroiliac. The "chicken" route on the right rarely has enough water to float and when it does it jets into the channel with such force that it greatly increases the dangers in the main channel.

The last named spot one half mile above the Hiway 23 bridge, is far from the least. This wonderful little run is named "Alcatraz" because if the water level is just right it is easy to slide up on this immense, flat rock and "spend a little time". The rock is anchored in mid channel in very deep water and once you are "grounded" there—you stay, surrounded by deep water, unable to help yourself short of getting in the water well over your head. In better than normal water the

* no longer an access





THE MULBERRY RIVER

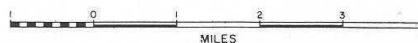
ADAPTED FROM
ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT MAPS
OF JOHNSON, FRANKLIN, AND CRAWFORD COUNTIES

MULBERRY RIVER MILEAGES (approximate)

Hiway 103 (Oark to Wolf Pen Recreation Area (NFS)	3 miles
Wolf Pen Rec. Area to mouth of Little Mulberry river	2½ miles
Little Mulberry to Low water bridge (F.S. road 1504)	9 miles
Low water bridge to Redding Recreation Area (NFS)	4 miles
Redding Rec. Area to Turner Bend (Hiway 23)	4 miles
Turner Bend to Milton Ford (Rosson Hollow - Jethro road) ..	9 miles
Milton Ford to mouth of Hurricane creek (on right)	8½ miles
Hurricane Creek to River gauge (on left)	6½ miles
River Gauge to Hiway 215 access (take-out on right)	4 miles
Total Mulberry River Mileages	50½ miles

LEGEND

- Access Points
- National Forest Recreation Area - Picnicking
- National Forest Recreation Area - Camping
- Private Camp Ground
- Southern Boundary of Ozark National Forest



Note—Do not attempt to take out at major hiway crossings of Interstate 40 or U.S. Hiway 64.





Rotten Rock, unique and beautiful, greets the paddler just below Hell Roaring Falls.

rock is well below the surface serving to halt the rush of the river, piling the water in glorious haystacks, washing your gunwals and possibly filling your open craft to a point beyond control. What a way to end the ride on the upper Mulberry!

Below Turner Bend (Hiway 23 bridge) the Mulberry is just as wild and wonderful as it is above Turner Bend. Accesses are less numerous and no road parallels* the river as it does on the upper portion. This has the distinct advantage of giving the canoe a better "wilderness" experience but can be inconvenient in case of difficulties. Even though no large tributary streams add to the waterflow at Turner Bend the river, nevertheless, seems bigger below Turner Bend than it does above. The riffles have a tendency to narrow and the entire lower portion of the river is characterized by deep, narrow runs, some on blind corners and some with a wide open V you can see for several yards away. In the first mile below the big bridge at Hiway 23 there are several small riffles turning first one way and then another but eventually slowing in a long, dead hole of water. At the end of this pool there is a willow jungle that is as menacing as anything along the Mulberry. The only route through is the first narrow

channel you encounter making a right turn into a veritable "jungle" of low hanging limbs, vines, brush and general high water debris. Caution is the key word. This section of the river seems to change with each flood and is extremely susceptible to freshly fallen trees and blocked passage. You may need an axe to open the river. In low water it is a simple matter to move slowly around each blind corner but in high water this part of the river can be dangerous. Once free of this problem area the river settles down to a series of chutes and pools. Not far below the willow tangle is the Forest Service access on the right. The next few miles of Mulberry are swift enough to be fun but canoeists have no name applied to any drop in the river until you are about halfway to Milton Ford. The first named rapids (and it certainly won't be a rapid in low water) is "Rocking Horse". It lies below a long, slow pool on a right turn, dipping over ledges of white rocks. Years of erosion have broken the shelf rock and the high waters have carried off great sections making the course of the river much like a set of stairs. As the water plunges over these stairs it builds haystacks all out of proportion to the little staircase so obvious in low water. In high water the thrust is much like the motion of a

child's rocking horse. To make things even more interesting the river turns rather abruptly to the left just as you enter the last stack. Immediately on your right the shelf rock is exposed and a finer lunch spot does not exist along the Mulberry. Pulled in here you are "sandwiched" (pun not intended) in between two of the river's finest rapids — "Rocking Horse" blends into "Picture Book" just beyond this curve. You may want to walk the rock ledges the few hundred yards down stream to observe the rocky course offered at "Picture Book". When you crash through the waves at "Picture Book" and pull back to watch the next canoe coming through it will be obvious how this rapids got its name—pretty as a picture! There isn't any pool of water between "Rocking Horse" and "Picture Book" and there isn't much of a pool between "Picture Book" and "Azalea"—the next one down stream. "Azalea" is named for the masses of bloom sometimes seen on the right hand bank as you wiggle through rock garden riffle. In certain tricky water levels you may not have time to study the flowers but, if they are in full bloom (about May 1st) the heavy, heavenly odor will identify the spot for you.

Nothing spoils a good river trip like

* road completed 5½ miles at this writing.

having someone tell you what is going to happen next (ever sit next to one of those guys in a movie?) but below "Azalea" you will encounter two very well named spots—one is "Little SOB" and the other is just plain "SOB". Hopefully you will have enough water so the "stand on the bottom" won't be necessary. In any event they are both rock strewn and challenging, truly a built-in slalom. "Little SOB" comes first. His big brother is meaner and also far more exciting, especially if you study him for a minute and figure out a way to cross almost directly against the current to the far left bank where the water course squeezes between a couple of extra large boulders, moves swiftly to the right bank combing the sprawling willows, joins the other channel of "SOB" and just generally takes your breath away.

About a mile above Milton Ford is another of those willow tangles which has been appropriately named "The Strainer" in honor of the many canoers that have been literally strained right out of their canoes trying to run it. We walk it more often than we run it just because it is so mean. The water is spread out on a

right hand turn and every drop of it runs under dropping willow branches in several channels. This spot changes from time to time depending on the mood of the river but it never has been an easy place. The early canoers fought a downed tree in the far right and when mother nature took that away she also moved the main channel farther under the tangle of trees. Scout it! If it can't be done with reasonable safety—why not walk it? When you reach the access at Milton Ford you will have traveled 9 delightful miles of the Mulberry. Chances are if you didn't have any big problems getting this far you can manage to get the remaining 19 miles (near the town of Mulberry) without mishap.

The run at Milton Ford is pretty typical of many rapids along the Mulberry. It is a well defined V, wide open, with or without haystacks depending upon river level. It is swift in most water but in high water it moves by this point like a fast load of freight. Amazingly enough most of these wide open "V's" are unchanged by floods or droughts. No rocks erupt from the channel's depths and no willows sprout to slow the current. In

good water the haystacks mount higher and higher at these points causing your canoe to slap at the water. In extremely high water the rapids seem to disappear as the river tends to level many haystacks. Conversely, in extremely low water, the wide open rapids are blue and sparkly, often harder to handle than when the river is up and rolling. This is especially true in the rocky shoals where high water calls for nerve and lower water for skill.

One mile below Milton Ford is a place known locally as Hamm Ford. Long before you reach its frothy edge you'll see a high, clay bank on the left and a small island in the middle of the channel. Take the exciting route on the right of the island and be prepared for a thrill or two as you round the bend below Hamm Ford into a series of bouncy haystacks. For the next few miles the Mulberry takes on a different tone. It is slower but none the less beautiful. The ever present river birch lean far across the placid pools sometimes as much as 75 or 80 feet. Pines grow close to the river and the heavily foliated banks give little evidence of past floods or bad erosion. Often the banks are lined with rocks

One of the delights of the Mulberry is maneuvering the many sparkling shoals. The one pictured is typical.





The thrill of white water canoeing on the Mulberry is superb at Hell Roaring Falls.

giving further stability to this fine mountain stream and minature bluffs of crumbling shale, dripping with ferns are common. Sweet gum rivals the river birch as the most common tree, and if you are fortunate enough to be on the Mulberry in the fall you'll appreciate more than ever the many colored robes the sweet gum wears. Some falls the willow even puts on a yellow coat and a few rivers in Arkansas can offer as magnificent a display of color as Mulberry in late October. Migrating wood ducks and teal are common, and, once you have flushed a flock from a pool they may elect to escort you all day, flying only from pool to pool, making sure you don't get lost. You may see kingfishers and pileated woodpeckers, even a deer or two but you'll seldom see people or cattle. If the day is windless you'll hear the rush of water just ahead or the swooping of the ducks over the still water. October is a special month anywhere but on the Mulberry its superb—quiet you can feel, beauty you can almost touch, peace you can embrace.

It must be three miles from Hamm Ford to Hell Roaring Falls—it takes about an hour of paddling in moderate

water. Some think it is a slow three miles, devoid of anything to interest the canoer. It does have a pool or two and some slow water but this respite from rapids is great for the soul. Every mile puts you further from civilization. You've paddled far enough to get the feel of this stream—its power and its beauty. You are flowing on it and with it. The rapids will come soon enough, then you'll forget how marvelous is the scenery and go back to pitting your ability with a paddle against nature at its finest. Nearing the falls the canoe begins to pick up speed even in moderate water and for nearly a quarter of a mile you are swept towards this so-called falls. If you aren't alert for the last plunge (maybe two feet or so high) you may be swept across it unawares. Don't worry, you'll probably survive. There is nothing to hold you if you upset and plenty of room in the river for you and your canoe. If you can identify the spot there is a fine big shelf of rock on the right just at the brink of the falls. Beach your canoe here and climb up on the rock for a super view of the falls. If this is the most photographed place on the Mulberry it isn't because

it is the greatest drop or the biggest rapids, but because nature was so darned cooperative in placing this photographers platform in exactly the right position. From the vantage point atop the ledge you can pick your channel, identify the hidden rocks and just generally enjoy the bubbling water that piles over the edge of "Hell Roaring Falls". In spite of all you can do in low water there is a good chance that you'll feel a grab or two at your keel as you pass over the drop. Don't worry about it—it happens to everybody. It's kind of scary—makes you think you're going to spill but you won't. And how do I know—because nobody ever has—they just come close. In really high water this falls gets wild and big. It can swallow an open canoe and wash the deck of a closed one. If you insist on running it in extremely high water the guarantee does not hold.

Just below the falls is one of the most scenic spots along the Mulberry called "Rotten Rock". It looks for all the world like a giant cavity of decay in an otherwise sound sandstone and you will want to paddle close to it and examine the detail of this gradually deteriorating bluff. Scarce-

ly a half mile below Rotten Rock is a great bend in the river shown on the map as Salt Spring Bend. The river chutes off to the left, and out of sight, turns quickly back to the right at the base of an enormous boulder. The force of the water is such that a mighty whirlpool is formed against the rock and in certain water conditions has a great suction force, literally sinking canoes completely. The problem can be avoided, or at least lessened by staying as far to the right (inside of the curve) as possible but this may be easier said than done if you do not recognize the danger before you are swept into the rock. As you straighten your canoe into the current you'll catch your first glimpse of a unique bluff high above the river. This ragged, eroded series of rocks has been appropriately named "Denture Bluff" for it looks very much like a poor set of dentures in need of repair.

If you have camping gear in your canoe you have observed how few gravel bars dot this stream and are no doubt concerned that you may spend the night on the side of a hill. There are a few places along the river to put a tent or two but ideal camping

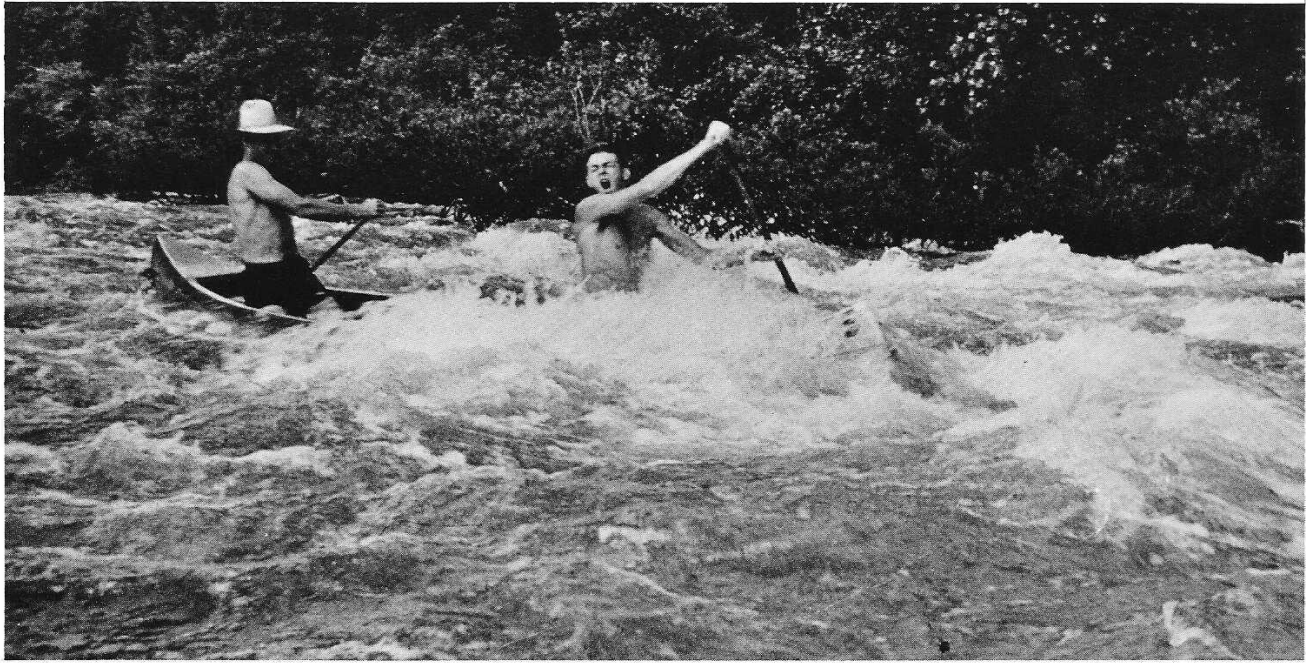
conditions do not exist. For the most part the gravel is too big and the so called bars are small, very unlike most of our Ozark streams. There is a fairly large bar on the left about two miles below "Denture Bluff" that is simply known as "Sweet Gum Bar". At the time of its naming there was a huge sweet gum tree on the bar but over the years the bar has grown over with all kinds of shrubs and willows and the tree is no longer a significant land mark. If you are desperate for a place to make camp you'll find it simply because you are looking for it and camp sites are scarce.

Not far beyond "Sweet Gum Bar" three tall gums stand in mid stream marking the rapids that lies just around the bend. This hidden hazard is known as "V Notch Rapids". The water drops over a rock shelf on a curve near the center of the river and the low point causes a definite "V". You must make an abrupt turn at this notch, straining hard at the paddle to pull the bow into position. The river won't help you much on the channel from here on through the rapids. This is a wide rapids, much too wide and it takes pretty good water in the river to make it very exciting. By the same

measurement it is an ornery place in low water because it offers so many places to make mistakes, so many places where the ledge will grab your keel and hold you there, and, as some will testify, if you chose to walk it, it's slick. From "V Notch" you are about one mile to the mouth of Hurricane creek. Where Hurricane creek enters the river there is a wide sweeping left bend: rock dotted, jumping water makes this a fine little run. This bend in the river is the beginning of a long shoal that ends at the original "Wrecking Rock Rapids" now poorly imitated on the upper Buffalo river. It is advisable to pull ashore and take a good long look at the possible channels through this wild whirl of water. Over the years the heavy floods have finally shoved "Wrecking Rock" a little ways down stream but, other than that the place has changed little. More water runs on the right of a tiny island allowing for easier canoeing if it is preferred but the main force of the river is still wham against "Wrecking Rock" on the far left. Appearances here are deceptive and what looks like a pretty simple maneuver may loom as a real trap when viewed over the bow of a fast

Just below Hamm Ford the river moves and moves and moves.





The bow is washed with foam as the straining sternman holds the canoe on course through Bow Dipper.

moving canoe. The trick is to pull the canoe away from "Wrecking Rock" just before the wreck. It's a bowman's rapids and a fun one at that.

Even though the map shows that you have not yet entered the "gorge" the river seems extra steep in this section for, just below "Wrecking Rock", about a quarter of a mile, is another big haystacky drop that can put your bowman out of the water and your heart in your mouth. You are still about one mile from the long, fast riffle above King's Ford, the entrance to the gorge. Below King's Ford the pools are short, the hills have a tendency to hem you in from both sides and giant boulders dot the channel, adding much to the scenery and more than a little to the fun of canoeing. In low water there are places to make a small camp within this gorge. About midway in the gorge, in one of the few long pools, stands the oversized "Shoe", by far the biggest midstream rock on the entire course of the river. Not far below this unusual rock lies the twisty rapids known as "Stem Winder". You can hear it long before you can see it for it spreads out in the stubborn willows and much of the water courses through the gravel in little rivulets impossible to canoe. There is an opening easily found but it takes a little skill to manage the sharp turn to the left where the river lunges into the bank. It's fast, tricky—it's a "Stem Winder". As you clear the turn into the current of the confined channel below, glance up to the bluff side where a picturesque water fall splash-

es down over several shelves amid ferns, mosses and flowers. At this point the extreme upper edge of "Blushing Bluff" is in view and about a quarter below this point is a gravel bar that has furnished camp sites for a large party in past years. One rapids now separates you from "Split Willow Run" the willow for which it was named has long since been washed away but the drop is still great enough to bounce your canoe, and, in high water, the frenzied motion of the water may even quiver your craft from side to side while it is slapping the water in the haystacks. Needless to say it is one of the finer spots along the river. You are now nearly out of the gorge with "Bow Dipper" the only named rapids between "Split Willow" and the end of the gorge. "Bow Dipper" may or may not dip your bow under water, depending entirely upon the level of the water and the course of the canoe. "Bow Dipper" is full of boulders, large and small, anyone of which can be your undoing.

Leaving the gorge isn't as bad as it may sound for the river still has many good drops at the end of those seemingly endless pools. The scenery is still pretty wild although some of man's intrusions are now evident. In one of the long pools about 1/2 mile above Mill Creek lies the only recognized gauge on the Mulberry river, useless to canoers except to compare the river with the last time you were there. It is not easily read except from the river and is far from good roads or easy accesses. The last

time we passed by it read 1.75; we considered it a moderate flow of water. Just below the mouth of Mill Creek recent floods have made canoeing an impossibility. Two awkward stumps have slipped into the channel where they catch all the force of the stream head on. Dragging around the blockage is easy and safe.

There are some nice fast runs below this point and the trip is by no means over. The greatest single drop on the river is yet to be run but it is one of those previously described wide open "V's" where you may fill with water but aren't likely to turn over. "Switch Back Rapids", long, narrow, sparkly and unbelievably turning back on itself awaits you in the distant willows. It isn't difficult but it is a great piece of running water that goes on and on, maybe for as much as a half mile. Even when your car is in sight (assuming you are using the access about one mile north of the Interstate) you are still enjoying the motion of an unfettered, free bouncing bit of outdoor recreation that will beckon you back again and again. Ride it often but respect it always for the mighty Mulberry is King of the Arkansas waterways.

Written prior to the all time record flood of 1973.

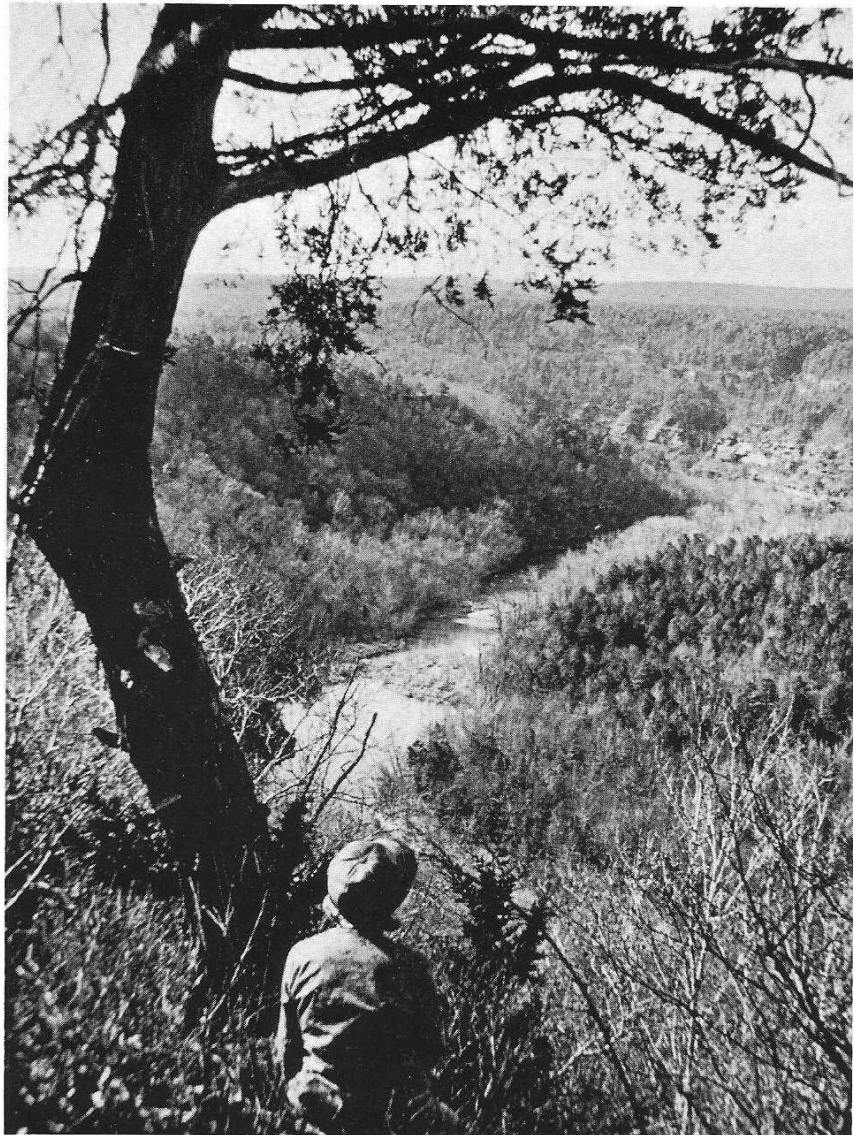
ROADS LEADING TO THE MULBERRY

The Mulberry has many access points along its canoeable portion. Four roads lead to Oark, the headwaters of the river. State Highway #103 from the south is the only one presently black topped. All others are gravelled Forest Service roads. The road from Cass is Forest Service road #1003 and is the main route of shuttle traffic for the upper part of the river. The other 2 roads into Oark are F.S.R. #125 that intersects Hiway 21 just south of Salus and F.S.R. #1421—a poor gravel road that leaves Hiway 16 between Fallsville and Red Star and drops southward off the mountain into the Mulberry valley at Oark.

Hiway #1003 parallels the river from Oark to Cass and occasionally curves so close to the river that you can see riffles and willow-tangles from the road. Never is the road more than ½ mile from the river. There are two places to reach the river very near the town of Oark. An unmarked narrow road leading south from the center of Oark fords the river about ½ mile from town. Access is easy but there is room for only 1 or 2 vehicles at the river. The best access is about 1½ miles west of Oark where Hiway #103 from Clarksville crosses the river on a high bridge.

Driving westward along the Mulberry it is easy to get to the river at several points. The first access below Hiway 103 bridge is 2½ miles downstream at Wolf Pen recreation Area where there is parking and picnicking facilities but poor access because of the long carry to the river. It is much easier to reach the river at Yale School house, just 1½ miles below Wolf Pen. The Little Mulberry bridge is ½ mile down the road from Yale School but you may need permission from the occupant of a farm house there in order to drive in and out. One of the finest access points on the entire river is about 7½ miles below the Little Mulberry where the low water bridge crosses the river. There is ample room upstream of the bridge on the south side of the river but this should not be used if the river is so high you are unable to paddle under the bridge. The road into Redding Recreation Area is about 2½ miles from the low water bridge and just 5½ miles from Champ Turner's place on Hiway 23.

Hiway #23 divides the Mulberry for the canoeists and any portion below this bridge is referred to as the lower river. Accesses on the lower river are not as frequent nor as easily found as those on the upper river. The first access is about 2 miles down river from Cass at a Forest Service Access.



Looking from the rim rock into the gorge of the Mulberry.—Joe M. Clark

It is reached via road presently under construction by the Job Corps from Cass Work Center. This gravel road leaves Hiway 23 about ½ mile north of the bridge and parallels the river most of the way.

At the present time this Forest Service Road is completed to Rosson Hollow, a distance of 5.5 miles. At Rosson Hollow a single lane unimproved road leads to the river. This is known locally as Milton Ford and is used as a crossing in time of low water.

Milton Ford can also be reached from the south via an unmarked road westward off Hiway 23 about 6½ miles south of Turner Bend (Hiway #23 Bridge). This road looks for all the world like a private drive into a farm house very close to Hiway 23 but it is a public road leading to the hamlet of

Jethro and eventually to the river. It is rough, slow and dusty for the entire 4½ miles to the river.

The most commonly used access on the extreme lower end of the river is 1½ miles from the Mulberry Interchange of Interstate #40 on State road #215 (the road to Shores Lake Recreation Area). At this point Hiway #215 veers within 100 feet of the river. Turn right into the parking area overlooking the Mulberry river. Access is up a steep, rocky bank about 20 feet high and a "bucket brigade" system works best for taking out here.

There is an old iron bridge about ¼ mile above Hiway 64. It can be reached from the north end of the Interchange but it is a high muddy bank. Do not take out at old Hiway 64 bridge one mile east of Mulberry or at the New Interstate 40 bridge.

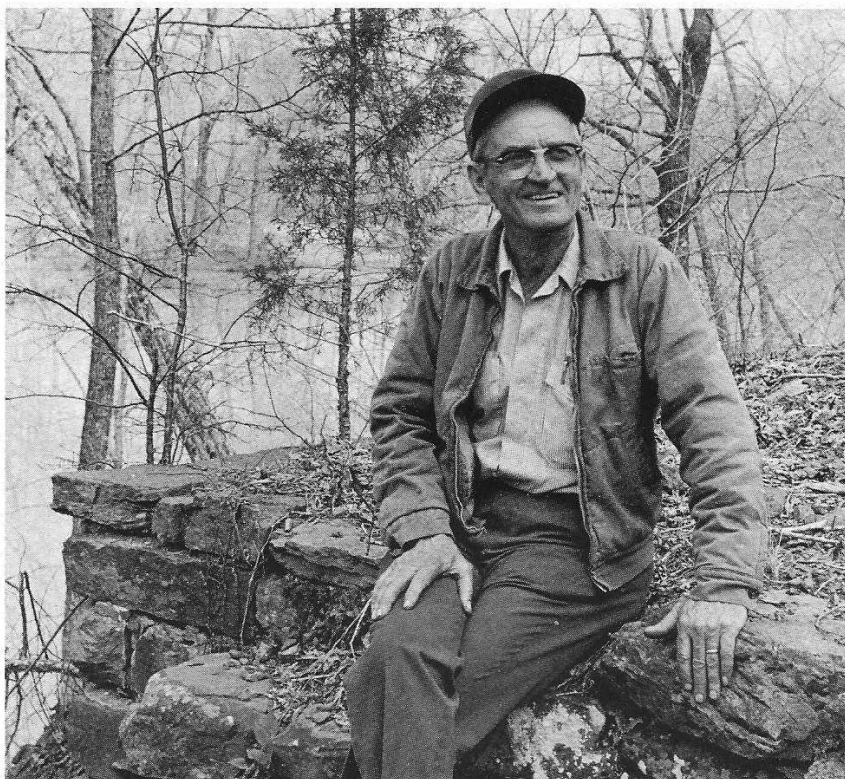
CHAMP TURNER AND THE MULBERRY RIVER

Champ Turner lives on the banks of the Mulberry river just south of the Hiway 23 bridge in Franklin County on a curve known as Turner Bend. Champ's father lived there, Champ's grandfather lived there and Champ's great grandfather lived there. Champ Turner's great grandfather, Elias, who came there in a covered wagon in 1849, is buried in the old Turner Cemetery about ½ mile north of the bridge. So are many other Turners including great aunt Tennessee Turner who was born in that same covered wagon that brought great grandfather Turner to the Mulberry country.

Champ loves the river, always has, and wants to see it stay just like it is. He likes to see people enjoy the river, fish it, swim it, canoe it, so long as they don't abuse it. Champs likes to tell about the river, how wild it can get, how fast it can rise, how many folks have been fooled by it. He likes to tell about one time when he had the old well tested and sent in a bottle of river water, too. Funny thing, the river tested better than the well! Might not be that way now — too many houses and people and animals. Still, Champ will vouch for the river — it's pretty clean by present standards and he'd like to see it stay that way.

Nice thing about Champ, he's real friendly and obliging, always ready to help you if he can. He runs a little store there at Turner Bend, he and his good wife, Flora. Used to have a Mina bird there at the store to help with the conversation — guess you might say he used to have 2 Mina birds, only not at the same time. Both lived 9 years—now that's 18 years of having a bird around the place, talking and trying to sing "Bye, Bye, Blackbird". Well, the second bird died not very long ago and he's buried in the pet cemetery there on the place. Guess all that really isn't important and doesn't have much to do with the river but if you're used to stopping by the store for gas or groceries or just a little river information, well, you miss the bird right off.

Champ can tell you about the river



Champ Turner tells of the past from the abutment of a former bridge at Turners Bend on the Mulberry —Joe M. Clark

almost better than a gauge. Lots of folks have tried putting a gauge on the river somewhere near the bridge but the high water or swimmers always manage to rip them out. Years ago we used to gauge the river level by the number of steps underwater over at the camp grounds on Champ's place. Don't know exactly how long those steps down that steep bank have been there but Champ says they've been there a long time. Whenever we got a bad case of "Mulberry fever" why we'd just call Champ and he'd run down to the river and report where the water was in relation to the bottom step. Then one spring flood washed out that bottom step and another broke off when the bank gave way so now when we call Champ he just eyeballs the river and tells us if its enough water to float or too much water to be safe.

You'd think Champ would get tired

of folks calling him up and asking about the river but he doesn't seem to mind. Like I said earlier, he's real friendly and obliging and will do just about anything for you, so if you've got this hankering to "do" the Mulberry why just give him a call. You might want to camp at his place or maybe you need help moving your car or maybe you just want some information about the river. It won't matter to Champ, if he's not busy with his livestock or tearing into some engine or busy helping somebody else he'll sure do what he can to make your canoe trip on the Mulberry one of the finest you ever had. M.L.H.

For river information
write or call
Champ Turner,
Ozark, AR 72949,
501-667-3641