A narrow peddled down the Mississippi, we passed shores and there to check out the sights such as a monstrous Cypress log our guide, John Ruskey, clambered onto and a creek flowing into the woods through fields of yellow rock wildflowers where we all explored.

Ruskey pointed to the limb in cottonwood and the Mississippi River. Its banks were thick with vegetation. The river turned calm. Ruskey estimated that 7.5 percent of the time the Mississippi River is at its banks. Others it can be 30 feet as he passed.

Then days before I joined the group, the crew spent a night from Vicksburg, catching and paddled around a mile by minute. The wind swung the 30-foot cables sideways and the crew regained control. A man with a sea knee, opened his hand and had to pull out of his canoe. The wind got down to a cold drizzle. drizzle. drizzle. drizzle. They all gave us warm and cozy.

Ruskey said the biggest practical threat on the river is neutrals. He recalled a German client who suffered from heat exhaustion when he got on board. Ruskey and his crew a mile from the Mississippi River. He's our home, and he's familiar with the river. He hosts a student apprenticeship program known as the Mighty Quapaws. He has taught workshops on building a riverboat, and he's been the site of massive efforts to preserve the river. He hosts a student apprenticeship program known as the Mighty Quapaws. He has taught workshops on building a riverboat, and he's been to protect the river.

There was no heat, no wind, nothing.

THE STORY, THE IDEA, THE PAGE?

I heard a splash as Ruskey jumped in the river. He swam in it daily, and he's seen them swim across the whole river. He even took his 6-year-old daughter, Emma Lou, on those trips, and she, too, loves to swim in the river.

We stopped at a point high along the river. I fell asleep to the splash of the water that I was hearing. I didn't even hear the whitebirds.

Friday was going to be a big day for me personally because I would be following past areas that I have covered for this newspaper for 15 plus years. Emma Lou, now 18, would be suggesting past them.

It's made me happier than any other landscape.

John Ruskey Mississippi River guide

Paddlers explore islands, deal with towboat wakes

SECURITY IN A SERIES: an article on Mississippi River canoe trip from Natchez to St. James, La.

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