

Whitewater Adventures in Banning State Park, Minnesota--Craig & Clarissa Prudhomme

As told by Craig & Clarissa Prudhomme

Sandstone, Minnesota

Story Narrative:

This story was collected as part of a collaborative effort to record the state of American lakes, rivers, and waterways as well as an attempt to uncover what water means to Americans. Listen to other stories recorded by the Minnesota Humanities Center for the Stories from Main Street project, an initiative created by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service for its traveling exhibition "Water/Ways."

Clarissa Prudhomme: So, I came up to visit some friends and he took me to Banning, but there was no interpretive center and they did not plow the roads, so we parked the car and we walked in and we were going walking and going through the woods and then came out on the edge and the cliffs over where the rapids started and just started standing there and just going, 'Oh my Gosh!'

Craig Prudhomme: That is some very exciting Whitewater canoeing experiences there.

Clarissa Prudhomme: Unintentional swimming.

Craig Prudhomme: Yes – unintentional swimming. The first time we ran Hell's Gate in Banning – you generally, if you don't want to bang up your boat, you want to go river right and then at the last second, you need to be able to move over to river left and go down the standing waves for a good ride. Well, we didn't quite get over in time. We caught the edge of the Sous Hole at Dragon's Tooth and the next thing we knew we were swimming. Clarissa survived that and we survived that as a team and the next day when we paddled the Brule River, we were the only ones that did not swim.

Craig Prudhomme: We also used to teach, from youth campers to adults how to Whitewater canoe. There we had many, many years of introducing people to what to do, what not to do. Standing waves can be a great ride - sometimes they can be so big where you come over one wave and the boat is too long for the wave length - for the distances between the wave tops - so you come down the other side and your partner, the bow paddler – the wave goes right over them and hits you in the chest and your boat is full of water and you are swimming.

Clarissa Prudhomme: Submerged boat!

Clarissa Prudhomme: And some people set the canoe up to do it on purpose so their bow partner gets this wave of water over them. But my overall memory is just people

starting out and being kind of hesitant and then once they start to feel more confident in their skills and realize, ok – well if I tip over, I will go swimming - it is no big deal. This is not an unsafe situation. So, the learning and then just the pure joy that that trepidation and hesitation turns into --'WOW, this is so much fun, I'm grown up...or in the case of the kids, 'I can still play!' You know I play with the water and getting to understand how the hydrology works and how I can use that to my advantage – but just the pure joy of playing.

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