

Floating the Jordan River

(12300 S. to 2100 S., Salt Lake City, Utah, 4 June 2005)

by

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Having a never-ending intrigue with gliding over various bodies of water, when a psychologist friend and colleague had suggested a run of the Jordan River from the south to the north end of Salt Lake Valley a few years back, the challenge never left. Thirty years or so earlier, I had gone on a few runs of the river between the locations of 1700 South and 1700 North with my children and others—to even include a delightful float in the moonlight one evening. That was before the Jordan River Parkway project was started. Large trees were lying in the river here and there, threatening a kyacker's entanglement in the limbs, with surrounding waves pushing and lapping at the small craft's edge, and the possibility of even capsizing. And yes, the river had the reputation of being a dumping ground for a lot of waste materials. Various objects were in fact seen floating half submerged on the surface every so often.

But now, since there has been a much-changed image of the river—with the clearing of trees and debris in the valley's river in the past two decades or so, the challenge had taken on increased feasibility. And with a paved parkway alongside the river most of the distance throughout the Salt Lake Valley, where strollers, bikers and roller-bladers are seen passing and gliding by park benches, marshlands, boardwalks, manicured groves, and across numerous arched bridges, the lure took decisive hold.

I knew there were some small waterfalls or spillways along the way, but no specifics were known, nor did I know where other barriers such as fences or concrete and steel dams might be. The decision was made to survey as much as possible the entire river from the Jordan River Parkway from Bluffdale to North Salt Lake by bicycle. Mid-spring of 2005 was a delightful time for just such a pursuit.

Age didn't pose any problem for peddling along the paved parkway. Along the southern to middle section of the path were heard and seen meadowlarks, red-winged blackbirds, robins, sparrows, geese, families of ducks, and several other birds which I couldn't identify. Along that particular southern part of the path were also seen a variety of butterflies chasing each other across the path and over surrounding meadows. Wild flowers of several varieties dotted the meadows along the winding path. At one point, I stopped for a fairly large snake sunning across the trail. The whole experience set me back in nostalgic reflection of times in my childhood while visiting grandparents out in the countryside that Roy, Utah once used to be. I actually felt young again, as though I was back in that carefree time of my life—inhaling the freshness of spring in the country. I even climbed a deteriorated and abandoned concrete structure of about 80-90 feet in height that looked as though it had once been a silo. The climb gave a view of the surroundings that was worth the climb, but reminded me of my vulnerability in doing solo what most parents wouldn't let their teens, let alone smaller children do.

While back on the parkway path again, a faint view was seen of what looked like steam or mist rising over parts of a pond down in a nearby gully a little larger than the size of a typical backyard swimming pool. Skittering down a steep embankment, I bent down at the pool's edge and confirmed that it was indeed a natural hot pool, possibly around 140 degrees fahrenheit in temperature—certainly not for soaking in, and unguarded at that. Biking further along the trail, which sometimes turned into a rather steep incline or dip, a small waterfall would periodically be seen along the river, and notes were taken as to where a safe portage of the boat might be made.

However, there were a few sections of land where Jordan River Parkway personnel have apparently not yet been able to work out negotiations with the owners, and where a fenced-off, dead-end trail or “**No Trespassing**” sign was seen—leaving of course a gap in my survey of the river.

The survey started at 16400 South in Bluffdale, where there was considerable private property yet. However, over an incremental period of a few weeks, I covered the distance of the parkway going along the river to 1700 North. The parkway took on different traits along the way—from riverside meadows, parks and a couple of golf courses in recently-developed or developing areas of Bluffdale, Riverton, and South Jordan, beside a massive industrial excavation strip in West Jordan, through developing riverside marshlands in Murray, and through groves alongside growing industrial sites in Cottonwood and into South Salt Lake. Entering the Salt Lake proper area were seen a railroad trellis across the river, parkway improvements and delightful landscaping, as well as sounds of increasing population and industry. Distinct cultural traits were observed entering the Glendale area. A very refreshing and welcoming break in scenery is found beside the river in this area, namely, the beautiful International Gardens of the Jordan River Park, with landscape, gardens and structures which have been funded and constructed by numerous participating nationalities—representing and honoring them as well.

In the more northern sections of the parkway were older and larger Russian Olive and Elm trees hanging over the now shady, slower-moving Jordan, but with haunting reminders of numerous lives which have been swallowed up in its somewhat murky depths over the years. Indeed someone has likened a float on the Jordan River at this location to an imagined float under relatively thick trees and forage on the Amazon River. Under bridges in a few undeveloped sections along the path were seen discarded articles of clothing, bottles, cans, litter and various objects reflecting nearby transient living. Going further toward North Temple was the impenetrable concrete masses of the power and fuel industry complexes, along with fences and other barriers. There was no reasonable alternative but to migrate to the nearby streets leading to North Temple where the Parkway trail continues.

Entering on North Temple, the trail leads through the west end of the Utah State Fairgrounds, past a concrete-walled duck pond, past a rather large manicured body of grass and then along a rather lazy but remote and uninhabited stretch beside the Jordan River. It then winds past and around the state’s Martha Hughes Cannon Health Building where I worked for several years. During those years, for a break in the day various employees and I would often take sunny strolls along the river’s Parkway. A little further down the river is another state building, where manicured grass runs on a slope to the river’s edge, summoning picnic lunch breaks at opportune times. With a nicely-paved walkway still continuing, the Parkway weaves through an aging grove of white-barked Poplar trees with a nearby view of trails crossing over several bike-jumping hills. There are seen along this section of the path several older Rose Park homes with large back yards, covered swings and other outdoor furniture, and even private entries giving access to the often slow-moving and lazy Jordan. At this point of the trail are just a couple of tire ruts made by a few cars which use it as a backway access. The trail next runs along another golf course to the west, and finally ends at Redwood Road and about Seventeenth North in North Salt Lake.

With a fair survey of the Jordan River completed, arrangements were made for a worker friend to accompany me on a float or run along the river in my small dingy boat which incidentally has weathered about eighteen lakes in five states in recent years. The chosen day had arrived in early June of 2005. My acquaintance however cancelled his part due to other pressing concerns just the day before. Nevertheless, I made the decision to “go it alone” just the same. Arriving early in Riverton, the anticipated morning was welcomed with a clear sky and plenty of birds. A wild

rabbit was spotted nestling in the grass near the launch site, the air was fresh, and I felt exuberant in my search for a deep-enough current to launch the craft. With everything set in the boat—ready to push off, I went up to the car on the unpaved stretch of road near the parkway by the side of the river at 12300 South to check for belongings in the back seat which I thought could be tempting to passers by. Spotting a few, I unlocked and opened the driver's side door, transferred the belongings to the trunk, and shut and locked the trunk lid. Then I hurried back toward the river, weaving through some tall grass wet from the morning's dew, and down to the boat by the water's edge.

Balancing myself against any chance of an entry spill, I carefully pushed the boat into a rather narrow, swift, but deep current leading to the river proper. Soon I was passing under one of many rather large bridges I would be seeing throughout the day. In the shade of the 12400 South bridge, I saw twittering swallows flying up to their small nests of mud and straw or other constructive matter. Later in the day, under some bridges were rows and rows of swallows' nests, with little beaks poking out from a nest every so often. I found myself taking several pictures of various birds flying overhead and other sights of beauty along the river's edge.

Before much time had passed, I found myself getting high-centered on bars of shallow riverbed gravel or sand, and had to push with a paddle to slide into a current deep enough to again carry the boat and me down the river. This frustration occurred at several locations in the southern end of the river. At about this time, I had a foreboding thought that in the excitement of putting some belongings in the trunk of my car, I failed to shut the car door, for I couldn't remember having done that. "Well, it's too late to turn back now", I reasoned.

Though several families of ducks were spotted along the river, very few let me get close enough to take a nice picture of them before they were off flying, and then splash-landing several yards further down the river. There were plenty of blossoming Tamarisk bushes along the water's edge, Russian Olive trees, Prim Rose bushes here and there, Cat Tails, other sorts of reeds, and plenty of thick swaths of willows all along the way for miles. Several developments of large homes were also seen along the slopes and hillsides above the riverbanks in Riverton and South Jordan.

I had taken some fun treats and drinks to sustain me for the day; but after gathering some caramel corn that had spilled on the boat's floor, I happened to notice that there was only one oar in the boat. It seemed that only a couple of minutes had passed since I had both oars in my hands. I had, come to think of it, just recently taken an oar out of its oarlock to help me off a high-centered position, and had placed it in a resting position along the upper edge of the boat. It was obvious that it had quietly slipped into the river a ways up stream. "Could I negotiate the rest of the river with just one oar" I queried? I concluded that I had just started the float, and it would be worth it to try my best to find the oar if I could". I negotiated the boat a little further down stream to a rather quiet body of water by the side of a clump of reeds and Cat Tails, and got out. Next, I pulled the boat out of the water and somewhat onto the muddy edge to prevent it from also slipping away from me.

I then climbed up a rather steep slope to a trail and started scoping the river's edge as best I could in search of the lost oar. The view was often blocked by ten to twenty yards of thick forage between me and the river. Often weaving in and out of thick forage, I must have gone about a third of a mile upstream, but with no luck. "Surely the oar couldn't be this far up stream", I thought. But not having found it, and with the felt need for both oars, I continued up stream. Suddenly I saw the lost oar wedged between some willows across the river and not moving at all. I analyzed the surrounding trees, and noticed that the oar was directly below a particularly tall tree with surrounding Tamarisk bushes having an unusual abundance of blossoms on them. With

those as a marker, I backtracked through the willows downstream to the boat, got in, and paddled canoe-style with the remaining oar to the opposite side of the river and to a place where I could approach and again anchor the boat. I then trudged through a portion of the riverside—having to wade in some of the river’s black and putrid mud. I finally got up the steep bank, and started sloshing heavy-footed along a seldom-used trail close to the river toward the area where I thought the lost oar might be.

In the thick of the willows I came across a middle-aged man taking advantage of the wood’s privacy. I excused myself and continued until I found what I thought was the tall tree. Jungle-style but without a machete knife, I pushed myself through and over very heavy thickets down to the river’s edge, and peered up and down the river, but to no avail. With no room to walk along the edge of the willow-bordered river, I stepped into the river to screen the shore. My foot was sucked into thick, black, river mud ten or twelve inches down. Trying to get that foot out without losing a shoe, I took another step with my other foot only to have that foot also sucked into the God-forsaken mud. This became rather unsettling to me. Holding onto some nearby overarching riverside willows, I was able to slowly remove my anchored feet and continue to traverse the river’s edge for a short while, but, probably wisely so, abandoned such a questionable pursuit, being out of the view of anyone else. Still heavy-footed with wet and muddy shoes, I made my way back through the surrounding thickets up to the trail, but getting fairly exhausted with the struggle. Going yet further up stream, I again forged my way through the heavy thicket, but feeling so exhausted at one point, that I just rolled my body over the entangling willows to allow my entrance to the river’s edge for another survey. Still there was no sight of the oar.

Exhausted though I was, I decided to go back downstream to a rather shallow place where I felt I could walk across mostly on rocks, and retrace my path to where I had last seen the lost oar, and there decide what yet to do. When I finally got to the view of the oar again, I looked at the river’s breadth and surroundings. The river looked too calm to be very shallow for wading. However, I decided that for all I had already gone through in trying to locate the oar, and with the likelihood of becoming further exhausted by repeating such a pursuit and again not likely being able to spot the oar from the muddy and entangling edges on the other side of the river, I would take the risk of wading across the river to retrieve the oar while it was yet in sure sight.

The edge of the river again had thick mud in it, though there were some firm areas where I could feel rocks. I decided to wade across to the oar as best I could, assessing each step as I went. The water became deeper as I went toward the center of the river. My concerns were now focused on all the gear I had on me. My wife’s cellular phone and my digital camera were in a pouch strapped to my waste, and my pocket Ipac computer was in its own pouch attached to my belt. My wallet, keys and credit cards were now getting submerged. I decided to place my credit cards in my shirt pocket, and hold my wallet in my left hand, and with that same arm, hold up the two pouches with my electronic items above the water as best as I could to prevent their destruction. Pushing toward the oar, the water continued to increase ever so slightly in depth above my crotch. Nevertheless, I was finally able to stretch across and barely get a tip-of-the-finger grip on the handle of the wedged oar without sinking deeper or losing my balance in the water. Hoping not to have damaged any of the electronic devices, worth well over \$1,000., nevertheless, with relative assurance, I made my way along the middle of the river, and finally to a more shallow section where I sloshed my way to the river’s edge. As I was negotiating myself up a rather steep bank through more willows—soaking clothes and all, grateful for the successful recovery of the oar, and being relatively confident that no damage was done to the electronic gear, nevertheless, my eyes were pulled in the direction of the water’s edge, where I noticed my wallet with all its years of valuable notes, resting on the ground and blending ever so well with the soil just a couple of

inches from the river's lapping ripples. Adding now my wallet's safe retrieval, I couldn't help feeling fortunate and protected in my rather eccentric adventure.

A mother and her children were sitting on the riverbank by my boat when I finally finished the half-mile return. For whatever they might have been saying about a man and his boat, I was nonetheless grateful for not only retrieving the lost oar, for not having damaged any of my items of technology, for still having my wallet, but also for my life, considering a few somewhat precarious factors I had experienced.

I had lost an hour and a half, and had gone but just a short distance down the river so far. There was no certainty at this pace how far I might travel by boat this day. But with both oars in my hands, I was again on my way down the winding and varying depths of the Jordan, with ripples and waves at varying turns and bends—hinting at shallows where hindering sand and pebble bars might be, or smoother waves where I might find greater depths for a quicker passage.

From time to time along the river's bank, I would hear what sounded like a waterfall or other rushing waters. A few times paddling closer to the edge, a small stream would be seen tumbling over rocks and merging into the Jordan. Several times, however, I saw water pouring out of large culverts or galvanized pipes having a diameter of about 12 to 16 inches. With stories over the years of wastewater being channeled into the river, it was wondered if such was still being done. Before the end of the day's float, probably ten or twelve such culverts were seen.

The biking notes I had made on my map as to where various falls or spillways were along the trail had pretty well faded in the sun during the two preceding weeks—having been placed on the dashboard of my car, so I had to rely on the nearing sound of tumbling water, and try to remember where the best places were to portage around the falls. Not much further down the river, the water's surface took a rather strange, unsuspecting and eerie appearance. A film of scum was seen on a widening body of what seemed to be dead water. Cans, plastic sacks, empty jugs, and miscellaneous litter were lying still along the edges. This was territory I hadn't had the opportunity of surveying earlier, and a heightened sense of caution came over me. The next thing I particularly noticed were signs posted—warning “**Danger**”, and “**Keep Out**”. I saw a large fenced-off area across what looked like the end of the river, but also heard a mysterious, muffled roaring of water as over a large pit. I rowed over to the water's edge to a place which looked safe enough and didn't appear too difficult to portage from, got out of the boat, climbed up a steep embankment over large boulders to the upper bank, and assessed the phenomenon I had come upon. Apparently, the river at this point takes perhaps a ten foot or more drop through a square, vertical, concrete channel, then tumbles down a mass of huge boulders before returning to the quiet body of water the Jordan River is more noted for.

After dragging the boat up the steep and rocky embankment, a decision had to be made whether to maneuver the boat on the other side of this massive barrier down a steep, twenty-foot or so embankment which was thick with large and jagged boulders and thistles, or to make a hundred-yard portage further along a path, bordering another of several golf courses along the river, and through a winding trail down a more gently-inclined thicket of willows by the river's edge. The latter alternative was chosen; and after a few rest stops were taken, the boat was again launched, and I returned to the relative peace of drifting past changing scenes of nature. I came upon several more families of nervous ducks, which quite predictably flew off before I could get anywhere close to them.

There were fewer sand and gravel bars to get my craft hung up on as I rowed further along the river. But again I came upon an unfamiliar challenge. Though I was in need of portaging my

dingy around another fall, slight but rocky as it was in my reflections, I was faced with a rather old, but tall wire fence in an area that had all the markings of an old cattle corral. To the side was a weathered and warped cattle chute which obviously had been used many years ago to channel the livestock up the incline and quite possibly into a pickup truck. Should I try to hoist the boat six feet up and over the ragged and rusty wire fence? Checking along the fence, I found an un-gated walkway just barely wide enough to lug the boat through on its side. But again, there was a fair distance to carry the dingy on my back along a burr and thistle-infested dirt path. I persevered, taking a few rests in between, till again, the boat was launched onto what readily felt a more friendly and welcome passage.

By now I had passed under the 106th South overpass. There were countless swallows' nests tucked quite methodically in any available corner and crevice, and the swallows were flying in such numbers as to create an audible breeze, nervous as it sounded. Digital space in my camera was quickly being eliminated with such attractions.

Before long, after passing under the 90th South overpass with no incidents or distractions, I came upon yet another rather strange barrier stretched across the entire Jordan. It was heavy vertical sheets of steel, serving as a sort of dam. The force of the river at one time or another had leaned a couple of the sections of steel a little forward—causing variation in the two-to-three foot water spill. Carefully, I tucked the boat in the willows a few yards distance from the pull of the falls.

Though I figured I had already had a fair share of challenges and disappointments, nevertheless, as I pulled the boat up the steep bank to start a portage, one of the oars slid off the back of the boat and into the river a few feet from the pull of the falls. There was no chance of retrieving it before it would go over the falls, so I ran several yards down the river to a view of the other side of the falls to hopefully watch the oar go over the edge. This was a fruitless strategy, nor was the oar seen in the calm stretches leading beyond the falls. Perhaps the oar got trapped in some of the debris between the steel partitions. With this thought in mind, I waded down to the rather deep water just over the falls and with my body's weight, tested to my satisfaction the security of a slightly-leaning steel partition against any possible collapse. Then, with a renewed sense of precaution regarding the safety of my electronic devices which I felt to keep on me at all times, I supported myself on the partition while wading toward the center of the river to where there was not only an accumulation of twigs and other debris, but a nearly submerged stick that looked like it might be the lost oar. When I finally reached it and pulled it out, not only was the object a mere larger stick, but it had a thick mossy growth formed at the submerged end with a nearly three-foot snake now unwinding itself from around the growth. Though the snake was probably more concerned than I, nevertheless, I decided to abandon any further search for the paddle, and conceded to a one-oar float the rest of my journey. "Look at John Wesley Powell", I thought, "negotiating the heretofore unconquered Colorado River through the Grand Canyon with only one arm. What was I complaining about?"

I went back to the boat, finished pulling it up the bank, unpacked it, put it on my back and portaged it to a small clearing by the water's edge in the thick grass a few yards further along the river. As I shoved the boat a little further into the water in a position ready to launch, I looked to the right, and within a couple of yards, I saw my lost oar floating listlessly. I could hardly believe what I saw. Nevertheless, while retrieving the oar, I put my mind to thinking logically about what probably took place. It seemed reasonable that after the oar had gone over the falls, it had floated down the river several yards, but with the backwards flow of an eddy from the force of the falls, had been brought over to the very location where I was. Phew! Again, I reflected on the fact that I had all my gear, both paddles, and that I was not harmed, nor was there any damage to my electronic devices.

Once again I was afloat. The journey wasn't half over, and still, I hadn't come upon the first falls I had identified from the Jordan River Parkway. Another frustration presented when coming around a rather fast turn in the river—the boat got wedged in a large clump of willows, with a swift current locking it in place. An oar-lock broke in my desperate effort to finally pry the boat loose. This put some limit on my options for rowing the boat. Nevertheless, I was on my way again.

It seemed but a few bends, rowing past more duck families, floating over deeper water, and with time gliding by, that I heard the approach of yet another water fall. This one I had scoped before. It was a rather rough and fast falls in the center of the river right at the entrance of the 7800 South overpass. I anchored the boat a safe distance from the rushing falls, climbed up the bank, and surveyed my options. The distance to one launching area was rather considerable, so I more carefully analyzed and executed another option, which was securing my gear more carefully in the bottom of the boat, tying a rope to a bracket on the bow of the boat, and guiding the boat over a rather wide and somewhat smooth-flowing part of the fall by the river's edge. Though there were a few huge boulders slightly under the water's surface, this option proved surprisingly very successful. This allowed me to float in the cool shade under the bridge. I then passed the Gardner's Village shopping area at 7800 South, and then past a rather lengthy industrial area where bulldozers and other earth-moving equipment were leveling a huge section of ground. But looking to the west, there were seen the more pleasant view of a few local roller bladers and couples strolling along the Parkway trail. Tall tufts of heather and rich patches of brilliantly-colored flowers broke the sometimes monotony of sage, reeds, willows and Tamerisk so often seen along the river banks.

It being a sunny day, and I being of a fair complexion, a generous film of sunscreen had been applied on my hands, arms, neck and face below my eyes. Perspiration mixed with sunscreen getting into the eyes can be pretty miserable. Continuing down the river, probably not an hour passed, and I again heard the rushing of falls at 6400 South. These I had also surveyed earlier. There were warning signs against possible danger posted well in advance of the overpass. On the other side, just as the river immersed in a calm and unsuspecting approach from under the highway's shading bridge, the falls started crashing over a good fifteen yards of large boulders at a rather steep incline. I studied my portage strategy fairly well.

As providence might have it, while I started dragging the boat up the banks, a man stopped on his bike, said he floats down the Jordan in a canoe with his children fairly often, and asked if I could use some help. Being somewhat on the spent side, I gratefully accepted his offer. He said, however, that he had an appointment with his family pretty soon. Well, there we were on the south side of 6400 South, and with a fair distance to portage both around the highway as well as the falls. It dawned on us that we could place the boat upside down, with the tip of the bow capped over the bike seat, and, balancing the boat, just wheel it on the Parkway trail across 6400 South, past the falls, and to the general location where I'd just drag it to the water's edge. That assistance gave me renewed strength for continuing on. When the oars, life jacket and a few other belongings were then retrieved to the boat from their hiding spot by the falls, I pushed out into the river again. The launch site was at Winchester Park, and five of six people were fishing at the rather popular riverbank, so I exerted effort to distance myself from them as quickly and quietly as possible.

I was now leaving West Jordan on the west side of the river and Midvale on the east, and entering the domains of West Valley City on my west side, and Murray on my east. Another golf course bordered the west side not far from the river, and I was soon winding through a beautiful marsh

and wetland preservation area set up by a department in Murray. Birds I had not previously seen nor heard were here and there nesting or gathering supplies. Frogs were heard as well. Groves of trees were seen nearby; though not providing me with the shade that would be so welcome at this time of day. I could hear children playing in the groves, but couldn't see any of them. The time was getting in the late afternoon, but the sun was still beating down on me. I found myself rowing over to the west side where shade was provided every once in a while under a large overhanging tree soaking up the river's water.

Just as during my bike surveillance, I was now sensing more the influence of a city, than of countryside. Large warehouses could be seen once in a while, and sounds of more traffic on 5400 South could soon be heard. Soon I passed a couple more parks on the Murray side, and another golf course on my left. Being later in the afternoon, a sense of near evening was approaching. One of the larger falls was now within hearing distance. The location was about 4300 South. I tucked the boat in a protective area by a large concrete jetty at the edge of the falls, got out, climbed the steep bank, and again surveyed and entertained a strategy for lugging the boat to a halfway decent launch site again. Just past the falls was a steep embankment leading to the river lined with jagged boulders again near two feet in height, so further options were sought. Not much further down the river was another steep incline, but a well-worn path was found weaving through tall willows and grass. In portaging the dingy, which weighed around seventy pounds, I'd have the boat upside down, with the bow just over my head, holding the bow with outstretched arms, and resting the middle seat or brace on my back. Sometimes, to soften a cutting effect on my backbone, I'd place a pillow or life jacket in between. Somehow on this portage though, the pillow must have dropped in a struggle through the fairly thick willows, for after putting my belongings in the boat, which I had already placed by the launch site, and having started my float again, I noticed the pillow was missing.

By now I was dodging a blinding sun low-positioned in the West while also rowing in a westerly direction a good part of the time. It was hard to tell whether I was headed for waves barely over the surface of rocks, or flowing waves over a deeper part. However, the river was now quite reliably deeper than it was in Riverton and South Jordan. And if it weren't for the compromised visibility, this part of the run would have been most delightful. Nevertheless, when the sun finally dipped below the horizon, there was no blinding effect, the temperature was pleasant, and the rowing was great—with several bends in the river and lots of trees and forage on either side of the river. However, now that it was dusk, and having no commitment parameters to end my day's journey, I was in a rather critical position to start negotiating such plans.

The time was pushing nine in the evening, and I knew of only one park that provided hospitable boat docking before approaching the Twenty-first South Dam, and that was Madison Park at Thirty-third South. I was running pretty fast in the middle of the river, it was getting dark, and before I knew it, I was nearing a somewhat familiar docking pad at Madison Park. I asked a couple of young men there if this was in fact Madison Park, and they confirmed that it was. Quickly, I tried to row to the side, but the current was too swift, and I was left to consider just a very few remaining options. The only other familiar road near the river for possibly arranging to be picked up was Twenty-first South. The river at this point, deep and wide, was also getting quite slow and very quiet. A few people were perched high above the river on a bank—casting their lines in the river. One particular woman began asking me several questions about where I started the float, what the river was like, and what I had seen along the way. This was close to where Twenty-seventh South dead-ended into an industrial area. But before long, the lady and I were out of conversation range.

It was now dark, there was but a mere current in the widening river, and late as it was, considerable noise was mounting from traffic passing over highway I-80 which I was now approaching. After passing under first the wide overpass and then the Twenty-first South overpass a block further north, I started approaching the wide falls just beyond. There, as I had learned from an earlier experience, a river continues along the same direction, but becomes what is called the Access Canal leading west, with no recreational development along its shores. And where does the Jordan River proper continue? To the east a large body of water dips through a large controlled concrete spillway before continuing as the Jordan River.

I was looking in the dark for a place in somewhat unfamiliar territory to pull the boat up to the side, but nothing looked friendly, and the sound of the wide falls was a little eerie. I needed to try to arrange for some transportation, for I knew that this was the end of my day's journey. I back-paddled for a good block—first under the Twenty-first South overpass, and then towards the I-80 overpass. Since it would not be feasible to have someone park on the edge of a busy freeway to pick me up, I rowed from the west to the east side of the river. There I found a rather quiet though compromised place. Amidst corroded steel structures and mossy beams sticking out of the water was also a lot of floating junk. There I anchored the boat and skittered up the weedy bank to assess my position. While the freeway was blockaded of course, I did find myself at the end of an abandoned and unused dirt road leading from the north, with weeds a good three-feet high straddled by old tire tracks. Beside this property and down an incline to the east was an industrial building which seemed to have nothing to do with the possibly fifteen feet high upper bank above the river where I was standing. I pulled the boat up the steep bank for safety from the river and in a position for ready retrieval when I would return with my car. Then I walked north for a block along the old dirt road to see if a car could in fact enter such a path from Twenty-first South and drive to where the boat was. At the end of the road was a huge and damaged earth-moving tire nearly blocking the way, but with barely enough room for a car to squeeze around.

From my safe leather camera pouch I pulled the trusted cellular phone; and it being just after ten o'clock, I gave my wife a call in assurance that all was okay. Then I proceeded to round up some transportation tentatively promised to me a few days earlier. I first tried to call a friend who said he wanted to pick me up after my float on the Jordan, but his phone was constantly busy. So I tried to call my son Stewart, who had always been willing to help me out in just such a situation, but no one was at home—after all, it was a Saturday night, and the likelihood was that many people would be away from home. So I called at my home again and again, but for some reason the phone wasn't being answered. Perhaps any of several people would have been willing to pick me up, but my pocket computer's battery had gone dead, I didn't have other phone numbers memorized, and the night was getting very late. I began feeling a little isolated in the growing darkness, and started wondering just how the night would end. It was just a three or four-block walk to a Flying J convenience store to the east, so when I approached the store, a lady attendant let me use a phonebook to look up a couple of numbers. When nothing came through for me, a male attendant said that when his work was over at 11:15, he could take me as far as 6400 South. I thanked him for his trust and willingness, but thought, "That would still leave me 60 blocks away from where my car was". Yes, a taxi was considered as an option. Nevertheless, I called my wife again, and this time she answered the phone and was given the number to where I was. Within the next several minutes, she called several homes, late as it was, and found only one person home and in a situation to rescue me. This was Dave Rasmussen, an available and willing friend in our neighborhood. Within just a few minutes from the call, he arrived.

We drove to Riverton to where the boat was first launched. As we approached my car, it was noticed that the interior light was on. Coming around the car, it was also noticed that the driver's side door was wide open. Though we wondered if someone had broken into the car during the day, I reflected on the initial premonition I had the first hour of my jaunt when I couldn't remember having shut that particular door. The windows were covered with dew both inside and outside from close proximity to the river's mist. And though the interior light had been on for about fifteen hours, the engine started without any problem. Again, I thought that certainly beyond my own preparations, I had needed help, and was fortunate to have received it as well.

Just one more major task remained before I could put closure on this day's adventure and tuck myself in bed. That was to retrieve my boat and other belongings in it. Having returned to Salt Lake proper and entered from Twenty-first South the abandoned dirt road that my boat was resting beside, I couldn't help observe the uniqueness of plowing through a field of wild weeds towering above the hood of my car. Well, the boat and belongings were still there of course (not that anyone would likely pass such a remote location, nor that there was much to lure anyone). In the faint light of the night, not so much lunar as freeway, I secured the boat on top of the car, and was soon turning off the old abandoned dirt road into contemporary traffic. Incidentally, when I had an occasion to stop by the entrance of this dirt road two weeks later, the huge earth-moving tire had been moved to entirely block the road so that no car could possibly drive around it!

Well, the next stop was home. Oh, there was one more task before I could feel comfortable going to bed. The clothes I was wearing were pathetic, especially my old tennis shoes and socks which had the blackness and unique odor that only the muddy bottom of the Jordan River produces, desperately needed to be taken care of. That being done, and having a much-appreciated shower at the end of a fifteen-hour venture, I was ready for bed.

There are a few conclusions from this experience possibly worth sharing. If a person wants a pleasant and relatively uneventful float on the Jordan River, starting at about 6400 South and possibly ending at 2100 South would be recommended. There would be but one falls to portage around at about 4300 South, the depth of the river would likely be ample, there would be plenty of interesting turns and twists in the river's flow, with many trees, shrubs and wild life along the way, and the jaunt would take but a few hours. But if a person had the time and wanted to venture further on the slow-moving and tree-umbrellaed Glendale and Rose Park sections of the river, another steep descent to the river is just beyond the underwater spillway at 2100 South which branches to the east. However, a much easier launch to start a delightful float is provided at a nearby park marina accessed from 1700 South and about 1100 West. A person would first be floating past old and tall groves, then gliding under arched wooden walking bridges near the edge of the well-manicured International Gardens of the Jordan Park stretching from around Tenth South to about Eighth South. From this point, the character of the riverside changes drastically, drifting past a mile of concrete industrial buildings and a few homeless haunts under the North Temple highway overpass, but then again along the heavily-shaded and slow-drifting waters through Rose Park, and then leading toward North Salt Lake.