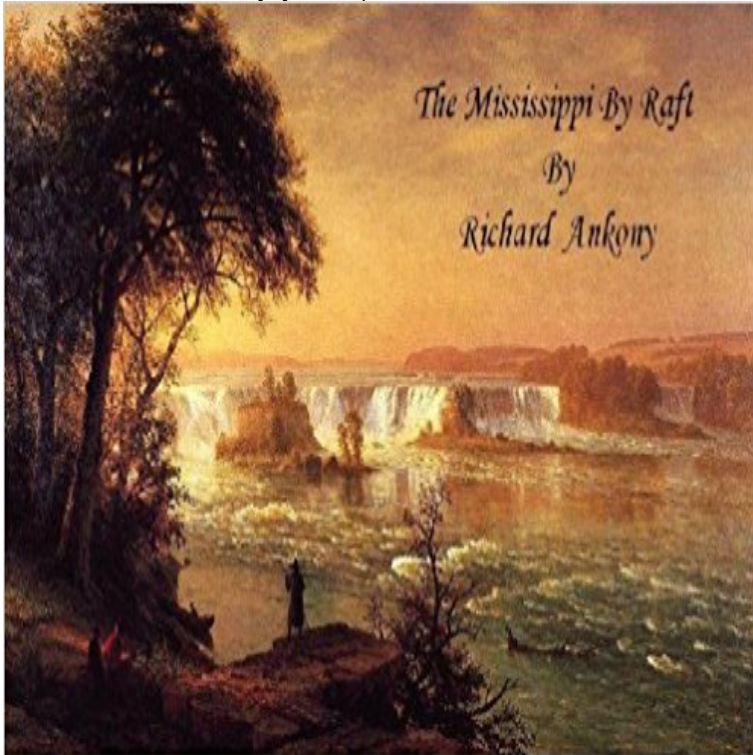


The Mississippi by Raft



The first thing you will learn about the Mississippi River if you travel the length of it, is that "Tug Boats Rule." These "monsters" that are pushing their massive loads in barges, both rule the day and the night and take no prisoners. For if someone tells you that they traveled the river and do not inform you of this, then they have done you a grave disservice. For either they hugged the shoreline the whole way, so as to keep themselves out of harm's way, or they didn't go at all. If you intend to travel this majestic and mighty river by raft, canoe or kayak then you must know this critical fact, otherwise your life will be in imminent danger. For those of us who went the distance in the sea-lane or center of the channel, learned quickly, that tugboats are to the Mississippi River as great white sharks are to the oceans. You must give them a wide berth and pay homage to them or you will pay the ultimate price. The second thing you must be told about the Mississippi River is that the river is alive, a living being, but not "Old Man River." Yes, she is a living being, a woman, a mother and a teacher who will embrace you with her love, tenderness and beauty. But as a teacher and a mother, you must pay attention and listen to her advice for your survival depends on it or you will die. The third thing you must be told is that the American people who

live along the riverbanks of this great river have to be the kindest and sweetest people you will ever meet. For from them, they restored my faith, renewed my dreams and from their simple humanity, I was born again. That said, come join three Detroit city white boys, who bought a \$50.00 rubber raft and a small trolling outboard engine with a broken propeller to take on the mighty Mississippi. We were clueless about waterways and rivers but a gentleman's bet pushed us to the limits and outside the envelope of what most people can only dream about. During our journey we gained the respect of the rivermen and the twenty-nine lockmasters that monitored us throughout our near 30-day adventure. Come follow our true story as three young men with \$150.00 each and a \$50.00 rubber raft navigate the mighty Mississippi with all its dangers at eye level. Follow us, as we and four other teams of young men from across the nation who met a different fate than ours, challenged the mighty Mississippi by canoe and small rafts. Join us as we travel through the heartland of America with just gas station maps and a \$10 dollar compass to point the way in this heart-warming venture. Experience the dangers that we encountered as we face broken dams, breached levees, flooding conditions, snakes, raging whirlpools and the dreaded four stackers that took the lives of our friends. See how an old black man in the bayous saved our lives as if an angel like in the movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*. The Hollywood movie, *Deliverance* is fictional and the actors play pretend but our names are real and our story is

true, so follow us as we travel at wave level 2,300 miles and 29 locks down the mighty Mississippi. I, Richard, invite you to come join my friends, Dave and Tonsabuns, who lived the dream of the young at heart as I recall the greatest trip of my lifetime. Lastly, as an epitaph to the memory of my dear friends who have since disappeared and to those eight young men who perished who will rise again to the sure and certain resurrection to the life of the world to come when the Mississippi River shall give up her dead. I, Richard, last man standing, write this in remembrance of yous. Now, we are immortal.

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• Planning Your Mississippi River Canoe Trip “ Outdoor Adventures We plan on replicating this tremendous journey on a homemade raft, floating 1,692 miles down the Mississippi River from Stillwater, MN to the Gulf of Mexico.

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