

## Jon's 2009 Ultimate Hugh Heward Challenge Log

### *May 12-Final Thoughts Third Installment*

**The Results**-How did I do? This is a question that has been asked of me quite a bit and there really is not a direct answer. Because this was not a race we really can't measure our accomplishments against other paddlers or a clock. I suppose we could compare our journey to that of Heward, but that would be like comparing The Wright Brothers experience to that of a modern day shuttle astronaut. In the end I can only give my statistics and measure my experience against what I had planned on happening.

**Some Stats**-The trip took me 16 days of paddling and I covered approximately 492 miles on the water. This mileage was derived mostly from my maps, rather than actual GPS miles so I am using 500 miles as my final number since I'm sure I didn't paddle in those nice straight lines I had on my maps. Plus it's a nice easy number to say and use in other calculations. I didn't take any days off from paddling but, as will be explained below, I did have couple of rest moments. Thus I averaged 31.5 miles/day which isn't bad as I had imagined averaging 40 miles a day.

My **longest day** of paddling was 48 miles on Day 10 when I went from Webber Dam to Knapp Street just upriver from GR. My **shortest day** was 16.5 miles on Day 3, which was when I tackled downtown Ypsilanti and their damn dam. This was also the toughest day physically and mentally.

Apart from the short portages (less than ¼ mile) around dams, log jams and impassable water such as found at Delphi Mills or Hudson Mills, I figured I only walked 9 miles of the trip. After killing myself paddling up through Ypsi, I chose to walk the roughly 1 mile through downtown Ann Arbor as the river began to look frighteningly similar. I then was able to paddle all the way up to Williamsville Road but had to make a ½ mile portage to get to Williamsville Lake. My final portage was the biggie, the 7.5 mile walk around Portage Swamp (Marsh) which I chose to complete from 8 pm to 11 pm on Tuesday, the 12<sup>th</sup> because I really wanted to avoid gawkers on the road, wanted to camp at the put-in off Hannewald Rd. (much nicer area), it was freezing rain, blowing stink and snowing that evening and I thought walking and being warm sounded better than sitting around in my tent, and finally I really wanted to get the hell out of the Huron Watershed! So I am very pleased with the amount of water I was able to navigate through with the kayak and would find it hard to believe Heward walked less.

My favorite stretch of water was the Portage River before it became a drain. My least favorite stretch was the 2 mile from Kent Lake to the dam in Ypsilanti. I doubt I will ever paddle more challenging water in such a dismal environment.

I was on the Huron for 5 days (counting the Detroit River and Portage Creek), on the Grand for 6.5 days and on the big lake for 4.5 days. My greatest paddling accomplishment on the trip has to be the crossing we completed going to Chicago. Beating the Huron was no small feat, but to take on the big lake at this time of year and win was such a gift. I would say the last four hours of the crossing were the hardest part of the trip, followed by the Ypsi section of the Huron, then the morning we paddled into Grand Rapids due to the 40+ mile winds, and finally the section of Portage Creek from Kaiserville to Williamsville.

I had no severe gear failure, although my primary paddle gave up the ghost on day 4, requiring me to use an old trusted friend, the first paddle I ever owned, to take me to Lansing, where I switched to my wing. Also, my old tarp couldn't take the constant rain on this trip and I replaced it in Lansing also. My favorite equipment was my Jetboil and my portage wheels.

There have been a lot of comments on how bad the weather was during our Challenge, and yes, it was wet, cold, windy, and grey much of the time. But I was never uncomfortable or discouraged due to these conditions. I would say I brought the right mix of clothes and gear to deal with it. The worst part of the weather is that it prevented me from "bathing" as I really didn't want to get wet. So I would use baby wipes each night and just had to deal with the smell of my clothes as the days went by.

The food budget was perfect, and kept the fire hot throughout the whole trip. While not diverse or gastronomically appealing, I enjoyed every bite of oatmeal, jerky and the hot dinners and was never hungry. However, I still lost 10 lbs on this trip. Most days I consumed 2-3 qts of water, which I mixed electrolyte mixes with, however, on day four I believe I filled my 3 qt water bag twice and consumed it all!

I was challenged on day three emotionally. The weather was crappy, I was tired from several nights of restless sleep, I began to miss family, friends, and yes, even work, as this was the second full day without familiar company and the river just sucked (as if I hadn't said this already). Otherwise, reflecting back, I believe that being on my own enabled me to paddle through sections of river, physical pain, and mental barriers that I might not have had if there been others to consult with. I was joined by Rusty on Day 9 and Day 16, and by Jim Winter-Troutwine on Day 11 and really enjoyed the company on the water,

While I did paddle 16 straight days, I had two small breaks on the trip. Day 7 I got off the river around 4 pm, was picked up by my family and taken to the Hampton Inn in Lansing (thanks Rusty). Here we celebrated Jacobs's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, went swimming, and ate Pizza! Next morning, after hitting the breakfast buffet twice, I re-supplied from my stores box and was picked up by Rusty. We went to Walgreens for wrist braces and enjoyed a free lunch with all the Challenge participants and supporters. I got back on the

water in Diamondale at 3:00 pm and paddled through Lansing that day. Day 10 found me outside Grand Rapids at 5:00 pm so I called for a ride home (7 miles away), enjoyed a grilled steak for dinner, and re-supplied for the open water section of the trip. I was back on the water at 11:00 am the next morning.

In the end, how did I do? I did great! I completed the entire route, lost no gear or body parts, stayed warm and full, and finished with a crossing. I look back now and think of the trip and smile, rather than grimace. Finally, while I have no way of knowing, I'd like to think we were the first people since Heward to paddle from Detroit to Chicago via this route and that's pretty damn cool. Would I do it again? Not without some serious motivational factor (like money!). If I put this much time and energy into something again, I would hope to experience something new. One last time thanks to Jim Woodruff for dreaming this up and thanks to all of those who supported me in this endeavor, especially my family and Rusty McBride.

**May 8-Final Thoughts Second Installment**-During this event there were so many trying moments and unexpected obstacles, yet now, not even a week later, I really only remember the biggest of these. My overall reaction to the trip was that it was fun and extremely rewarding. Perhaps that means I have a little bit of masochism in my genetic make-up, but I'd like to think it was because I went out there with a good plan, proper equipment, and the right mental approach.

**Methods**-Earlier in the log I talked a bit about the things I did to prepare for the trip and some of the gear I planned on using. Well here's a bit more detail on that planning and how it was applied.

**Mental Preparation**-From the start I really only visualized starting this thing in Detroit and finishing it in Chicago. As we all do before any big event I painted mental pictures of those two parts of trip. I studied the documents provided by Charlie and Jim and used Google Earth and topographical maps extensively to learn the route, but I really tried to avoid making judgments on any particular sections of the trip to avoid needless worry and stress, or worse, unfulfilled hope. This approach kept me from being disappointed or frustrated when things were bad, and to celebrate all the little victories. There were a lot of "Yee Haa's" along the way! It also kept me from getting upset when I was measuring upstream travel in feet, rather than miles! Lots of folks have asked how I dealt with the awful weather conditions experienced during this particular two-week stretch as well. We had lots of rain, wind, and even some snow. Yet when I think back I can recall that weather, but not any negative effects from it. With the right equipment and clothes, weather is no different than the thermostat in your house. You make adjustments based on the current conditions and forget about it!

**Physical Preparation**-I did a good job of starting with a solid conditioned body. I have put this body through some pretty tough assignments over the years. But man, I had no

idea how painful the early days of this trip were going to get. Pounding against that upstream current day after day took a big toll and I don't think there was any way to really "train" for this. Notably, both wrists developed tendonitis almost immediately (I wasn't able to relax my grip much), the muscles in the torso just killed (that means I was paddling properly, right Ron?), and my poor hands were a blistered, cracked, and cut-up mess. In the beginning I dealt with the wrists by soaking them in cold river water and taking Ibuprofen, against the advice of a trusted friend, before finally getting some braces after 6 days of paddling in complete pain. The braces worked tremendously well and if I do anything similar I will wear them from the start. For the body I used sore muscle spray from Elemental Herbs at night, stretched out in the mornings and before bed and eventually that pain turned to muscle. As for the hands I used a great hand salve called All Good Goop from Elemental Herbs, popped a few blisters and kept them as clean and protected as possible, and once I hit Lake Michigan, they began to heal. There were times at night when I wondered what permanent damage was being done to the body, but the vision of finishing in Chicago was strong medicine and allowed me to ignore the discomfort.

**Paddling and Eating-**That's really all I had to do each day, every day. My paddling gear and clothing held up really well. The portage wheels were so important to my success on this thing, and along with a long painter I had to use to walk the boat up through the strongest current, allowed me passage when paddling wouldn't. A handful of times I had to separate my two-part paddle and use ½ like a canoe paddle. But my Falcon managed all that upstream work like a dream, took the poundings on the cement, iron, and rock with no damage at all, and surprisingly, my butt never got sore!

My maps were excellent. I used Michigan Topo! Software to produce maps for the entire Huron and Grand River watersheds. The portage "cheat sheet" provided by Charlie was invaluable and the Huron River Map was a great aid. I really only had issues on the Detroit River (I had failed to map a route out here, thinking I knew the river. I didn't) and on the Huron above Flat Rock Pond. Otherwise, I was very confident in my position on the route and maps making the trip that much easier.

Eating was focused on two things, high calorie and high protein foods that could be made with boiling water. There was comfort in warm food and drink when it was cold, and the pizza and sandwich I was able to enjoy during the Lansing break were such a treat, but for the most part, I was looking to keep the fire burning, not the palate satiated. Breakfast was oatmeal with a handful of dried fruit and French pressed coffee every morning, lunch was jerky and gorp and cheese, and dinner was something out of a bag (the lasagna was my favorite) with a candy bar for dessert (can't live without my sweets). In between I would consume 2-3 Cliff or snack bars and 2-3 Cliff Shots (those high carb, jelly like concoctions) every day. Hot tea before bed if it was particularly cold, otherwise I drank 3-4 qts of electrolyte fortified water throughout each day. I took my water from park

fountains and such for most of the trip, but had to filter and “zap” water from the Huron, the Grand, and Lake Michigan at least once. The system worked, as I never got sick!

I had lost about 7 lbs preparing for the Challenge, and I lost 10 more during the trip. Better than a diet pill any day, but I really couldn't afford to lose those last 10 lbs and am slowly starting to put that weight back on.

**May 5-Final Thoughts First Installment**-Now back at home and settling into the rhythm of regular life rather than the rhythm of the water. I've had so many words of congratulations from those who had followed this adventure via the SPOT Tracker, logs, and blogs. I had no idea what was going on out there and how many of you were staying tuned in. However, in a strange way, on the water I swear I could feel all of you pulling for me and there were many moments that energy was needed. So to you all a big thanks!

Some really big **Thank You's** go out to the following: Toni Kay, Madison and Jacob Holmes, Bill & Paul's Sporthaus, Rusty McBride and Family, Kathleen Mooney of Fire and Water Art in Lowell, MI (she turned me on to the portage cart that was instrumental in getting this thing done), My Parents, Steve Bailey, and a shout to Eddyline Kayaks for the Modulus technology. My boat looks almost new still and you should have seen what I did to it on this trip. Finally, a big thank you to Jim Woodruff for his vision and blueprint on which the trip was based, and he and his daughter Karen's huge efforts in keeping the information flowing while we were out on the water.

For now I am going to summarize the whole trip by looking at it from a purpose, method, and results point of view. Trust that I had a few minutes of reflection on the journey and I seemed to keep breaking it down into those areas.

**Purpose:** This whole epic adventure was initially pitched as a paddle sport Challenge Race-First one from Detroit to Chicago-by the Verlen Kruger Memorial Foundation as a fundraiser for Verlen's Statue. Because I didn't communicate with anyone until two months prior to the event, I didn't realize that at some point the race perspective was scrapped and the focus became on simply trying to replicate the Heward party's 1790 expedition. So all of the rules and conditions I had been building my plan around had been tossed. It also became apparent that the trip was developed by a hardcore group of Kruger Sea Wind paddlers and that they were skeptical of the sea kayak as an appropriate vessel for the journey. So my initial purpose, which was to race to Chicago through Michigan changed radically once I officially threw my hat into the ring and to begin getting the details on who was involved in this and how the focus had changed

While the racing aspect was one of my main motivators, from the first I heard of the event last August **my main purpose** for attempting the challenge was to test myself against the realities of the route. Did I have the skills, physical ability, equipment, and

mental ability to paddle solo across the state and take on such a long stretch of Lake Michigan?

At one point shortly after I entered the mix, the appropriateness of the sea kayak for this event were questioned. Having no knowledge of what a Sea Wind Expedition canoe was, and being a proud sea kayaker, a **second purpose** was immediately formed: To show this group that the kayak would be a capable vessel for this adventure.

Finally, I read and re-read both the accounts of Heward's expedition and Charlie Parmalee's 2008 adventure over the winter. Comparing modern adventure travel to the every day working environment and exploring the heart of southern Michigan by water became **my final purpose** in choosing to take part in the event.

Now that the trip is done, I have discovered, as alluded to in the first paragraph of this entry, a **fourth purpose** evolved during the event. I believe far more spectators and fans than we expected found entertainment, inspiration, and most surprisingly, a new perspective on their own lives through our daily struggles and adventures.

**May 3-** It is done! What a journey and it didn't end quite like I had envisioned. I was unable to provide information this week, as my cell phone didn't work out on the lakeshore so I was out of contact until Saturday morning when I had access to Rusty's phone.

The big lake was pretty kind to me until Thursday afternoon, when a sudden squall kicked up 4 footers with driving rain and forced me into Grand Mere State Park. It was just plain luck I was there as most of the shoreline in that area was all rock rip rap the locals are using to keep their precious lakefront property from washing into the system. Set up a hasty tarp and planned on making New Buffalo but the wind and rain kept up all evening, so I spent the night in the woods there.

The next morning I paddled in front of the Cooke Nuke Plant, opting to stay near shore rather than go around the buoys, which went about a 1/2 mile out into the lake. Within 2 miles of passing the plant, I was "boarded" by the Coasties for violating Federally protected waters! The crew was super nice and after issuing me a verbal warning, spent 10 minutes questioning me on the journey, the challenge, and SPOT technology. I have nothing but the best to say about our Coast Guard-They are very professional, but personable at the same time, unlike some other marine law enforcement divisions I've had contact with in the past.

So Friday's paddle took me to New Buffalo, where I was to meet Rusty in the afternoon. It took so long to get there I swear I must have passed it! Around 2:30, as I was approaching their little pier, a kayaker approached me from offshore on the lake. Turns

out it was Rusty, who had arrived early and was out looking for me. Apparently our small craft are hard to spot!

We pushed on to the Indiana Dunes, set up camp, and were treated to a spectacular sunset right over the silhouette of the great city of Chicago. Seeing those three tall buildings was like a magnet and I was jumping up and down with excitement at being able to see the end of the journey.

We awoke to very good lake conditions and a great forecast. As you can tell by our track, we did the 36.4 mile crossing. Started in light sw winds with 1 foot chop and at the halfway mark, were paddling about 5 mph on glass. Around 15 miles from Chicago we began noticing small swells in the glass, and I mentioned to Rusty that I saw no boats to have made them and we wondered where they were coming from. At about 13 miles out that question was answered. For 4+ hours we paddled into 20-25 mph headwinds and faced 3-5 foot waves. We had no choice but to go forward, and I am so thankful that my wingman was there. Can't say there was ever a time where we were scared, but faced with weakening bodies and strengthening winds, there were moments where options besides paddling on were considered. In the end, we dug deep, swore loudly at the wind and at a city the apparently didn't want us, and in the end won the battle.

Came ashore at the planetarium at 7:15 pm-11 hours in the kayaks. Rusty abandoned his boat as he climbed on the seawall and collapsed, dehydrated and slightly seasick. I hooked his boat up and towed it around to the beach where I clumsily exited, found my legs again, and with the help of my wife, got our gear up to the parking lot. Utterly exhausted, we've slapped a few high fives, enjoyed a beer over dinner on the drive back to GR and parted ways at 2:00 am this morning.

I wish the intrepids the best of luck in completing their journey and would have liked to been able to stay to see them come ashore. I hope we can all get together in the near future and toast this journey. I have an endless amount of respect and admiration for explorers like Heward who took these trips without the luxury of weather forecasts, gps, cell phones, technical clothing and camping gear, etc... What really blows me away is that I am ready to settle back into the comforts of my everyday life, while Heward just traded boats and kept right on going.

**May 2-**The boys are ready for the last leg of the UHHC adventure, spirits are high and Jon is looking forward to a shower and clean clothes. After Jacob's soccer game is over we are driving to the Windy City to meet them at Shedd's Beach. Huge thanks to Anna and Rusty McBride for my peace of mind, Jon will not be alone on the final big crossing.

**May 1-**Jon got pulled over by the Coast Guard! Instead of going around the buoys at the Nuclear power plant, not wanted to waste time he went in the zone. What a good feeling that the Coast Guard are keeping us safe from would be terrorist. Jon only got a warning,

and they were very interested in the technology of the Spot. Rusty the wingman McBride found Jon, paddling down the shoreline a while, until they reached a good place to camp, they could see the Chicago skyline. Wow was Jon geeked when he called last night. Way to go, all your long hours pouring over maps, sleepless nights, etc. has paid off.

**April 29-**Jon got on the water around 7:30 am, two hours earlier than yesterday. Took a half hour catnap on a beach, and is making great time. Rusty is going to meet up with him in a day or so, and they are planning on hitting the beach in Chicago Saturday weather permitting. Got my last instructions on what to have Rusty bring, battery charger! Jon has taken killer pics along the shoreline, his words.

**April 28-**Jon made it to the Big Lake in Grand Haven about 1:30! Pulled out to bask in his feet and dry a few things out. Made great time down the lakeshore this afternoon into evening.

**April 27-**Jim called Jon this morning excited to get going, Jim had to wait awhile. Sorry Jim, I was having trouble getting the log to update to his website, he was working on that and not getting stuff around for the last leg of his adventure. Jon's mom Pat took him to Knapp Street launch. Jon called when he reached River Side Park, informed me that it was his third toughest day yet. Two-foot waves/white caps, he was glad to have Jim with him for company. Pat and Jon's 96-year young grandma meet Jon at Johnson Park in the pouring rain. He said it was the neatest seeing his grandma watching him pull in. Down river the Berridge family met up with him Amy, Rick, Emily and Maggie brought along a box of Thin Mints!

**April 26-**I'm back in home waters and back at home tonight! Mike and Ann Mulder were down at the Lowell access to say hi. Thanks! It provides a big lift seeing friends and getting support along the way. Most people look at me funny if I tell them what I'm trying to do. In Ada I was met by Toni, the kids, Ben and Gabe Smith, my rock star neighbor boys. They provided me with some killer cookies which allowed me to make it the last 6 miles. Took out at Knapp Street launch around 6:30 and while waiting for my shuttle had two more visitors in Jim Winter-Troutwine and Wayne Norlin. They're thinking of paddling with me in the am. So I've taken my second shower in 10 days and will be in my bed for the first time in those same 10 days. Trying to get everything dry and am planning on being back on the water around 9:30 tomorrow for the push to Grand Haven. There is a two-three day window of good open water weather starting on Tuesday!

**April 25-**Rusty and Jon started above Grand Ledge and soon began paddling with those doing the 25 mile portion of the 50 mile Hugh Heward Challenge. Stopped in Portland for the festivities, great chili, and a t-shirt. Took off around 3 and ducked storms all afternoon, finally calling it quits at the Webber Dam. Jon and Rusty had a wild night of weather, one of the worst Jon has ever tented in.

**April 24-**Woke at 5:30 am to get breakfast and head back to Lowell. Jon told the kids you are going to hate this, but I'm going to read the paper and head back to bed. Rusty took him to Rite Aid to purchase wrist guards, and then to the river. Jon paddle back upstream to Jim's house, were a cold Bell's Obron and good conversation was waiting for him. Chuck had every participant meet at the English Inn for lunch check out the web site below. They had a great time. Rusty brought Jon back to Dimondale. After meetings Rusty was heading home to get his kayak and will camp with Jon and paddle with him until Sunday afternoon.

**April 23-**Jacob turned double digits today! Got a later start then we were planning all I will say is a 13-year-old girl named Madison. Called Jon to get his location, he said north side of the bridge in Dimondale. Missed our turn, called again. How can you miss a bridge? So after getting to the bridge, could not find the dirt road still. Called Jon once again and asked if he paddled by a marina. Needless to say he was getting very frustrated with his wife. Went further in to the town proper and there he was standing on the corner! Good thing he was, his directions sucked. Wonderful to see him, but could not believe how swelled his wrist were, plus all the cuts on his hands and arms. He stated if it weren't for the high water, he would not be able to get thru. All the debris in the river, he had to paddle between the trees beside the actual river.

First words out of Jacob's mouth were dad shave that mustache. Madison's were when you get home you have to get your haircut. Seven day without washing the hair was pretty ugly. Ordered pizza, and heard his tales. Jon and Jacob went to the hot tub to relax. Even our two fuzzy muzzles got to stay in the room. Thanks again Rusty, just those few hours was wonderful.

**April 22-**Making plans to head down for our visit and restocking Jon's supplies. Jon wants us to get a hotel, so I called Rusty a family friend, if he could get Jon back to the river. Madison, Jacob has school and I need to get the paper out. Rusty offered his bonus points and rented us a room at the Hamilton Inn near Dimondale.

**April 20-**Jon was extremely wet and cold and decided to visit Hell for lunch. After fish and chips plus three cups coffee was on the river. That afternoon friend and fellow kayak instructor Patty caught up with Jon. Jon said there was someone on a bridge waving. Patty made her famous chocolate chip cookies, and took some fabulous photos. I already order a set from Kodak Gallery. He borrowed Patty's phone to call, since he only had one bar left on his cell. Thanks Patty!

**April 18-19-**Jon stopped for lunch near a pavilion there happened to be 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade students from Ann Arbor on a field trip visiting water treatment plants. The teacher came down to see what this crazy man was during paddling in a downpour. Jon explained about the Hugh Heward Challenge, etc. The teacher was retelling the story, when Jon heard him not telling everything correctly... the teacher inside Jon came out went up and had a nice talk with the students, explaining everything. Jon really stressed for them to look up the history on Hugh Heward and Verlen Kruger in the canoes that he designed. This little visit was what he needed to lift his spirits; the poor guy was getting lonely and needed human interaction.

**April 17-**Jon called to fill me in on what happened on day one. At the launch he asked his dad for the skirt, they remember Jon taking it off the hook in the garage, but must have not packed it. He called Tiffany at Riverside Kayak told her what he needed and that his dad was coming there to pick it up. Big shout out to Tiffany at Riverside Kayak, Jon owes you big! Jon started down the river, and would meet up with Craig's fishing party to get the skirt from him. After the hook up Jon took a wrong turn at Alberque, lost one hour, wasted energy on four miles up stream.

Huron is flowing faster than the Grand, which Jon is used to paddling. At the start of the challenge there was another participant that wasn't on the original list, Larry, he is going for broke too. After, the wrong turn Jon is approximately 45 min. behind, but was too tired to try and catch him. Jon called home at 7:30 pm and had gone 37 miles on day one.

**April 16-**My father in law Craig picked up Jon for the drive to Detroit, they were going to check certain areas on the route for both difficulty and possible camping sites on the way down. Craig was going Walleye fishing on the Detroit River the next day. Cannot thank my father in law enough for driving Jon down.

**April 15-**Took care of all the loose ends at Bill & Paul's today. Many thanks to the gang for allowing me to take this much time off from work!

There was a nice article in the Grand Rapids Press last Saturday resulting in much encouragement from friends and former students who learned of the trip by reading the paper. Looks like there might be a few friends to paddle with along the way!

Finishing up packing, charging, and checking lists tonight. Will do a mock loading of the boat in the morning to find that perfect balance with a full load.

My dad is picking me up around 10:00 am and we will head east. The hope is to meet Jim Woodward and Dan Smith in Portland, look over some of the route south of Lansing, and then spend the evening and night at Uncle Brian and Aunt Judy's in Brighton. We'll get up early on Friday and head off to Belle Isle for the 8:30 am launch.

**April 7-12-**Gathered all my gear and clothing, food, and other necessities in the basement. The trick here is to turn big piles into smaller piles. I restocked and inspected the safety/signal, first aid, and repair kits. Taking my time on the food planning and packing. I'm starting out with 8 days worth to get me to Portland; everything else goes into the "re-supply box". I plan on using this box like a grocery store in Portland and Grand Haven.

**April 11-**Heading out on a date night with my wife, which we have not done in months. First stop was a local bike retailer looking at bikes for a birthday present for Jacob who turns 10 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Then out to dinner to a place we would go to when we were dating. Shared a bottle of wine, great food and talked about my up coming trip. Then to the grocery store to get the last few supplies crossed off my list. Ran in to Aaron Snell, a good friend who is in the process of making venison jerky for the trip. Can't wait for that "World Class Meat"!

**Route:** Paddle from Belle Isle down the Detroit River to the Huron River, turn right and head upriver to Portage Lake (8 miles upriver from Dexter). Travel a series of small streams, lakes, and channels to get to the edge of the Portage Swamp. Pull the kayak 8 miles along the road, skirting the swamp, then re-launching in the Portage River. Follow down to the Grand River and turn right. Travel the Grand to the Portland area for a re-supply meeting with Toni and the kids (Happy Birthday Jake!). Continue on to Grand Haven for another re-supply stop then hang a left and follow the lakeshore towards Chicago. If weather permits, I will attempt to shave some time by crossing to Chicago somewhere around Michigan City. Landing at 12<sup>th</sup> Street Beach near the aquarium. Goal-Get it done in 16 days!

Starting to get that anxious excited feeling in the stomach as the last week of preparation begins. Actually had a dream where I brought the wrong paddle, left my portage wheels at the launch, and had to re-paddle the first leg!!! It's starting to get emotional around the house as well. This may be the hardest part of any trip.

**Early April-**Acquiring supplies from Bill & Paul's and the grocery stores and organizing it in big piles in the basement. Installed new deck rigging, tightened screws, inspected and cleaned the Falcon with 303 the other day. Took a paddle with the portage wheels and found I needed to tighten a few nuts and bolts (couldn't get the knob off to engage one wheel!)

**February-March, 2009-** I have been emotionally and morally supported by family, Bill & Paul's, my wing man Rusty, and numerous friends to do this thing. Thanks to all. Thus far I would also like to thank Black Diamond, Jetboil, Mountain House, Chota, Cliff Bar, Steri Pen & Kokotat for assisting me in acquiring equipment and provisions for the trip. I intend to paddle my trusted Eddyline Falcon 18 modulus powered by Werner for

this adventure. I am sure to add more Brands to the list (this is something only a self serving outdoor retailer would do, sorry).

Conditioning has been weekly paddles up and down the Flat and Grand Rivers with mileage running 5-16 miles per paddle. I also started running (haven't done this since the mid 90's!), push-ups and sit-ups, Nordic tracking, and three days of hard tele skiing at the Crystal and Nub's closing day telemark festivals!

Route planning has been super fun using Topo Map software, Google Earth, Charlie's notes from last years trip, Lake Michigan Charts and the trusty Gazetteer.

**February 17, 2009** – Sat down and wrote an e-mail to Mark committing myself to the challenge. I would be meeting with a number of possible sponsors in the next few days so if I was going to do this the time to get off the fence was now. I've been reluctant to pull the trigger since Rusty and Steve are out, and I would be leaving home and work for up to three weeks. Therefore, I sat in front of the written e-mail for several minutes before hitting the send button. Ironically, about five minutes after sending, Rusty called to remind me the start date was only two months away and wondering if I had made my decision yet!

**December 2008** – Still haven't committed to the race, but I did ask my parents for a set of those portage wheels for Christmas and that's what I got! Thanks Mom and Dad!

**September-October, 2009-** Did a couple of 25+ mile paddles and used a borrowed portage cart known as the Original Swedish Style Folding Cart to do a 1-mile portage walk as sort of litmus tests to see if this really something I wanted to do. After each paddle I was pretty encouraged by my enthusiasm and desire to go farther. Also started paddling with an I-pod. Found this helpful on the day it poured rain for the entire four hour paddle.

**August 2008** - Made initial plans with Rusty McBride and Steve Bailey to paddle the archipelago of islands between Sleeping Bear and Mackinaw Island in the spring of 2009. Shortly after asking Steve to accompany us, he sent us information about this 500 mile paddling race being called the Ultimate Hugh Heward Challenge. It will be a re-creation of the original 1790 expedition, led by Hugh Heward, to open up the inland trade route between Detroit and Chicago. Because it was logistically right out my back door and had elements that the open water trip didn't (upriver, portaging dams and watersheds, downriver and open water) and the appeal of the historical sense of the journey, I began to seriously consider this as an option.