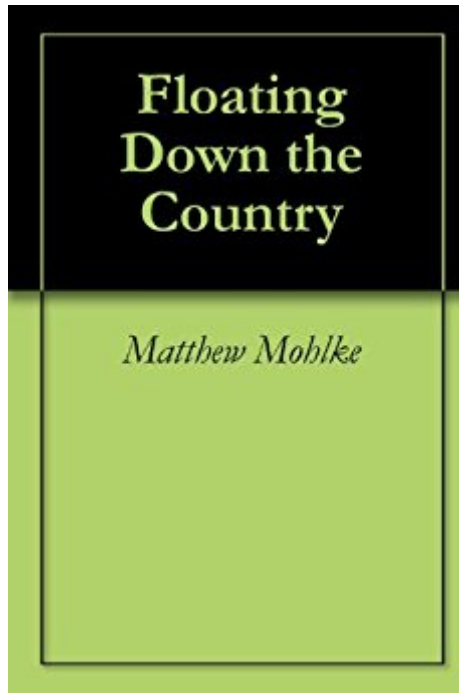




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Floating Down The Country



Synopsis

Travel along my fantasy float through experiences with the Chippewa Indians of the North, to 4th of July with the KKK, to a standoff in the dark woods of Mississippi at gunpoint. Dissecting our nation with a paddle was done on a vagabond's budget of \$3 a day. On constant lookout for love and free meals, days of peaceful solitude were broken by bouts of chaotic experiences as I strove to reach a moral plateau, but couldn't avoid trouble along the way.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Matthew captures the spirit and soul of a young man on a journey quest for freedom from everyday life. He thinks outside the box. As he encounters dangers and temptations, he deals, sometimes in not ways that high society would accept, but that work for him. This is an amazing river adventure and coming of age story. Start to finish excitement.

Only read this book if you want to learn what NOT to do as you float down the Mississippi! This idiot makes all kinds of mistakes and drinks like a fish the entire trip despite multiple promises to himself

to keep his body pure on this trip. I learned a ton about planning my own trip down the river but that does NOT make this a five-star book!

I loved this book. It made me want to go paddle a big river and never come home again. Maybe I might.

Matthew Mohlke describes the Mississippi as the jugular of this country, the pulse. After reading about his journey, I would have to agree. The book starts at the river source where the water is cold and calm. It doesn't take long for the elements to start raining hell on him. His poor preparation becomes apparent very early on. Throughout his journey, he's constantly warned of what lies ahead, but he keeps on moving. The gargantuan barges he has to dodge on the way often times make him seem suicidal. It's kind of funny to consider how much safer (relatively speaking) his journey would have been had it not been for man's monstrous machines. Descending thousands of miles down the country, his journey ends in hellacious summer heat at a metropolis of sin. It's a spiritual journey, a drunken adventure, a daily struggle of physical endurance, and at times just a relaxing read like floating with the current. He runs into all kinds of kindness, trouble, and crazy characters. Glimpses of the harsh reality of drug abuse, racism, and lost minds riddle his story. Some parts were downright depressing. That feeling of the law fading away as you ride out into the river was made very, very real in his journal entries. I lived in Greenville, MS for a few years and reading about his adventures from Memphis to Natchez were all the more real and touching being familiar with the area. I laughed aloud when he found himself in some of the same backwards places I had found wandering the area years ago. His story is easy to relate to given how much distance was covered slicing right down the center of the country. Knowing the next landmark but not knowing how things would go terribly wrong made it hard to put the book down. It's crazy. It's fun. Highly recommended for anyone that's gazed in wonder at the Mighty Mississippi River.

In David L. Miller's book *The Complete Paddler*, he speaks of certain people who "somehow managed to stay alive and recover from mishap after mishap as they bungled themselves down the river." Speaking humbly as someone who's had his share of disasters, I do think some of the excitement in this book must be due to Mohlke's ill preparations. A 1-star reviewer here said that this was a story of a "drunken frat boy" with poor equipment and planning who survives by "sheer luck". This is basically true, but the knowing immaturity of the author at the time he wrote this book carries much of its charm. He's not going to preach at you -- not when his confused readings of the

Bible and the book of Mormon on the water aren't enough to help him avoid temptation on land. Yet the conclusion of this book clearly allows you to frame the text as a warning to be better prepared physically and spiritually on whatever river you may be traveling. Mohlke's decision to write this in journal format allows you to go along for the ride, as he tries to find dates, gets intoxicated, and fails to make sense of the world or himself. His writing style is straightforward, and his humor deadpan. He records each of the promises made to himself just before they're broken. Although his lifestyle is very different from mine, his honesty about his weaknesses made me grow to understand him. I wish this book had been edited. His spelling is idiosyncratic and there are passages that could have been smoother. I got tired of his descriptions of women, which rarely went beyond them being "pretty" and a certain age. It seems typical and perhaps unavoidable for solo travelers to typecast the people they interact with, and while Mohlke does this, his attitude toward them is at least generally positive. I would recommend any compiler of true short essays on roaming the country to take a look at Day 72: Natchez, Mississippi, easily the most packed, hilarious day of the trip. I would certainly recommend this book (among others) to anyone interested in accounts of major American river journeys. I doubt it would be the first book I'd recommend. Although Jonathan Raban has quite the negative attitude in his book *Old Glory*, it is more expertly written, and he spends more time visiting different aspects of how the river functions. After that, you can read this book, and Mohlke will show you a powerful way to wrap up this kind of narrative.

Obviously some people are a bit holier-than-thou in their opinions and are not really competent enough to review the book in an objective format (ditto for all the complaints about editing...like you could do better). If you are looking for a classic epic novel, or one with a history of the Mississippi, or a biography of the Mississippi, this is not the book. Go read *War and Peace* or Wikipedia. What this book is, is a chronicle of one man's journey down the river. It is written in a plainspoken manner that anyone who has listened to a good storyteller by a campfire can relate to and speaks to many people. The adventures that Matt runs into are fascinating, as are many of the people that he meets. He makes you want to grab a paddle, hop in the canoe with him and crack open a beer. The book is fairly fast paced and while it does have its lulls, keeps the reader going. I recently got my hands on the newly updated version and was even more impressed.

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