

out over the wetlands that surround Lou's home, I am mesmerized by the beauty of this place. It is a landscape painter's—or photographer's—paradise: distant brown hills in the morning haze, golden reeds and grasses encroaching around the deck, ancient worn trees framing the panorama.

A healthy breakfast precedes a late 10:30 start, timed again to coincide with the ending of the ebb. As the river narrows, our progress is more discernable and we can ignore the tethered reeds clearly floating in the wrong direction. Yesterday's pains have receded, but new ones are sidling forth. This time it's the coccyx at the base of the spine. We abandon the long hardened cushions fitted for the seats in favor of small inflated pillows. Ahhh, such relief.

Through Rio Vista, and into Steamboat Slough. Just as yesterday, there is no stopping, no

bathroom breaks. Once again we have a schedule, to reach Freeport -- 35 nautical miles away --before the next flood falters. If we miss it we'll have to row against both tide and river flow. On the Thames, when we were tired of rowing, one of us would take the bowline, jump on the towpath where the horses once pulled barges, and drag the boat along. But there's no towpath here. We spend the balance of the day on the slough, emerging back on to the Sacramento River as night falls. Another spectacular sunset, the sky on fire behind the silhouetted trees and the still water reflecting the glow.

We soldier on, Jon indefatigable, stroke defatigated.

At Freeport, our destination, the only eating option, the Freeport Grill, stops serving at 10 pm. Once again the tidal gods watch over us, slow down the Moon, and let us slip into the marina with ten minutes to

spare.

The Sacramento pilgrimage was over.

We sleep on the wooden dock listening to dripping water and a sleepless freeway.

Sunday is a simple nine nautical miles, although we get no help from the cosmos and struggle for every mile, bouncing in the wake of restless fishing boats. By now the various aches have coagulated and the overall numbness filed out of sight, muscles have hardened and posture improved, but when, at 1 pm, we turn into Miller Park, I pour a celebratory dram and suddenly it all seems worthwhile. A church bell sounds in the distance. The Sacramento pilgrimage was over. Hallelujah!



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