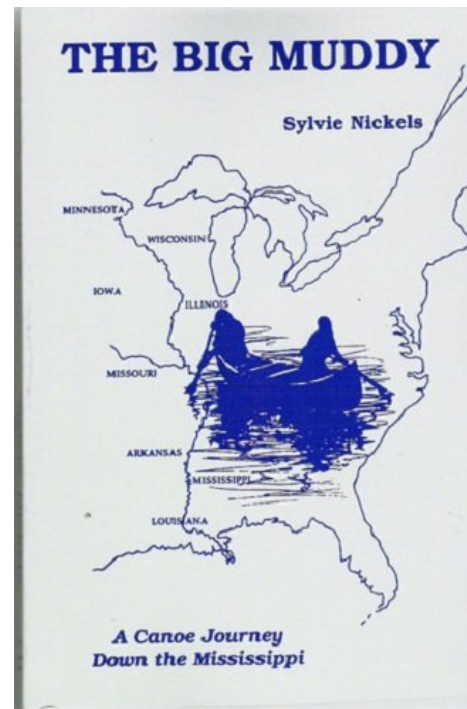


Thornborough & Thornton W.I. Report October 2015

Sylvie Nickels isn't the first wife to have taken up her husband's hobby in order to keep track of him; no doubt there are many soccer/cricket/golf erstwhile widows who've done much the same, but what about paddling a canoe down the full length of the Mississippi (over 2,300 miles) taking 4 months to do so? Now that's devotion of a different kind or was Sylvie Nickels just joking? Her talk last week at the W.I. was full of irony and humour so it's hard to call. The sheer effort, the endurance, the physical and emotional toughness required to complete such a feat didn't seem much of a joke to her amazed listeners, despite her light-hearted tone.

What a fascinating story Sylvie Nickels had to tell. The trip from the topmost point of the Big Muddy (as it's known to all who live near the river) to New Orleans was full of incident: raging torrential rain, immovable dams made by determined beavers, swamps, alligators, erecting a tent in a sandbank (not recommended) and endless redtape, letters and permissions required from the 10 USA states en route. Sylvie and George (the husband) were the objects of much interest from the locals ("We just lurve your accent!" heard at every stop-off) and were regularly kidnapped by curious onlookers to be wined and dined or helped by the huge tugboats used to carry freight on the river. They travelled through Mormon country (assailed by an influx of May flies) Hannibal (home of Mark Twain), Gracelands, Vicksburg (scene of a dreadful civil War siege) and Golden Meadow where they were honoured with 'freedom of the city'. What an adventure! The W.I. group was spell-bound by Sylvie Nickel's stories and photos and truly inspired by her extraordinary talent to tell a tale. One of our best speakers, people said afterwards.

As you can gather, we love a good talk at the W.I. and appreciate a wide range of topics and subjects. Especially well regarded are those from our own community or near environs, so if you have something you could chat about for 45 minutes or so, we can promise an enthusiastic reception and as many cups of tea as you can muster. Please get in touch with one of us. Madge Carey is best as she organises the programme. You don't have to have canoed down the Mississippi to qualify!



Cath Sayer