

# 2 different rivers are in the Skagit

As a youngster growing up in Hamilton I remember just taking the Skagit River for granted. It was there, over by Coal and Iron mountains, and in those days anyone could catch fish just by dropping a hook in the river.

It was something to also be feared, and as I grew older and wandered farther from the back yard, my parents warned me never to go near the river. It seemed almost every year there would be an accident of some sort, and someone would drown in the river. From Hamilton on upriver the current was swift and the water ice cold, and in those days we didn't know much about life jackets.

There were no bridges upstream from the Clear Lake bridge and the only way to cross to the south side was by row boat or ferry. The ferries were about six miles apart and were all hand operated with no motors. The current provided the crossing power. Each ferry was attached to an overhead cable and the ferry operator turned the ferry into the current, depending which way he wanted to go.

As I have mentioned in previous columns, we left here in 1950 and returned in 1976. One of the things that was still the same was the good old Skagit River. One of the new things (to me) was the presence of David Button, who, among other enterprises, was operating Pacific Northwest Float Trips. These were trips down the upper part of the river, in open boats, and involved rough water. Usually the customers for such trips are younger people.

The float trips involved the upper reaches of the Skagit and as time went by, Button decided the lower Skagit could also be utilized in a bit different manner. From this thinking arrived the "Skagit Queen" and a bit smoother

joined by Tony Flynn, a member of the Argus staff.

We started down the Skagit in an 18-foot rubber boat and it was a very comfortable ride. The river is much different than upriver, being so much broader and smoother. In about two hours we arrived where the North Fork of the river joins the salt water and we beached and climbed up a small knoll to eat our lunch. What a broad and beautiful view!

After cruising around a bit and seeing many types of wild birds, we started back up the river. Included among the birds were a number of bald and brown eagles. The eagles

## Slipper's Soliloquy

By Fred Slipper

didn't seem a bit timid and flew quite close, resulting in some good pictures. (I hope; the film hasn't been developed yet.)

On the way back upriver, we stopped and visited a friend of Button's, Lynn Garrison. Garrison lives right on the river and his home is the "Hermitage," a twin-hulled craft about 25-feet long. Alongside his home he had four other types of boats. One had a small cabin on it that could be lifted to shore if he so desired; another had a greenhouse enclosed with plexiglass and we had a radish from his enclosed garden; another was a row boat which he used for river transportation; and the last one was a bigger boat with an engine of large horsepower which he uses to tow all the others when he moves from one spot on the water to another. He was in the midst of planning such a move, but the tide conditions had to be just right.

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The float trips involved the upper reaches of the Skagit and as time went by, Button decided the lower Skagit could also be utilized, but in a bit different manner. From this thinking arrived the "Skagit Queen" and a bit smoother type of river travel called "channel tours."

Button had been promising me a trip down the lower Skagit for quite some time, and a few days ago, he delivered. I met him at Edgewater Park in Mount Vernon at 10 a.m. and we were

river transportation; and the last one was a bigger boat with an engine of large horsepower, which he uses to tow all the others when he moves from one spot on the water to another. He was in the midst of planning such a move, but the tide conditions had to be just right.

I have rambled on and this is getting too long, so must stop. I didn't get to see the "Skagit Queen" or see Button's lower Skagit tour course, but he has promised to take me on the rest of the tour and I will report on it at that time.