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populated with highly “lit” individuals. “Hey, you’re going the wrong way!” they shouted, and “That dog has a life vest on, ha ha!” I tried to ignore their unflattering comments but then along came their children. Now we had the additional obstacle of screaming little ones with high powered water guns. It was clearly not going to be easy to get to a calmer place.

As we tried to make progress, Bella chose to sit backwards on the kayak, allowing her to lie down and be closer to the water. I tried to be playful with the children and gave a “ha-ha” shout in return to their antics. We kept going till we finally became little dots in their vision. If only Bella

could have given them a paw salute!

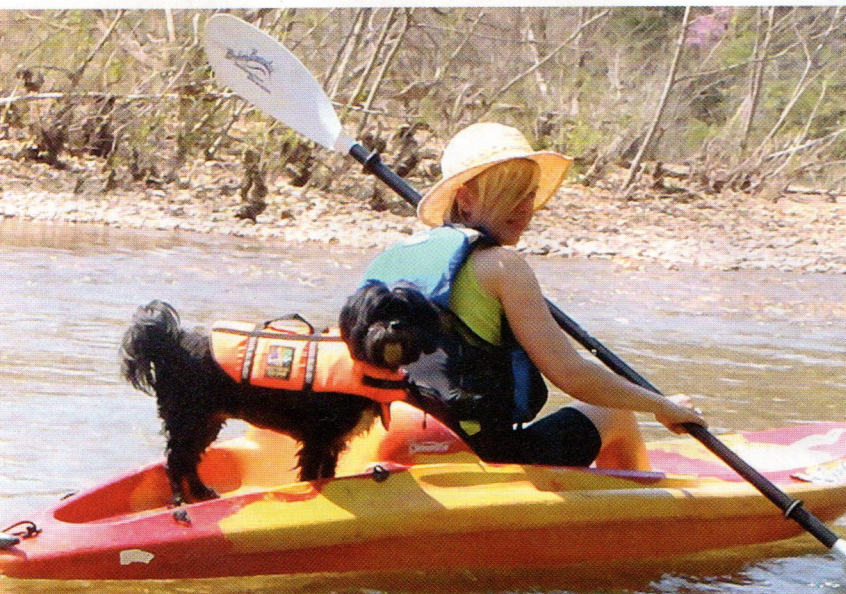
At last, we reached an area of natural scenery and peace. The current became placid. Turtles swam near the kayak and ducked their heads under water when they found Bella’s curious nose too close for comfort. Families of turtles bathed in the sun on fallen trees. Some of the babies sat on their mamas, enjoying an extra lift to the sun’s rays.

Soon after, a large bass swam by, then a little dead sun perch rose from the water. I used my paddle to place her on the kayak so Bella and I could get a better look at her vibrant colors. I noticed her sharp little teeth. Bella came close to having the little finned discovery as an afternoon treat before I returned the fish to the water.

Later, we hit a small and pleasant current so I decided to stop and take in the melody of the water. I watched a river otter swim across the river with flexible ease and brave persistence. As I stood in the current and enjoyed the water around my legs and feet, Bella was content to sniff the sand and rocks. Then she sat serenely near the water with what I call her “happy pant”. I felt like I was part of the river and realized Bella and I were connected by what we were experiencing. We had to be still like the turtles to feel it. We had to be steadfast like the otter to get through the current and past the noisy campers to reach this place of peace.

When kayaking, I am so close to nature I can feel my true spirit. Bella’s step-sister Sophia sometimes comes along, but I wanted Bella to feel closer to her true nature too, away from our stressful city life. I enjoyed her company on this river trip. She was good natured about wearing her safety vest, and seemed curiously pleased with her surroundings.

Enjoying our destination was well worth the trials we’d gone through to get here. Just like the turtles, fish and otters, Bella and I were together and at one with nature. 🐾



Bella, complete with safety vest, prefers sitting in the back of the kayak.



Jennifer encourages Sophia to try out her life vest.