

The 2012 He-man was yet another epic trip that involved 14 men of all ages, from different walks of life. This trip will be remembered as a trip of firsts. It was the He-Man's first year on the Wisconsin river, it was also the first time that the first day would be the longest paddle, someone slept in the bed of a truck, there was a flamingo at one of the campsites, and a hammock was slept in. It is also the first time that I (Douglas Senior He-Man Irwin) have written the scribe entry.

Friday Night

As I recall, Friday was a glorious day. The sun was shining bright in a perfect blue sky and the temperature was just right. Cool enough to get away with wearing pants, but warm enough for Al to wear the shortest shorts he could find. A few anxious He-men headed up early and to their surprise were not the first ones to enter the cabin that week. When Todd, Garth, and Ron opened the small cabin's door, they were not expecting what came next. Mysteriously, a duck had entered the closed cabin by some means yet unidentified by his discoverers. However, they did conclude that the duck had been there for quite some time as there was plenty of droppings left behind by the rather uncivilized animal. Thus, upon my arrival I was witness to the cabin being the cleanest it has been since around the time it was fabricated years ago.

As more He-men gathered at the hallowed grounds of the Roloff cabins there tummies started rumbling; thus, and they decided it was time for dinner. The three previously mentioned He-men were joined by Jake and myself for a delicious fish fry. Fun was had by all as we reminisced past trips and tried to convince the rookie, Jake, that this trip is, in fact, fun (a task that gets harder as the years pass). When their bellies were full and all were satisfied, it had come time to head back to camp. He-men continued to pour in from all corners of the tri-state area. Al and his sacrifice to the waterways of Vilas county, Eric. Brady and Dan somehow found their way. Dave and his caravan of Jessie, Ian, and Kyle. Last but certainly not least, Kenny arrived. Though he seemed to take his time with his arrival as I don't recall him getting there that night. Which is either because he just showed up in the morning, or I over consumed beer. Regardless of the whereabouts of Mr. Kenny, the on-time He-men continued the festivities.

A brilliant fire was created as the He-men sat around and read aloud the always entertaining answers to the registration questions. All was well with the world until Dave told us that some of the answers had been stricken from the records. He informed us that being prompt with our answering of the questions was unacceptable and will under no circumstance be allowed. So only the people that procrastinated and submitted their answers within the allowed time before the He-man had their answers read.

As the sunlight began to diminish, we decided it was a good time to swing some splitting mauls to determine jobs. Don't be silly, of course we put our beers down before trying to split logs. This year we decided that instead of picking your own log to split, you had to pick the log that your competition would have to split. Of course, as always, we split in order of years on the He-man. The competition went as follows:

- Dave just barely beat Ron
- Todd beat Al
 - However, Todd picked a weak log for Al and one of Todd's "quarters" was a piece of paper. I later used that paper to keep track of this scribe entry.
- Garth beat Doug
 - There was a controversy about where the wood was supposed to be placed. Doug had his wood in the general area first, but apparently it wasn't good enough for Comrade Roloff.
- Dan beat Kyle
 - Someone had a rotten log picked for them. A truly rotten move.

- Ian beat Jessie because of Jessie's inability to hit the log. (or anything close to the log)
- With 3 rookies we had Jake split twice and first he beat Erik then he handled Brady like a boss.

With the last swing of the maul, all the jobs were spoken for. The easiest jobs going to the old guys and the harder jobs left for those that don't need walkers. After the competition, we rounded up the gang and played our annual night volleyball game. This year matched the old guys against the youngsters. Teams were something like this:

Studly Young Guys: Dan, Brady, Ian, Jessie, Kyle, Jake, Doug

Old: Dave, Ron, Al, Garth, Todd, Eric

Since we never really keep score during this just-for-fun game, no one really knows who won, but I think it's clear which team has the advantage. With the games all done everyone eventually made their way into the cabins and prepared for a good night's sleep to ready themselves for the trip ahead.

Saturday

Saturday began the way it always does. Somehow the old guys call on their old man power of being able to wake up with almost no sleep. At least I assume they got almost no sleep, as I had removed my watch to avoid being in violation of the rules. It was time for all to start moving out of bed. As breakfast was being prepared, others began packing their bags and dressing for the trip ahead. We enjoyed the usual and always delicious breakfast burritos and discussed the day's plans.

The plan was to begin our trip near the start of the Wisconsin river, just feet from Lac Vieux Desert, where the Wisconsin River begins. Once all the cars were packed and the canoes were tied down, it was time to drive to the start point. Upon arrival, some of the guys had to travel to the end point to drop off a car.

The weather was great and the water was up along with our spirits. With some spare time, the eager He-men that remained at the start got the canoes in the water, and readied the gear. Let it be known that the canoe carrying Doug Irwin and Jacob Malewicki traveled the longest distance during the trip. With the extra time allotted, Doug put the canoe in the water a little further upstream and paddled up to the culvert, allowing the canoe to go through as he heroically jumped out of the canoe, ran across the road, and caught the canoe on the opposite side. Once all the shenanigans were over and the other guys made it back, the journey could finally begin.

At its humble beginning, the Wisconsin River is only a few foot wide, winding creek. The river continued like this the entire day as each canoe jockeyed for position around the curves. After a few beer-o'clocks, we managed to make it to the lunch spot. Lunch was provided by Ian and Jesse. After our bodies were refueled and rested, we headed back onto the water on a quest for a campsite. We had no time to waste due to our late start time. As the day wore on, I began to question the words of the great Dave Becker. He often says that our destination is "around the next bend," but I'm beginning to doubt him as many bends had past and it seemed as though we were never going to find a campsite. When we finally did find the campsite that we intended to stay at, we found that it was already occupied. As always, I was prepared for a fight to the death; however, the other He-men decided it was a better idea to move to the next campsite as we were unsure about Al's fighting skills and didn't want to lose a member on the first night. Besides, Dave said the next campsite was just 2 miles away, "around the next bend." Following some grumbles, the He-men took back to the water to head further downstream in search of an unoccupied campsite. With the famous words of Dave Becker, "It's not that far away" ringing in my head, I finally came to the decision that Dave cannot be trusted when asked about a destination, for it felt like 10 miles before we reached the next campsite. When we finally did reach the campsite, we had precious little daylight to set up camp and it seemed as though a storm was about to descend upon us. This campsite was also occupied, but as I remember it, Ron had a chat with the occupants and in true He-man fashion engaged in fisticuffs ... or something like that ... and they decided to move. Everyone got camp set up

and for the first time in He-man history, someone decided that hanging from a tree was a good sleeping arrangement. Dinner was provided and served by Dave and Kyle, but no one knew what they were eating as the darkness had already settled in. We were simply handed a plate and a fork and told to dig in. The smell resembled stir-fry, but that could have just been the smell from the last meal cooked in the He-Man pan. Whatever it was, I found quite satisfying after a long paddle and headed to bed shortly after to rest up for a long day ahead.

Sunday

As we awoke the next morning, there wasn't much that wasn't wet, including everything in my hammock. My tarp did not stand up to the wind and rain as the thunderstorm had lasted most of the night. I quickly started a fire to warm up and noticed that it may have been the only time that I was among the first to rise. Breakfast was presented by Dan and Brady and consisted of bacon, sausage, eggs, and hash browns. It was delicious and much needed after a dreadful, windy, and wet night.

After everyone had camp packed up we continued on our way downstream. At the start of our day the river was about 20 feet across and had plenty of bends. As the day drug on the river continued to get wider and straighter. Each canoe jockeyed for position, as it is the He-Man way, periodically stopping for snacks and water breaks. We stopped under a bridge to have lunch. This lunch was prepared by Doug and Jake and included sandwich type foods with a delicious salmon salad. The lunch site was very nice and had a picnic table for us to lay out the food. There was also a nice bit of luscious, mowed grass for us to lay down and relax on. Such things are not common on a trip like this, so many men took advantage of the comfort and sprawled out on the grass just long enough to begin to get comfortable. Unfortunately, the call to adventure was loud enough to get us back in the water. Or maybe it was the fear of being left behind on the side of a highway. Either way, all men were back in their canoes and on the way to the next campsite. The day was pleasantly warm and the shade was abundant. Warm enough to shed the layers from earlier but not too warm to melt the ice in the coolers. It wasn't long before we arrived at camp. The paddle was much shorter than the day before. We had ample time to set up camp. The wet equipment and clothes from the storm last night were hung up to dry in the sun and warm breeze. Some men even decided to head out to deeper water for a swim. After all of us were back and camp was set up, it was time to find the axe throw log. A log was found to throw at and the throwing lines we determined. After everyone had their warm-up throws the action began. The Axe Throwing Competition was as follows:

- **Round 1-** This round was basically a continuation of the warm-up round as the log was so close that the axe barely had to leave one's hand to hit the log. Nonetheless, half of the He-Men were eliminated and their names were not recorded to save them the embarrassment. But it was recorded for some reason that Ian and Kyle have really bad aim.
- **Round 2-** With Ron, Kenny, Ian, Jesse, Dave, Kyle, and Dan embarrassingly out of the mix; Al, Todd, Garth, Doug, Brady, Jake, and Eric still had a shot at glory. In this exciting round we saw Al and Eric advance to the 3rd line while Todd and Doug advanced to the 4th. We also saw Garth knock over a beer during his throw. This was viewed as alcohol abuse and he was disqualified him from the competition.
- **Round 3-** This round was a round that could be quickly forgotten as the four remain competitors mocked the throwing abilities of the guys that were eliminated in the first round. Nobody stuck the axe which means that Todd and Doug advanced to the next round as they were at a further line.
- **Round 4-** With only two men remaining, this round would separate The He-Man from just another He-Man. As I remember it Todd hit two shots and on the third the axe struck the log only to fall to the ground with a chunk of log. That area had just seen too many strikes in this bout and Todd's mighty throw was the blow that did it in. Next up was Doug. He needed to hit all three shots to win or one to two shots to move to round 5. The pressure was on. The first two shots

were solid hits, it was almost too easy. As he lined up for the 3rd, he felt a little bad for his fellow He-Man. It was not Todd's fault that the log could not stand up to his perfectly thrown 3rd shot. Out of the kindness of his heart, Doug decided to make his 3rd shot more difficult. He had his buddy, and once groomsman Jake, stand in between the target and him. Doug had to throw the axe over Jake's head and hit the log the he could no longer clearly see. He lined up for the shot, wiped the sweat from his brow, and told Jake to stop whining and trust him. Doug took a shot that resembled a "granny shot". As the axe left his hand it appeared to have the trajectory to send it far beyond the log. As everyone looked on, some in horror and others in relief, it looked as though there was hope for Todd. As the axe was directly above the log it looked like this round was over. In spite of the bad throw, the axe struck a branch and for a moment was suspended in the outstretched fingers of a maple tree. In what seemed like an hour, the axe left the branch, as if thrown by it, and fell directly on the log. The crowd went wild and Doug was the Axe Throw Champion.....

Although that could be fabricated, Todd could have just missed all of his shots while Doug hit one, but where's the fun in that?

After the thrilling match, it was time for dinner, which was provided by Todd and Garth. I don't know about the other He-Men, but this meal has been my favorite since I first came on this trip. We had a south-of-the-border themed meal. Meat, beans, rice, veggies, salsa and tortillas.

It was a beautiful night so many of the He-men stay out around the campfire to hang out before turning it in.

Monday

Monday morning was glorious, the night had been dry and the temperature was perfect. Breakfast was provided by Al and Eric. As we set out on the last leg of the trip, I expected another one of Dave's hollow promises about the end being close. To my surprise, it was a really short paddle. We were at the landing and packed into cars in no time. Our journey on the Wisconsin river had come to an end, but the He-Man festivities were all but over. As we drove back to the cabin, some struggling to keep their eyes open, we knew there was still more in store; we still had the Tug-of-war to finish. We decided to have the competition on Trout Lake to avoid the current that we would have had to face on the river. The competition unfolded like this:

Ron was relentless and beat everyone just kidding

Round 1

Dan and Brady won a long, hard fought battle against Ron and Ian
The mighty Kenny along with Jessie beat Doug and Jake
Dave and Kyle were too much for Todd and Garth
and Al and Eric advanced to the next round on a bye.

Round 2

The fresh Al and Eric beat the wore out team of Dan and Brady
Dave and Kyle beat Kenny and Jessie who were obviously wore out from Doug and Jake

Final Round

Dave and Kyle edged out Al and the rookie Eric

After the Tug-of-war, the He-Men headed out into the glistening waters of the illustrious Trout Lake for the annual jumpin' in. The water felt great and all were refreshed, and probably a little less smelly. Another He-Man was successfully completed, but we needed just one more thing before we could get some dry clothes. The elders had spoken previously, and the He-Man of the year was Jessie. Having no choice, Jessie handed himself over to the rest of us and we gave him a good toss back into the water to commemorate his win. He was awarded a first edition, He-Man of the Year paddle, hand-crafted by Douglas Irwin.

This marked the end of yet another successful He-Man adventure. Everyone packed up their things and started heading out. Some went to Paul Bunyan's to feast and watch Jessie eat an enormous amount of ribs, a true He-Man tradition.