

Sweet Car ... Sweet Fudge ... Bittersweet Swim

By Jim Dreyer, August 20, 2015

Although most would agree that the *Pfeiffer Lincoln Murdick's Fudge Run* ended up being more of an accomplishment / feat / chore (choose your terminology) than what was intended, I will not call this swim a "victory."

After all, I told the world that I was going to swim, pulling a new Pfeiffer Lincoln MKC on a barge (called the Kemo Sabe) to Mackinac Island ... and while mother nature took me on a wild ride all over the Straits between St. Ignace and Mackinac Island, while pulling the Kemo Sabe at least twice the distance as planned (the majority of the time against the current) ... in the end, I did not pull my unusual cargo to the island under my own power.

Everything started out picture-perfect. It was an incredible sunrise (so was the sunset) ... see the pics at the end. The water was flat calm. There was no current ... nothing helping me or hurting me. It was all me. That's how I prefer it.

While picture-perfect, I did find out that the Kemo Sabe and her cargo weighed 19 tons (as estimated by Captain Jonas Carpenter), as opposed to the 16.5 tons that I had conservatively estimated. Would the added weight be a factor considering my recent left rotator cuff injury I've been rehabilitating?

When I started from shore, I may have made it look too easy for the spectators on shore at the American Legion Memorial Beach in St. Ignace. After a warm-up swim, I found my rhythm quickly. Right from the beginning, I was making incredible progress.

As I progressed toward Mackinac Island, the crew and I began doing the math as they would give me updates on my position when I would feed. I was on a pace to finish this by around noon. Where would we have lunch on the island?

When the media asked how long this adventure would take, I had estimated that it would take between 12 – 20 hours ... and here I was swimming at a 5.5 hour pace! I thought about Katrina, my assistant, and how she must be scrambling to get all details taken care of and get to the island ahead of me. Specifically, I thought of Arnold Mackinac Island Ferry and their "Jim The Shark Dreyer" world record cruise they had scheduled for 1:30. I would already be finished! Cruise patrons would get a free \$20 raffle ticket for their \$30 cruise berth. Upon reaching the finish line at British Landing, should I fill the Pfeiffer Lincoln MKC with The Original Murdick's Fudge (for the free fudge for raffle ticket promotion) and do a double-crossing back to St. Ignace? I was actually considering this. The Pfeiffer Lincoln MKC will be raffled at the finish line of the Labor Day *Mighty Mac Swim*, and I wanted these raffle promotions to be as successful as possible.

Katrina worked some magic and arranged for the 11:00 Arnold departure from St. Ignace to serve as the cruise. At about 11:10 the Arnold cruise boat pulled up next to us. They were honking their horn, everyone was cheering, and I could clearly see Kat and Dan Pfeiffer on the roof of the 2-story ferry taking photos and waving. I could clearly see the docks at British Landing, and I yelled to the cruise patrons that the British would be landing soon.

In the dark recesses of my mind I knew that mother nature could turn on me at any time. I've certainly experienced it before. I remember thinking "we shouldn't be celebrating early!" It couldn't happen this time though, right? After all, it seemed like I could almost reach out and touch the finish line, now just a mile away.

It's as if the cruise signified the change in my fortunes. As soon as the ferry left me, turning toward the town's harbor on Mackinac Island, an east wind began kicking up. It was noticeable immediately, but I didn't know I was losing ground until I stopped for David Volk to throw me my feeding bottles, and Paramedic Tim Webb informed me that we were going backward.

It didn't take too long before I could clearly see that I was losing ground. The crew began strategizing, just as I was doing in my own mind. I swam for all I was worth, and we tried fighting the current from every angle imaginable ... yet we kept getting pushed backward at an ever-increasing rate. I learned later that the mood of the crew initially fell with the increasing east wind and current, but they were inspired to keep their spirits up due to the fact that I refused to quit battling.

It only took me 3.5 hours to get within a mile of the island finish line, but for the next 6.5 hours I would swim directly against the current, while getting pushed all of the way back to St. Ignace with my 19-ton load. We were also getting pushed north, and we ended up north of town near the St. Ignace Airport, actually further west than where we had started.

When we could see the lake bottom, and were about to beach the Kemo Sabe, we knew our choices were getting limited.

Captain Jonas suggested that I try swimming south again, but this time straight out to sea, as if I were swimming to Round Island. He thought the seas looked calmer in that direction, and perhaps if I could make forward progress, I could get past the southern tip of Mackinac Island and then follow the coast north to British Landing (there was also a southerly component to the east wind). It would be a very long haul, but I was willing to try.

So I began swimming south with all I had. I've learned that if you want to see something bad enough, you will see it. I could swear that I was getting closer to the southern tip of the island, but after a short period, my crew stopped me and Tim told me we were still losing ground. I asked him "are you sure?" He assured me that the bad news was true. Tim charted and plotted my route on a topographical map the entire way, noting my position every half hour. Tim's map and the online map from my SPOT satellite tracker both looked like an etch-a-sketch.

So what to do? David suggested that I disconnect from the barge and see if I could free swim against the current (I was confident I could do that). Tim also suggested that once we reached the point near the finish line where I started getting pushed backward, that I re-connect to the barge and try again to finish the swim from where I left off. I liked these ideas. They seemed to provide the best option. Quitting was NOT an option. So I said "okay, let's do it!"

So they disconnected me, and before the engines could be started on the Kemo Sabe, I had already sprinted through 100 yards of the current. I was flattered when Captain Jonas later commented that what amazed him more than my physical strength, was my mental strength ... how I would just say "okay," put my head down and persevere no matter the obstacle. I was asked about how I do this in a number of interviews, and my answer has always been ... "you have to be wired a certain way. You have

to be able to turn things on and turn things off. You have to turn off pain and human emotion. By doing that, you turn on the button that turns you into a machine.”

That is easier said than done. However, if you know you are not going to willingly quit, you may as well joke with your team and help keep everyone’s spirits up.

It took me around 4 hours to swim through the current back to the island. There were times, even free swimming, that I was swimming on a treadmill, not moving. Even the boat struggled under power in the current at that speed.

When I got back to the place closest to the finish line, where I had left off, the current was stronger than ever, so the crew knew there was no point in hooking me back up to the barge. I would free swim all of the way to British Landing, and the current never let up, even just 100 yards off shore.

So after the Kemo Sabe docked at British Landing, the Lincoln MKC was filled to the roof with The Original Murdick’s Fudge, and the promotion to sell raffle tickets to raise funds for revitalizing Michigan neighborhoods through Habitat for Humanity was intact. I was presented, quickly ate and enjoyed a half-pound box of Murdick’s Fudge. My low blood sugar was craving it!

The swim was done, and I felt fine. Right toward the end, my right rotator cuff started giving me some problems, which is kind of funny since it’s the left rotator cuff that had been injured recently. Obviously, I must have been compensating for my left shoulder, thereby affecting my right shoulder. I’m happy to report though, that the soreness is gone at the time of this writing ... so no permanent damage!

In the end, I swam for nearly 14 hours, 10 hours pulling the 19-ton barge, with 6.5 hours of those swimming against a strong current. Looking at the chart, I swam at least the equivalent of to the island and back to St. Ignace with the barge, followed by a return trip to the island swimming free (against that same current).

Do I consider this swim a “victory?” No. I did not accomplish what I set out to do ... plain and simple. However, I am pleased with my effort, perseverance and what I was able to accomplish in the face of this extra challenge.

I will forever be grateful to “Team Dreyer” ... Katrina Murphy, Tim Webb, David Volk, Captain Jonas Carpenter and First Mate Don Marszalec. They are not only incredibly talented in what they do, but their loyalty and dedication to me and the mission is second to none ... and it will never be forgotten or taken for granted.

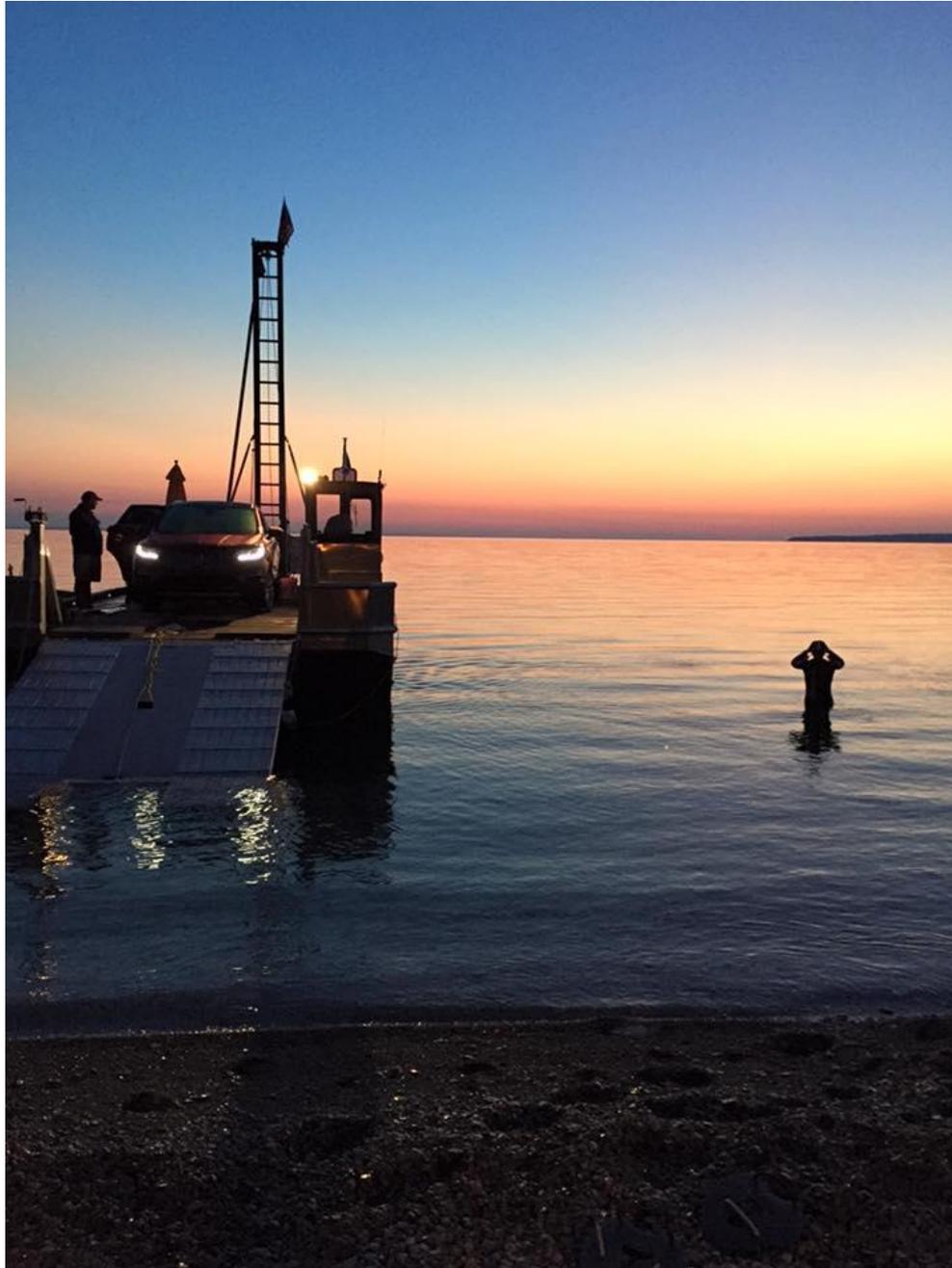
Furthermore, I am grateful for the generosity of our sponsors, without whom none of this would be possible. I am so pleased that the sponsor promotions came off regardless of the uncertainties that this sport provides.

Of course, I am also very grateful to YOU ... the Finheads who have been so supportive of my efforts. I sincerely thank you for following along on my adventures, for your encouragement, for all of your kind words ... and most of all, for your prayers!

You’ve heard the statistics from the swim, but the number that is most important is \$280,000. That is how much the 84 Mighty Mac Swimmers and sponsors have raised for Habitat for Humanity at the time

of this writing! We hope to hit \$300,000 by the Labor Day *Mighty Mac Swim*! It truly takes a team effort for a successful swim and for a successful fundraiser. I am proud of our team! The *Pfeiffer Lincoln Murdick's Fudge Run* sets the stage for the main event ... the *Mighty Mac Swim* on Labor Day!

Shortly after returning to the St. Ignace port, the city began shooting of their customary Saturday night fireworks from a break wall near where we were docked. We were sure these fireworks were for us ... especially when some of the fireworks tipped over and shot horizontally along the ground near the Kemo Sabe, starting a brush fire. Par for the course! 😊



The Start



Underway



The Signature Photo



Aerial