

It has been months since we left St. Louis. Before we left, I said goodbye to my family, and I told them it would be at least a year before I came back. I was going on a great journey. I was one of forty men who were going where no explorer had gone before. I was going to the ocean with Lewis and Clark.

If I had known how hard the trip would be, I would have stayed home. Every day we woke up early, and then we would row and row up the river. We only traveled about three miles a day. We were going hundreds of miles, a few miles each day, so it would take more than a year.

The first week of the trip was exciting, and I thought it would be such an adventure. I was careless and fell off the boat, but the other men helped me get back in the boat. After that I was careful, but it still was exciting.

We had brought food with us, but we used that food. We needed more food, so we had to stop to get it. There were no stores along the way; in fact there were no settlements. We had to hunt and fish to get the food, and then we would make a fire to cook it. At night we were exhausted and slept on the ground. It was getting so cold that I worried.

After a while it was too hard to travel on the river, because it was icy. Our hands would get so cold we could not hold the paddles. Lewis and Clark told us we would camp for the winter because the snow and ice would make it too hard to travel. This was much harsher than I had expected the trip to be.

That was weeks ago. We made a camp with tents, and then we hunted to get more food. We met some Native Americans who helped us--they really rescued us. They showed us where to hunt and they even gave us some food they had grown. If they had not helped us, I don't think we could have survived. Being an explorer is really challenging, and I am sorry I joined this group. I should have stayed at home and not taken this risk.

We are all so very cold. We go to get wood every day so we can keep the fire burning. We have enough water because that is the one thing we can get without any trouble. We have camped along the river so we are near water, and even when it is ice we can melt it near the fire.

They say it will be a few more weeks before we move. Then it will be time to travel again. I wish I could turn back, I want to return home to my family, but I made a promise. I said I would make the journey and reach the ocean.

When I do get home, I will stay there. I never will travel this far again. I will get an indoor job, and I will not have to hunt and fish to get food. I will buy it at the store, and I will never have to camp outside again.