

kayak enthusiasts.

Of New York, he said: "It's a city in a hurry."

"I wasn't keen on leaving New York," he admitted as he looked out over a wavy expanse of water, "but I was shamed into leaving with a large presence of friends and reporters."

He talked of the extremely heavy boat traffic, and "huge freighters," but "I felt my kayak, Hagar Twa (meaning two) and I were starting to become a team."

Throughout the trip he found on-shore accommodations generally expensive, "but I was not charged once for keeping my boat at a marina," he said.

Strong tides slowed his pace down to about one mile an hour coming into Atlantic City where, among other interesting experiences, he met another couple from Belleville walking along the Boardwalk.

He also helped rescue four teenagers off an island after they had troubles with their Seadoo. Calling the Coast Guard to help them was doubly helpful. "I was lost," Gray said.

Leaving Cape May, a marine police officer pulled alongside and

asked: "Where are you going." When Gray tried to tell him, the officer waved his hands and shouted: "You're mad and I don't want to know about it."

There followed a foggy paddle through monstrous sized freighters, and despite reports that getting across the Chesapeake would be the biggest, probably final challenge of the trip, it was flat as a table, he said.

More storms and hurricanes ensued as he continued south. "I was scared — very big scared."

One couple, who sheltered him, lost their motel in a hurricane which struck shortly after he made land in the Carolinas. After helping his hosts restore their hurricane-ravaged motel for a few days, he set out again.

He also talked about some concerned U.S. sailors looking over the sides of their ships. "I couldn't understand; I was so used to smiles and cheers."

Then police officers, a short time later, explained that he was suspected of being a terrorist looking for military targets and advised him to stay clear of warships.

Shortly after leaving

Charleston, he was paddling up a small stream looking for a campground when he saw his first alligator — a huge one. "I discovered a cure for constipation," he said.

When local people told him he'd be seeing plenty more, it was no comfort, nor was a clergyman who advised: "If you're a good friend of Jesus, you'll be OK."

Georgia: strong currents, desolate landscapes, warm hospitality, was his summary.

Heading into Florida waters, another hurricane, plenty of rain, a close encounter with a huge nuclear submarine, and friendly dolphins who followed him at paddle's length for days, were other memories, along with a media reception and front page pictures in the Miami Herald.

The final leg, to Key Largo, was marked by crystal clear beautiful waters, abundant marine life as he paddled through the largest marine park in the world, and the rewarding feeling of completing his goal.

"It was thanks to a lot people, dozens of them up here giving me support, and thousands of people along the way."

And to put his adventures and challenges into modern perspective, a prominent slogan posted on the canoe, which will go on display in the main Royal Bank for several days, reads: "Remember when sex was safe and kayaking was dangerous."

'If you're a good friend of Jesus, you're OK,' a clergyman told kayaker Bernie Gray about meeting alligators en route.

Waves of pride and joy swept through him, he recalled, as he paddled under the bridges leading into New York City. There he was entertained royally by fellow

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