

Woman lives her life by different strokes

Greenville News 8/25/10

On a commuter train in England, on her way to work one day, Roz Savage sketched out two obituaries.

She thought of the times she'd read obits and admired the lives people had lived.

"They were the adventurers and risk-takers," she recalls on her website (rozsavage.com).

"The people who seemed to have lived many lifetimes in one, the people who had tried lots of things, some of them successes, some of them spectacular failures, but at least they'd had the guts to try."

Savage wrote an obitu-



Jeanne Brooks

jbrooks@greenvillenews.com

Columnist

ary like that for herself, an obituary that reflected the life she wanted to have.

Then she wrote one for the prosperous life she was living. Husband, big house, management consulting job. She found the difference between the two "startling."

And she knew: She wanted the first one.

So one by one, Savage let go of the things that marked her old life. Eventually, that included her husband, too.

"Leaving him was the hardest thing I've ever done," she told the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, in 2007. "Harder than rowing across an ocean. I still love him. I still want him to be happy."

They remain on good terms, she said Tuesday in a phone conversation from Bolinas, Calif., where she was staying in a friend's cottage and working on her latest book.

In her letting-go stage,

Savage — who grew up as the bookish daughter of two Methodist ministers — said she came to realize that, for her, happiness required a sense of purpose and fulfillment, challenge and adventure.

She joined an expedition to explore Inca ruins in Peru and later wrote a book about it.

In November 2005, she entered the Atlantic Rowing Race. She was the only woman rowing alone. It took her 103 days to cross the Atlantic. The boat capsized three times. All four of her oars broke. She made makeshift re-

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pairs with duct tape. Some days the wind

and currents actually carried her backwards, the *Guardian* reported. She wore through her gloves. But Savage rowed 3,000 miles and finished, and then wrote

a book about it.

In the summer of 2007, she set off to become the first woman to row solo across the Pacific. Ten days out, gale-force winds and 20-foot waves capsized her boat three times in 24 hours, and she had to temporarily give up.

But the following

year, in 2008, Savage rowed 2,598 nautical miles in 99 days and became the first woman to row from California to Hawaii alone. From there, in 2009, she rowed 104 days to Tarawa. This year, she finished the last leg, reaching Papua New Guinea on June 3.

The 42-year-old Savage will talk about her experiences Thursday, Sept. 9, at noon at the Westin Poinsett in Greenville. Tickets for the talk, sponsored by Upstate Forever, cost \$20 and include lunch.

Among other things, Savage will tell about seeing bits of

plastic floating in the Pacific Ocean. What's called the North Pacific Garbage Patch is an estimated 3.5 million tons of floating trash, she said, "the accumulation of lots of small acts of carelessness over the last 40-50 years."

But by other small acts, that same ac-

cumulation factor can work for good. Bring your own cup to fill when buying your daily coffee, instead of using another paper or plastic cup.

Just as a single oar stroke "doesn't get me very far," Savage said, but 2.5 million oar strokes took her across an ocean.