

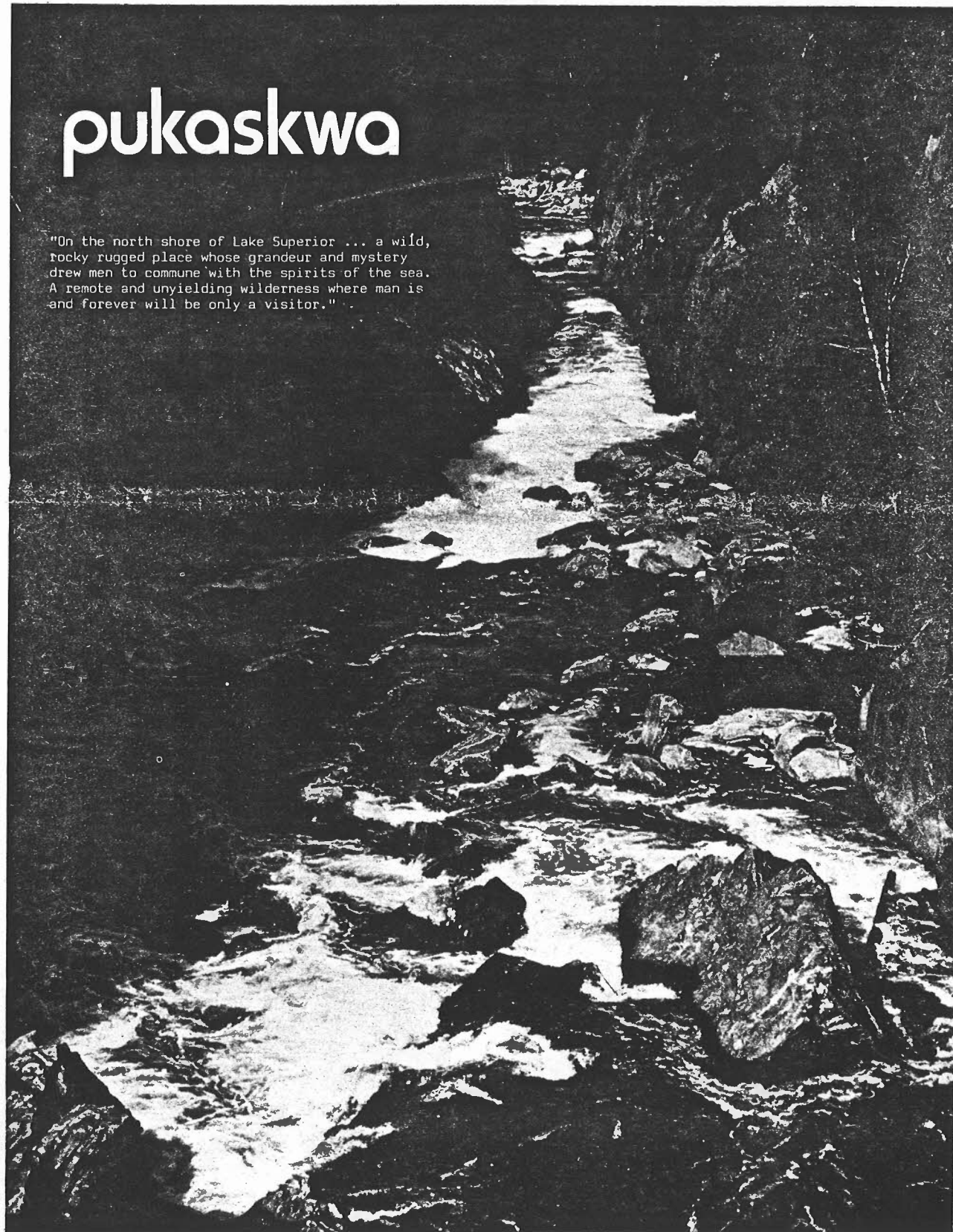
the wilderness canoeist

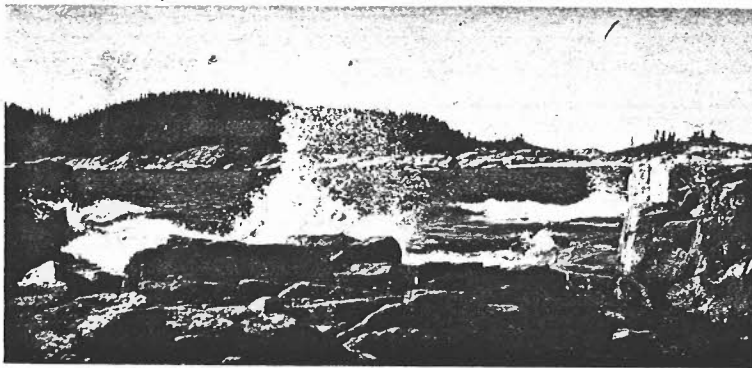
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pukaskwa

"On the north shore of Lake Superior ... a wild, rocky rugged place whose grandeur and mystery drew men to commune with the spirits of the sea. A remote and unyielding wilderness where man is and forever will be only a visitor."





Story: Sandy Richardson

Photos: Sandy Richardson & Rick Paleske

The Pukaskwa landscape is aptly described in the brochure for this new National Park. It is Canadian Shield — an ancient land wrinkled and worn through endless eons. Its terrain is rough and rugged, broken by slopes and depressions, riddled with tiny lakes in rock-rimmed basins, and clothed in shallow soil. The Superior coastline, with its protected bays, massive exposed headlands, islands and islets, sand and boulder beaches, and sheltered coves, is the dominating and most intriguing feature of Pukaskwa.

The land makes travel difficult. From Lake Superior the hills rise steeply to heights of a few hundred metres. Tip Top Mountain, the highest summit in the park, stands over 600 metres above sea level and some 450 metres above Lake Superior. Most of the rivers are short and swift, negotiable by canoe only during the spring run-off. Inland lakes are numerous, but few are connected by navigable streams or creeks.

Pukaskwa is not prime canoeing wilderness. It is hiking country. Foot travel has been the traditional means of getting around the area, and will continue to be the major way to explore the new park.

A system of 6 major trails has been proposed for the park. The first to be constructed is the Coastal Trail, following the rugged north shore of Superior some 120 km from the Pukaskwa River, the park's eastern boundary, to the Pic River, its western boundary. This trail is scheduled for completion in the summer of 1982. In 1980, when we hiked the Pukaskwa coast, about 70 km of the trail had been constructed, starting from the Pic River end.



We chartered a boat in Heron Bay to take us from the Pic River to our starting point at the mouth of the Pukaskwa River. Although the weather was overcast and damp, the boat trip along the coast offered a scenic preview of the country we would be backpacking through.

From the Pukaskwa River we set out without the restrictions of a trail to explore the coastline, roughly following the shore of Lake Superior in a constant series of ups and downs. Up over high rocky headlands, then back down to the shore at one of the many beaches or coves.

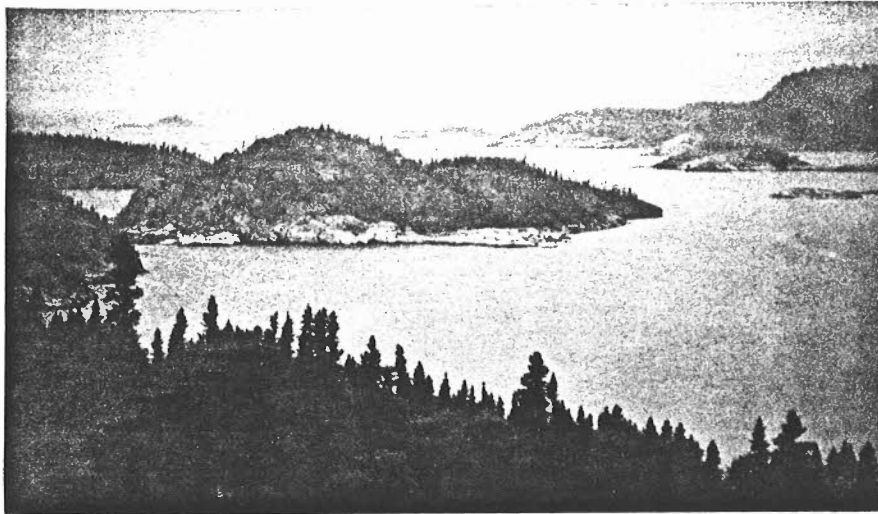


Much of the shoreline itself is too rugged for hiking, with sheer cliffs barring the way; so we made our way inland around these obstacles. We bushwacked through predominantly spruce and Jack Pine forests, over and around dead falls, through swamps and heavy underbrush. Sheltered by the dense bush, the going was often hot and sweaty. But frequent rocky outcroppings and open ridge-tops brought welcome rest stops with cooling breezes, and afforded fine views of the coast and off-shore islands or the inland mountains and ridges.

We regularly returned to the open shoreline where we worked our way over and around great slabs of wave-washed rock, or traversed boulder and sand beaches in the many sheltered coves. These coves provided perfect opportunities for refreshing swims, and ideal secluded campsites where we could sit on the shore late into the evening watching the sun slowly set over Superior.

Numerous creeks and rivers flow out of the hills into Lake Superior. These we waded, sometimes having to search for a suitable shallow spot. Many of these rivers form scenic falls and gorges as they carve their way through the bedrock. One of the most interesting was the Cascade River which drops about 10 metres off a ridge into the lake in a beautiful double falls. Inland, the Cascade forces its way through a dramatic narrow gorge and drops over a second falls before plunging into Superior. We were so taken by the secluded charm of this spot that we camped here only two short hours of hiking from our previous camp, and spent the better part of a day exploring and photographing.



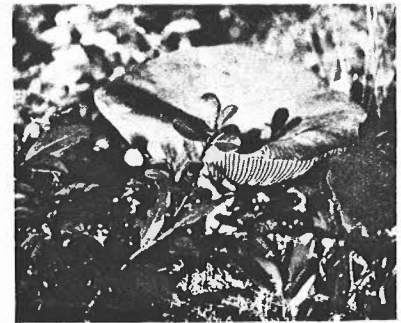


We found many signs of past human habitation along the coast: the remains of the logging village of Pukaskwa Depot, abandoned trappers' cabins, remnants of docks and equipment used by commercial fishermen, and the mysterious Pukaskwa Pits. The most interesting were the the Pukaskwa Pits, found along the raised beaches, and constructed before the time of Christ. Most of these now appear only as hollows in the beach, but the odd one still has walls of boulders. They vary in shape from circular to oblong to rectangular, and in size from solitary pits large enough to fit one person to larger complexes of pits. Their purpose is now only a matter of speculation. Some people suggest that they were temporary shelters; others propose that they were food caches; still others think that they had a religious function, places where shamans went to commune with the spirits. In many ways, their very mystery is what makes the Pukaskwa Pits so intriguing. As the author of the Coastal Trail Guide says: "In a way, I hope that no purpose will ever be found. If we knew their use, we might quickly pigeonhole then forget the people who made them. As it is we can never pass a beach like this without wondering. And by wondering our spirits are one with those people who dwell on this shore so many years ago."



(While these pits have withstood the elements for thousands of years, it is not certain that they will withstand the visitors to a National Park. The Park staff do not plan to make known the location of pits, and the trail is planned to include only one such site at Stop Watch Cove. How people respect this site will determine whether others will be "opened" to the public.)

While the Pukaskwa wilderness supports a variety of wildlife, including moose, black bear, wolf, and woodland caribou, we were not fortunate enough to encounter



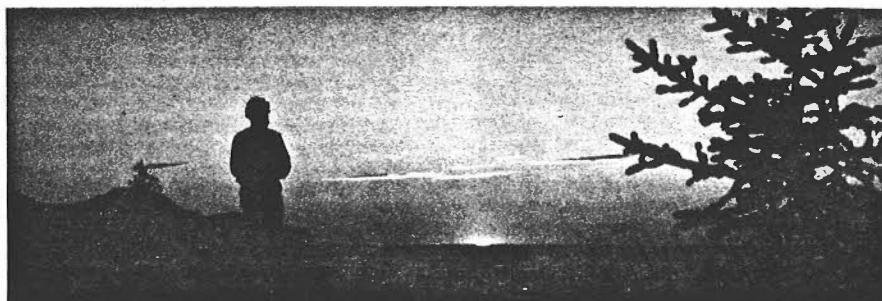
anything more exotic than the usual squirrels and field mice. Flora was abundant, however. Mushrooms of many colours grew on the moss covered forest floor, and arctic alpine plants and flowers found suitable habitat along the coast.

After a week of bushwacking and finding our own way along the coast, we reached the constructed portion of the trail. The succession of rocky ridges, high headlands, scenic coves, dense forests, wave-washed beaches, and rushing rivers continued as before. But the going was easier and faster along the well-maintained trail with its board-walks through the marshes and suspension bridges over the more difficult river crossings.

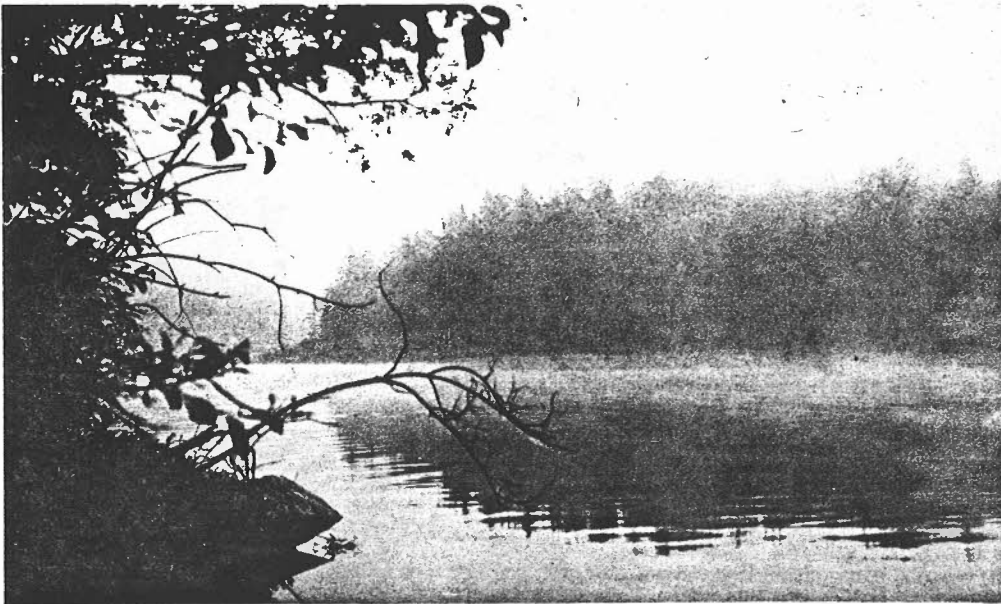
Something else changed as well as we made our way along the trail. Where earlier we felt a sense of isolation that heightened the wildness of the area, now we shared the trail and campsites with other hikers.

The presence of the few other hikers and the ease of following the established trail did nothing to change the grandeur and beauty of the land. We still found open ridges with spectacular views of the rugged coastline, campsites that caught the soft light of the sun setting over Superior, and dramatic river gorges. In fact, we crossed the largest river in Pukaskwa, the White, only half a day from the end of our trip. The White, one of the last rivers in Ontario used to drive logs, descends into Lake Superior over a series of thundering falls and rapids and through a sheer, rock-walled canyon, 70 metres deep and nearly a kilometre long. It was a spectacular scene of wild power and beauty. We camped by the end of this gorge our last night, and with the sound of the river roaring in our ears, feasted on fresh pickerel — the only time on the trip that we caught any fish.

The Pukaskwa coast is indeed "a wild, rocky rugged place whose grandeur and mystery" continues to draw people to commune with the spirits of the wild. One can only hope that, with the opening of the park and the construction of trail systems, Pukaskwa will remain, as it has for centuries, "a remote and unyielding wilderness where man is and always will be only a visitor."



spanish river



Story: Alma Norman

Photographs: Donna Naughton

On the evening of July first, while most Canadians were completing Canada Day celebrations, six women, two from Ottawa and four Americans from Ohio, and their canoes converged on a motel near Espanola for their first (and only) organizational meeting before undertaking a week's trip down the West Spanish river. Although the idea of such a trip had been simmering since before Christmas, getting such a group together proved to be a problem; there didn't seem to be that many women who were competent whitewater paddlers with enough time and money to take an eight to ten day trip. In fact, up to a week before starting, with only four paddlers committed we thought of scrapping the project. Fortunately at the last minute two other women were found, the trip was on, and we were off.

Like any good stew our group consisted of an unusual mix of ingredients: the basic stock was women, to which was added an age range from early fifties to late twenties, heights from just under one hundred and fifty cm. to nearly one hundred and seventy five cm.; occupations from housewife to teacher to carpenter to biologist. Among us we also had seventeen children and three grandchildren. Except for one of the latecomers, we all had considerable whitewater and canoe-camping experience. Though it says something for our good fortune in Canada that the Americans considered the Spanish River to be a real "wilderness."

All our planning to date had depended on xeroxed newsletters supplemented by the occasional phone call. To avoid duplication, each woman indicated what common gear she would supply, and meal planning depended on the simple method of having each person prepare a day's menu for six, plus two extra meals. (We planned a leisurely seven day trip, with an extra day for emergencies, hence the extra meals.) This meeting helped us tie up loose ends, of which there were surprisingly few. We did find though, in checking gear and supplies, that everyone of us had over-estimated food. A ruthless pruning cut out supply by at least a third. The extra we left in the cars, a decision we were much to appreciate on our numerous portages. Yet despite this cutback we still ended the trip with a surplus.



July second started with an enormous breakfast in the poshest motel around, and a stop at Espanola to get Betty a fishing licence and to stock up on some fresh fruit - added weight which none of us begrudged. By eleven a.m. we were at Agnew Air Services' dock and by 1:30 the last of us had been landed at Bisco Dam, our starting point.

We realized from the start that the only way a group of women could cope with our limited size and physical strength was to cooperate. Hence unloading gear and canoes from the float plane was done with a human chain; and all six of us lifted each loaded canoe across the island from Bisco Lake to the river. By the time we encountered longer portages we'd evolved an efficient and practical way of lifting and carrying which enabled even the "shorties" to carry their half with ease - though it required four of us to lift the canoe.

The river-run itself was a delight. Water levels were high though not dangerously so. We never scraped, and had a long bouncy ride from Agnew Rapids almost to the mouth of the Spanish. Only twice did we have any trouble: on the second day the Grumman hit a rock at the bottom of a rapid and capsized. We managed to flatten the edges of a serious gash in the hull and successfully patched it with layers of tape. Our second, less serious mishap took place at Graveyard rapids Drop Four, where we attempted to line down the right side and nearly lost the Kevlar canoe. Mary was knocked into the rapid but suffered nothing more than a cold swim: the Kevlar got a number of abrasions but suffered no real damage. Deciding the right side was impractical we ferried across the river and found a portage trail and two campsites (one at the top and one at the bottom of the trail - both small.) So - portage Drop Four on the LEFT.

Most rapids on the Spanish are grade II-III and should be scouted. Parts of some can be run empty. Otherwise, there's lots of grade I's and fun fast water. Portage trails are usually well marked, though not always in good shape; the one at Agnes Rapids (left) is poor, and bordered with Poison Ivy. Lorraine spotted this and had us all scrub down with yellow soap she's brought for just such an emergency. As one to whom Poison Ivy is not just an allergy but a pestilence, I can testify to the efficacy of her precaution.

Despite the fun run and generally good weather, our trip was somewhat marred by bugs - not just your basic mosquito/blackfly/horsefly nuisance, but a real plague. We could never stop in comfort. Whether on a rock for lunch, or on the P&H of the Piddle, or around the campfire they surrounded us like a miasma. At one time Betty's eye was so swollen we wondered if her glasses would fit. Wanda's vaunted vaseline-citronella repellent was no match for our Ontario stingers. And if you didn't have a bug net, you "didn't have a chance." Only Alma who'd invested in one of the bug-repellant jackets was relatively unmolested. But then no one wanted to sit downwind from her. Everything has its tradeoffs! Getting food into your mouth without entertaining bugs at the same time was a feat accomplished with varying degrees of success.

Since we hadn't prepared the menu collectively, each meal was an adventure. Sometimes we had your standard freeze dried fare, but there were memorable changes: Betty's fresh caught bass served with butter within minutes of catching; falafel in pita bread (the mix is available in most health food stores and larger supermarkets); Eskimo bannock fried rather than baked and eaten plain or with jam. We were introduced to the refreshing delight of "Russian tea," a mixture of tea, lemonade, lots of cinnamon and some cloves. The Oatcakes that Alma swears by didn't survive hot humid packing, due perhaps to their "natural" ingredients; there's something to be said for preservatives.

As usual, too, we discovered new techniques and gadgets: Betty's firestarter (wood shavings and paraffin in a toilet roll. Cut off chunks as needed); Alma's "desperator" (thin rubber tubing with a copper insert at one end for blowing and rekindling tired fires); Donna's famous double-yoke for portaging.



Although bugs were a problem we took them in our stride; they are part of camping. What really bugged us were those pests who used every campsite as a garbage dump for their foil, cans, plastic, and discarded equipment. We burned what we could, but gave up on packing out other people's garbage. This can't be blamed on fly-ins or on motor boats either. The dumpers were canoeists like ourselves.

Despite these drawbacks, the Spanish is a lovely river which offers long stretches of flat water between exciting rapids, making it possible to concentrate on scenery and wildlife. We saw no large animals like moose, but passed numerous beaver lodges, and saw a variety of unusual birds: among them osprey, great blue herons, broad tailed hawks, turkey vulture and a horned owl. Memorable was a lazy hour spent paddling around the marsh just upstream of Moncrieffe Creek, where we saw Blue Damzells mating.

High water and good weather made for a faster run than we'd expected, so that by July eighth we were nearing the end of the river. We were also beginning to encounter serious headwinds from the south. These were so strong, in fact, that one team was worn out and unable to paddle further. We decided to make camp early, though it was only three o'clock and then consider alternatives, given that we anticipated heavy winds from now on across Agnew Lake. Our solution, unanimously - though unenthusiastically agreed upon - was to get up at 4:30 a.m. and paddle



as long as possible before the wind gathered strength. So, before sun-up on July ninth we were on our way.

Paddling was a delight. The water was fast, the wind non-existent. By the time we stopped for breakfast at 10:00, we realised that with luck and determination we could push straight on across Agnew Lake and take out the same day. Luck stayed with us. Though winds were troublesome at the end of the river, they were no real problem, and by the time we got to the lake we were practically flung across with a fabulous tail wind. By 2:30 we were beaching our canoes. Our run had taken us seven and one-half days.

Good byes are always an anticlimax. What do you say to people you didn't know until a week ago, but whom you've come to love and trust because you've worked together and joked together and counted on each other in tough moments! "Thanks. It's been great. Glad you came. Have a safe journey back..." The right words don't come.

We loaded gear and canoes onto cars, climbed in, and headed home, south to Ohio, east to Ottawa.

A good trip. One to repeat another year with another group of women.

General Information: West Spanish Trip

Cost (fly-in): approximately \$175 each including Ottawa return; motel and meals, food for group; flight to Bisco (\$150 for canoe, two paddlers and gear).

Travel: West on Hw. 17 to Webbwood. Turn right and follow Agnew Lake and Agnew Air Services signs. Frequent and clear. Alternately, go to Sudbury and take the Budd train to Biscotasing station. Cheaper but you have to paddle Bisco...which adds a day; also someone has to be at Agnew Lake for shuttle or if only two canoes can hire someone to take you back to Sudbury. Fly-in is definitely less complicated.

Maps: Bisco 41 O/8, Low Water Lake 41 P/4, Pogomasing 41 1/13, Cartier 41 1/12, Espanola 41 1/5

Duration: Eight days would give a very relaxed trip. Can be done in six. Depends partly on water levels and canoes.

Canoes: Dumoine Kevlar, "Prospector" model with keel, Blue Hole ABS, and Grumman.

NB: Inco sometime shuts the dam cutting off river flow. Check with Agnew Air Services that there's water before going up or you may not have a trip! (See the Wilderness Canoeist, Fall, 1980.)

DIRECTORS REPORT

A meeting of the Board of Directors was held on June 13th in Toronto. It was with regret that the Board accepted the resignation of Roger Bailey, who will be moving to Edmonton shortly. Graham Barnett was appointed to serve as a director until the next Annual Meeting, filling the remainder of Roger's term.

The application for incorporation was signed by the directors, and lawyer George Brigden, who has worked long and hard preparing the application, is confidently predicting that we will have our constitution before Canada has hers!

Plans for the Fall workshop weekend were discussed, and we are all looking forward to a great time.

The treasurer reported that our financial situation is healthy, and that membership, which seemed to be dwindling at the time of our last meeting, has picked up considerably.

Hart House at the University of Toronto has been booked for the Annual Meeting to be held February 13.

The specifications for WCA crests and decals have been approved, and we have placed an order. They should be received in time for the Annual Meeting.

David Pelly's book about his barrenlands expedition in 1977 will be coming out shortly and may contain an endorsement (for publicity purposes) from the WCA.

John Cross will chair the nominating committee searching for candidates for the Board of Directors. Members interested in standing or nominating someone should see the News Brief about nominations. We still need a representative to sit on the Conservation Council of Ontario. This is an important function of the work of the WCA, and any member interested is asked to contact any Director for more information.

The next Board of Directors' meeting will be held in conjunction with the Fall Workshop Weekend at Haliburton Hockey Haven.

Bill King



news briefs

WCA PHOTO CONTEST

Again this year the WCA is holding a slide contest, and members are invited to enter their slides in any of the categories listed below. Remember that this is not a contest just for "experts" or for those who have taken trips in "exotic" places. It is for all of us who try to express something of our wilderness experiences photographically.

In the past only a few members have entered, but we know from newsletter submissions and meetings that there are many more members out there taking good wilderness photographs. It is not necessary to enter a lot of slides, or to enter every category. Select a few (1 or 2 would be fine) of your favourite slides that capture your feelings about the wilderness, and enter them in one or more of the following categories:

CANADIAN WILDERNESS: Photographs of wilderness scenery and landscapes, taken in Canada, that interpret the "feeling" of the wilderness. (There should be no evidence of man in the photographs.)

FLORA: Photographs of Canadian wild plants in their natural settings.

FAUNA: Photographs of Canadian wild animals in their natural settings.

MAN IN THE WILDERNESS: Photographs depicting man in harmony with the natural environment, and capturing the essence of the wilderness experience.

INTERPRETIVE STUDIES OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT:

Photographs of an expressive or interpretive nature, portraying the drama or impact of some element from the natural environment. Photographs may be abstract, and may highlight line, form, texture, colour, or mood in the chosen subject.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Entries should be sent to the Photo Contest
Chairman: Barry Brown,
1415 Everall Rd.,
Mississauga, Ont.,
L5J 3L7.

Entries must be received no later than JANUARY 15, 1982.

Each slide submitted should be clearly marked with the photographer's name, and numbered. Include with your entry a sheet of paper stating name, address, phone number, and clearly indicating by number for each slide: a) the category entered, and b) the title of the slide.

Winners will be announced at the WCA Annual General Meeting in February, where all entries will be shown. (Entrants may pick up their slides at this meeting. For those not present, slides will be returned by mail.)

- RULES:
1. Entries will be accepted from WCA members only.
 2. A maximum of 3 slides per category may be submitted.
 3. An entry fee of \$3 (regardless of the number of slides entered) must accompany each entry.
 4. Slides that received prizes or honourable mentions in previous WCA contests are not eligible for entry this year.
 5. The WCA reserves the right to use prints of the winning and other selected slides for display at the WCA Booth at the Sportsmen's Show.

JUDGING: The photographs will be judged on their subject matter, interest, technical excellence, and artistic merit by a panel of judges.

PRIZES: The winner of each category will receive an 8" X 10" framed and mounted colour print of their winning slide.

A.G.M. 1982

The WCA's Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday February 13, 1982 at Hart House, University of Toronto. The morning business meeting will be followed by lunch at Hart House. Details of the afternoon and evening programmes will be given in the winter newsletter. Please circle the date and plan to attend.

NOMINATIONS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nominations for 2-year terms on the Board of Directors are being accepted by the Nominations Committee. If you are interested in becoming a candidate for one of the three positions, or have another name to put forward, please contact any committee member: Dave Auger (705-324-9359), Dave Berthelet (819-771-4170), or John Cross (416-487-0678).

DEADLINE FOR WINTER ISSUE

Articles, trip reports, book reviews, equipment comments, etc. are needed for our next issue. We would particularly like stories and photographs of members' summer trips. Please send material to the editor by November 30 for inclusion.

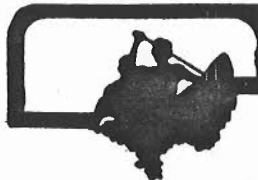
CANOE ONTARIO 1982 CALENDAR

A unique photo calendar, possibly the first one anywhere on the subject of canoeing, has been put together by Canoe Ontario to promote the activities of its four affiliations (flat water, marathon, recreational, wild water). The 16 black and white photographs, made by WCA member Toni Harting, show many aspects of the fascinating art of paddling, from training to competition, in the wilderness and on the regatta course, humorous and serious moments, paddling and portaging.

The price of this very special publication, which every canoeist and kayaker will want, is only \$2.50, plus 50¢ postage and handling. For more information contact: Canoe Ontario, 160 Vanderhoof Avenue, Toronto, M4G 4B8; or phone 416-424-6787.

FIVE WINDS SKI-TOURING CLUB

Do you like skiing through woods, over beaver dams, across lakes, and on uncrowded trails? Five Winds Touring Club welcomes new members to join them skiing on their own trails on Crown land near Gravenhurst. Buses go every Sunday from the beginning of January until the end of the ski season. Trips last all day, and are organized in small groups of 5 - 7 with a leader. Classes for beginners and Saturday trips to nearby ski areas are arranged. For more information phone Elaine Nepstad at 416-925-7639 or write to 105 Bernard Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M5R 1S2.



THE COMPLETE WOODSMAN

Author: Paul Provencher
Publisher: Habitex Books, Montreal.

Reviewed by: John Cross

Like all "complete" books, this isn't; but no matter — it has instructions in woods travel and living techniques you don't find elsewhere (thus making all the others just as incomplete). Paul Provencher has been a forester for about half a century, and lived and worked in the wilderness year-round when it still was wilderness. (According to him, pictures of Grand Falls in Labrador were not brought out until 1945!) His camping equipment and procedures are not in common use today, when most camping trips use small, light-weight mountaineering equipment as promoted by Backpacker magazine and its cousins. For some of us though, long-term cold-weather camping looks interesting enough that we would like to find out how to be comfortable and secure, with a margin for accident or repair. Provencher's methods were a way of life for Indians and trappers in northeastern Quebec; they had not only to survive all weathers and seasons, but to live in sufficient comfort to call it home; and they had to do it cheaply. Much of their equipment therefore, had to be homemade, and although most of us do not possess the same skill with the axe and crooked knife, it should not be beyond us to acquire it; at least enough to carve a paddle or a sled runner, a saw handle or a snowshoe frame.

I know of no other book which describes in such detail the traditional methods of hauling, odawban construction, heavy load packing (18' wood-and-canvas canoes and food supplies for 9 months), cold weather shelter, and all-weather homemade footgear. Calvin Rutstrum's books describe a winter travel method which involves hauling and heated tents, but it seems to be personal to Cal; the subjective preferences which most people seem to have (as shown by their widespread adoption) imply wall-tents instead of wedges, front-opening stoves instead of top-opening. Provencher describes how to make a light, cheap woodstove, how to make a warm, enclosed winter shelter with a tarp, how to carve a crooked knife handle, and how to sew a water-proof seam in a mukluk — you probably can't buy such a thing anywhere.

The instructions on trapping and gill-net fishing will not be directly useful to us, but are nonetheless interesting to read (for armchair Robinson Crusoes). The method of canoe-rigging for portage, or temporary raft without rope or nails I must try sometime. The trick for telling time by the stars I have tried and it works.

Provencher is not an artist, and the line drawings, especially of people, look a little childish, but he is extremely attentive to detail, so that the pictures contain all the essential information. (They contrast with, for example, those in the Red Cross book of Canoeing, which, though copied from photographs, are so badly done that you sometimes cannot make out, say, details of a sailing rig.) He demonstrates clearly, by drawing it, how to weave a gill-net or string a snowshoe.

The instructions are occasionally spiced by stories: how a canoe party came to a frozen lake and built a sledge to haul the canoe; how he was trapped out on a raft by thickening shore ice; how he shot a bear with a bow. Unfortunately, this new edition lacks chapter II of the original book *I Live In The Woods* (possibly you could find it in second-hand shops), which was an account of a trip into Labrador in the pre-topo map era. Possibly the publishers anticipated disappointment did their readers learn that Grand Falls, the goal of the trip, has fallen victim to Hydro, and the rest of the Churchill River is to follow.

It is fortunate that Provencher has broken the pattern by which, too often, the knowledge of long-evolved wilderness travel methods dies with a generation of its practitioners.

LAST OF THE COUREUR DE BOIS

Author: Paul Provencher
Publisher: Burns & McEachern, \$5.95

Reviewed by: John Cross

Since Burns & McEachern have been taken over by MacMillan, this title has gone out of print. It is unfortunate that Canadian publishers do not do a better job of selling their books; this was far worthier to have remained in print than many of the American woody books flooding the shelves. Until it reappears, if it ever does, keep a sharp eye out for it at clearance and remainder sales. (W.H. Smith was selling it for \$1.49 in June.)

Since Paul Provencher is a professional forester, not a writer, his books tend to be a little disjointed; chapters on different subjects succeed one another without forming a logical structure, like the pictures in a family album. That, though, is not far from what the book is: a collection of stories from his life on the St. Lawrence north shore, complemented by photos from his own album of his "family" — trappers, fishermen, and Montagnais Indians from his stomping grounds around Baie-Comeau, Betsiamites, and Manicouagan.

Given the readiness nowadays of greenhorns with a few summer vacations camping experience to bang out a book, it is a relief to see a real sage-of-the-woods turning his hand to a record of the techniques and way of life he knew, before it dies with him. Provencher and his friends were not in the woods for a holiday; they lived and worked outdoors in all weathers and all seasons, without the latest Gore-Tex jackets, Contour Comfort System Concept packs, and Aerodynamic Geodesic Dome tents. Provencher's characters carried loads several times their own weight with tumplines made of rope and birchbark — and it still works. They lived in tents heated by woodstoves for weeks in -30 degree weather — if only we'd learned how earlier! Perhaps we didn't because unillustrated technique descriptions quite rightly aroused our suspicions. Provencher's stories are enlivened by clear, large-scale photographs. (If you didn't see how it was done, would you believe a wood-canvas canoe frame can be built with a crooked knife?)

However, this is not primarily a book about techniques, but about people and their adventures. He describes his initiation into the pleasures of tuk-ushkassen (fermented caribou stomach contents), blowgun hunting (for wild cats), and shark fishing. His Montagnais guide tells him of winter living as a youth, and he in turn passes on some of the tricks of survival to army commandos on a course. The stories are always humorous, particularly when people get caught in unforeseeable situations (the surveyor trying to stomach caribou hoof interiors served by his Montagnais hosts, Provencher deserted by his dogteam who invaded a pigsty, the commando fishing all day between two layers of ice).

His evident delight in shooting bears with a bow will not be to everyone's taste, though bowhunting does not seem to have attracted to the woods the hordes of dangerous idiots gunhunting has. More distressing, though, is his naivete with respect to environmental destruction: "The hills, treeless now save for a stubble of sad-looking stumps...sadden me...But there's nothing to be done about it — that's the way life goes!" Life goes that way because people make it go that way, and Paul Provencher, long-time timber-cruiser for the pulp companies, had a hand in it. At least though, he has left us with a fine record of a way of life which would have vanished without him.

yukon trip

blackstone - peel rivers

jim greenacre

photos: tony bird

One hundred and fifty kilometres of continuous downhill river running, crystal clear water, good fishing and not a single rapid; that is the Blackstone. The Peel, 430 km of mucky brown water, loaded with silt, so much so, that it was undrinkable unless it had stood overnight and only two portages, but more about those portages later.

Initially, in March, there were four of us committed to this trip, Penny Clarke, Graham Barnett, Tony Bird, and myself. Dates were fixed, canoe rentals booked with Hudson Bay Company U-Paddle and air passages reserved. Five or six weeks later we were joined by Mark Riddell and his brother Graeme.

We were to meet in Whitehorse on Friday, July 10th... pick up the canoes and then, early Saturday morning have a local outfitter transport us to the Blackstone via the Klondike and Dempster highways, some 600 km distant.

Penny, because she was staying in the Yukon for a second canoe trip, was unable to get a cheap charter flight to cover that time period so opted to fly to Edmonton and then by bus to Whitehorse. She also decided that rather than rent a canoe for five weeks, she would be better off to buy a canoe, preferable a used one and then resell it when the trips were over.

The day after Penny arrived in Whitehorse, (she was there four days ahead of us) there was a canoe for sale in the local newspaper. It was a 17 foot aluminum "Mistry River", which is very similar, though not as well made to the Grumman. It was in mint condition and had been bought about a week earlier in Whitehorse by two Germans who had started down the Yukon River at Whitehorse, intending to paddle to Dawson. Unfortunately, two or three days into their trip, they had swamped, no life jackets and one of them had drowned. The survivor was back in Whitehorse selling off their equipment. Penny got the canoe for about half the new price.

Tony, Graham and I were all booked on the same flight out of Malton and some fast repacking of our six packs at the airport, got the weight evened out to just under the seventy pounds maximum per pack. We also had two paddles. The flight from Toronto to Whitehorse, via Vancouver, was uneventful except for the spectacular view of the west coast mountains from a height of 10,000 meters.

At Whitehorse we went to collect our baggage but all we could find were our two paddles, no sign of the six canoe packs. "Try the air freight department" suggested a baggage handler. They were not there and the freight man said that this happens every day. "Just hang around until the next plane from Vancouver arrives, he suggested," and your baggage will most likely be on that". Inquiries at the CP Air information counter revealed that we had been put on an earlier flight from Vancouver and that our baggage would most likely be here on the flight which we should have got. Puzzle, - how did the paddles make it with us? Our baggage was on the next plane in. A lady back-packer from Europe was not so fortunate, her backpack did not arrive.

Penny, and a contact she had made in Whitehorse, picked us up at the airport and took us back to his home where we were to spend the night. He was a fellow canoeist and we saw slides of his trip down the Blackstone and Peel rivers.

Mark and Graeme had been unable to get flight reservations for the Friday and were due to follow up twenty-four hours later. We were at the airport to greet them with the club van and canoe trailer loaded and ready to go as soon as their baggage was cleared. However CP Air treated us to a repeat performance of yesterday with a slightly

different twist. The two packs and the waning box arrived but the tube with the fishing gear in it didn't. "Maybe the next flight will have them," explained the baggage man. One hour later the plane arrived but no fishing rods, so at 5:00 p.m. we headed north out of Whitehorse on the Klondike Highway. Penny had brought a fishing rod along and Graeme managed to buy a cheap rod at a small wayside service station store about 150 km up the highway.

The drive to the Blackstone was not without incident. The truck developed a radiator leak (a stone thrown by a front tire) and we had to top it up with water from our water bottles, periodically stopping to refill our water bottles from roadside ditches. We made it to one of the few gas stations on the Klondike Highway where two tubes of "Radiator Stop Leak" cured the problem. There was an interesting handwritten note on the gas pump which read "Multiply the price shown by four to get the true cost," which was \$2.40 a gallon.

It was early Sunday evening when we finally arrived at the bridge over the Blackstone River where we set up camp and had supper. The meal over found Graham sealing the seams of his new Gore-Tex rain jacket which, incidentally, leaked like a sieve when it rained; Penny busied herself sealing the seams on their new four-man Timberline tent, while Tony and I went exploring up the Dempster Highway. At the top of the hill above our camp there was a sign which said this was the point where the N.W. Mounted Police crossed over to the Blackstone on their winter patrols from Fort McPherson to Dawson in the early part of this century. Another sign by the highway, which still has me puzzled, said "watch for horses". Wild horses in the Yukon? Next day, several miles down stream, we did see lots of horses manure and hoof prints.

Monday 13th

11:30 On water and paddling - good 10 km/h current - reminds me of Credit in spring flood but scenery vastly different. Twenty minutes of this then river splits into a multitude of shallow rock filled channels. Walk, push, pull, drag canoes for next 5-6 km which takes us about three hours. Quicker, and easier on canoes, to portage next kilometre to deeper water. See signs of horses. Penny and I get signals crossed and slide broadside up onto the only rock in this part of river. To save canoe which had one gunwale under water and was half full of water I jump out and heave it off the rock but have to let go of my paddle which disappears down stream. Spare paddle not fastened in and it floats off. Fail to find lost paddles. Borrow spare from other canoe. Later, Penny and I have second close call when running shallow chute. Stern gets hung up on rock and I have to make a fast exit and pull canoe clear. Mark and Graeme watching us from bank. They had stuck on same rock and had taken on some water. 6:00 Set up camp. Tony notices his paddle has split blade. Paddle situation not so good and this is only our first day.

Tuesday 14th

10:30 On water - highway close to river as we can see dust rising above trees when vehicle goes by but do not hear it. Many narrow channels - continuous drop - fast water - tight turns with "strainers" hanging out from banks. Penny and I take narrow channel - fast water - 90° blind bend and find large tree completely blocking channel - I jump out up to waist in water grab canoe and stop it before we reach tree. Graeme selects lunch spot where fishing might be good and in one hour we have nine grayling of a good size. Tony breaks paddle in shallow spot. Our last spare paddle is now in use except for spare Grumman blade. Later Tony and Graham swamp and lose another paddle. We have to make a shaft for spare

Grumman blade before we can proceed. 6:30 Set up camp in beautiful location. Baked grayling for supper. Splice broken paddle for emergency use only. Some supper got wet when Tony and Graham swamped.

Wednesday 15th

Up early and try making paddle blade from 6" X 28" log but am unable to split log lengthwise. Give up and try other ideas without success. All the trees here in the Yukon seem to grow with a cork-screw grain. I wonder what causes this? 11:00 On water - river continuous drop with fast current around many bends - lots of gravel bars and choice of channels. Penny finally conceded that it is easier, safer, faster and less energy wasting to power around the bends with the current, staying in the middle or close to inside of bend, rather than fight the current by doing a back ferry. Scenery constantly changes - wide valleys with distant mountains and the river sub-dividing into numerous channels to narrow gorges with almost perpendicular walls rising 700 meters above us - gentle tree-less slopes that looked like grassy meadows until you tried to walk across them. Our fisher persons (Penny and Graeme) catch six grayling at lunch time - three more later in day. See frozen snow, half meter thick, on river bank of lee side of mountain. No mishaps today. 6:30 Set up camp. Tony found suitable piece of wood to make improvised paddle blade and works on it with axe after supper. Later finds suitable shaft and lashes the two parts together - feels better than the regular paddle which we had repaired.

Thursday 16th

Wakened during night by throbbing noise. Lift good ear off pillow and realize noise is right above our campsite. Now hear swishing noise which gradually diminishes down river. We have just been buzzed by a helicopter - look at watch, God it is only 3:00 a.m. (This far north there is 24 hour daylight). Fried grayling for breakfast - delicious - even better than baked. 10:15 Set off to climb near-by peak just behind campsite. 11:15 Last man (me) reached summit - take lots of pictures - pin-point our position on map - did not cover as much distance yesterday as we had thought - about 8 km less.



12:30 Backat camp and on water. Paddle for half hour and stop for lunch at likely fishing spot - not so good, only catch four fish. Try again later but no luck.

6:00 Set up camp on flat sparselytreed area on edge of river, two metres above water. Storm blowing up so put up poly tarp over fireplace. Grommets tear out but fist sized pebbles from river solve problem. First rain of trip and works well. Nature of river has changed. Now a single channel in narrow valley between steep, high ridges on both sides. Deeper, faster water, bigger waves and a scattering of easily seen rocks.

Friday 17th

Big discussion at breakfast about late sleepers - late starts - fishing stops - day hikes. Today we stay here and climb peak (1700 meters) just across river.

10:15 Penny, Graham and I ferry across river to start climb. Tony and Mark are 15 minutes ahead of us. Graeme opts to spend day in camp.

12:45 Reach summit after climbing 25° slope over scree, large rocks and boulders with sharp jagged edges. Magnificent view of surrounding peaks, some higher than this one and some with snow covered caps. No sign of Tony and Mark. See two tiny moving dots way in the distance along ridge - must be Tony & Mark. Have lunch here while drinking in the view. Visited by one ant, one butterfly and five ptarmigans. Pintpoint our location and find we paddled about 7 km more than we had reckoned on.

2:00 Start down. Find it trickier and more dangerous than climbing. Lose balance fall side ways and roll over rocks two/three complete turns. Grab rocks. Left hand is bleeding where pieces of skin have been torn away. Day pack probably protected my back as I rolled. 4:00 Back in camp. Swim in river but not for long as water very cold. Find piece of wood ideal for paddle blade and work on it with axe and knife until it is finished, about midnight. Walk down river bank and find perfect shaft for paddle.

Saturday 18th

9:30 On water - our earliest start so far. Paddle at good pace with strong current till lunch. Now clear of the mountains and on flat plateau but current still strong. Late afternoon the Ogilvie River joins on the left and we are now on the Peel River. Water coming from the Ogilvie is brown from the amount of silt it is carrying.

4:30 Penny wants to stop and fish. I want to keep paddling for two more hours. 5:30 Compromise and set up camp on gravel and black sand bar in open and exposed area. All day we have been surrounded by storm clouds and half way through supper fierce wind hits camp. Scramble for extra rocks to hold down tents. Mine needs a hell-of-a-lot. Timberline and Cannondale - both free standing - are turned into the wind and fare much better. By the time Tony and I are satisfied that tent is secure and we are ready to get inside out of rain, the storm has blown over. Mark rekindles fire and brews a welcome pot of tea. Today has been our best day of paddling - I feel much happier.

Sunday 19th

Wake to rain and wind. Cold cereal for breakfast. Others heard wolf howling during night. Graeme got up and saw it on river bank just across from our camp. Black sand gets into everything - hate camping on sand.

10:00 On water - rain stopped. Make good progress in strong current with little effort. Water level rose 30 cm during night. Ran our first rapid - a chute with 45 cm standing waves which were easily avoided, providing you made the right approach. Mid afternoon Hart River joins Peel. Rapids - ledges across river from bank to bank - line first part then run last part.

7:00 Set up camp - 10 metres above water level and within sight of next rapid. Today was even better than yesterday for distance traveled.

Monday 20th

There must have been heavy rains in the mountains yesterday as the river has risen almost a metre overnight. The river is full of floating debris - many large trees being carried downstream by the strong current.

10:00 On water - paddle upstream close to bank before making front ferry to other side which ministry notes say is side to line or run next rapids. Ledges right across river again - tremendous current and monstrous waves 2 - 3 metres high, out in centre. We portage packs. Mark and Graeme run close to

shore and make it to rocky shelf below cliffs at bottom of rapids. I run solo. Penny and Graeme swamp at first ledge - swim and scramble ashore. Canoe disappears into eddy behind cliff abutment. Downstream we wait and watch - minutes pass and submerged canoe drifts out of eddy and plunges over shelf and is sucked into second eddy. More waiting until eddy lets go of canoe which dives over more ledges and is being carried out towards main current and waves in centre of river. Graeme and I launch a canoe, paddle out towards it and Graeme manages to grab one of the painters which was floating on the surface. We back paddle back into the eddy towing the submerged canoe to safety. Penny lost her paddle, but better a paddle than a canoe. The canoe would have gone for miles in that 10 - 12 km/h current. We decided to have lunch here after the morning's excitement and give Penny and Graeme a chance to dry out. The afternoon was spent lining, portaging packs and running empty canoes through more rapids. A kilometre or two downstream a cascade of water tumbles 100m down the rock face into the river. Paddle over to quench our thirst and fill our water bottles and what do we find - Penny's lost paddle.

7:00 Reach a cabin mentioned in notes and set up camp. Cabin belongs to a water survey group. Note on cabin wall dated July 7-8, 1981 says four men from Germany stayed here and have left some food on shelf for travellers who have had emergency - a can of Planters mixed nuts and a full 26 oz. bottle of rum. Take a sip of rum and gasp for air. Look at label, no wonder - it is 74% proof. A very strenuous day with little distance to show for it.



Tuesday 21st

10:15 On water - cover 10 km in first hour to rapids - more ledges with 2 - 3 m high standing waves in centre - sneak through on left with two lift overs.

12:15 Reach top of rapids leading to Aberdeen Falls - scout from cliff top on left but have to get over to right bank as notes say portage is that side. Track upstream 1 km before attempting to ferry across. We loose ground in strong current but make it and run down right until waves get too big for open canoe. Land on rock shelf and decide this is as far as we can run canoes. Takes four persons over one hour to manhandle two canoes up 30 m of almost vertical scree. This is where we start our portage. Leave canoes and carry packs along high embankment until gully stops progress. Down gully to small pebble beach beside river and set up camp.

Wednesday 22nd

9:30 Carry packs along rocky shore line to second gully. Can see in the distance entrance to third gully which is where normal portage of 7 km starts. Have already portaged 3 km and at least one more to go before we reach the third gully. Leave Penny and Graham to get pack up to top of gully while Tony, Mark, Graeme and I return for canoes. While bushwacking the burnt over muskeg back to the canoes Mark and Graeme decide they would rather take their chances on the river than portage these extra 4 km. (They later admitted it was not wise

decision as they found themselves in a very precarious position while navigating a ledge on the final approach to the beginning of the regular portage.) Balance of morning spent portaging canoes and packs to top end of gully number three.

After lunch we leave canoes and some none essential equipment and, using a hill way on the horizon as a guide mark, head straight across the muskeg. Visibility is good - 25-50 metres as the trees had been small and stunted prior to the burn over, but the footing is sheer hell. Step on the coarse grass hillocks and your foot twists at the ankle as it slides off the top. Between the hillocks is soft, soggy, wet moss and/or mud. Periodically detours have to be made around open swamp areas. Wonder why all this water doesn't drain away, then remember this is inside arctic circle and this is permafrost territory.

About 2½ hours of portaging and pick up faint trail which is occasionally marked with a pink ribbon tied to tree. Follow trail for 1½ hour, slide 50 metres down steep slope thickly covered with brush and there is the river. Portage over, at least for today. Mark and Graeme, who have not been seen all day, have made it as their canoe and one pack are here, but no sign of them. Twenty minutes later Mark and Graeme appear with two more packs, a double trip in one day. They did not see Penny, Tony or Graham who are still out there somewhere. Later, Graham arrives, then Tony and then Penny who had struggled, (manfully?) with our most awkward piece of baggage, the wannigan box and its tumpline. We camp here. Lousy campsite - loose shale and very wet.

Thursday 23rd

8:30 Graham, Tony and I leave for return trip over portage to get canoes and remaining pack.

12:45 Back at camp with all portaging, hopefully, behind us.

1:45 On water. Whirlpools, waves and one metre high back swells as we run remainder of gorge, about 7 km, with its 60-70 metre high, near vertical shale walls. Current through gorge 10-12 km/h. Flat water for rest of day.

6:30 Find good campsite amidst a stand of tall, mature white spruce.

Friday 24th

10:30 Packed and ready to go except to fit and tape down our improvised spray covers which are made from clear, 6 mil poly. Ministry notes advise covers to run second canyon.

11:30 On water. Flat water for 16-20 km to the second canyon. Walls are near vertical rising from 60 metres up to 160 metres high, and keep closing in until the walls are no more than 50 metres apart for about 100 meters. Ledges coming from both banks cause big waves in centre on approach to narrowest section of canyon. High water allows us to sneak down left side but still have to take some waves. Spray covers work magnificently. Smooth water through narrowest section - no sense of forward motion - just drifting - huge boils and whirlpools which suck canoe down and canoe appears to be floating in a saucer - then back swells as water is bounced back off protruding rock walls. 6:30 Good campsite at junction of Peel and Snake rivers.

Saturday 25th

9:45 On water. Tony and Graham set good pace though current has diminished to 3-4 km per hour. Penny and I fall far behind other canoes after first hour or so. After lunch same situation, Penny and I lag far behind.

6:00 Look for campsite. Fierce storm breaks and wait it out huddled under tarp. 8:00 Find good campsite. As only 150 km of flatwater left to Fort McPherson Tony suggests two days of steady paddling and get out early. Penny disagrees - wants tomorrow as lay-over and then easy days. Mark sides with Tony. I think it over during supper and decide to get out early which leaves Graeme no choice but to come with us, and Graham no choice but to stay behind with Penny. Today we saw small bull moose and a black bear with two cubs.

Sunday 26th

7:15 Up, but do not call others who sleep late. Morning spent dividing up food.

11:45 On water and wave good-by to Penny and Graham.

7:00 Severe rain storm and as we paddle around bend see two tents, large prosp-

ector type. Investigate and find empty except for stoves. Decide to use them for tonight. Collect water from sags in tent roofs as river water unusable because of silt.

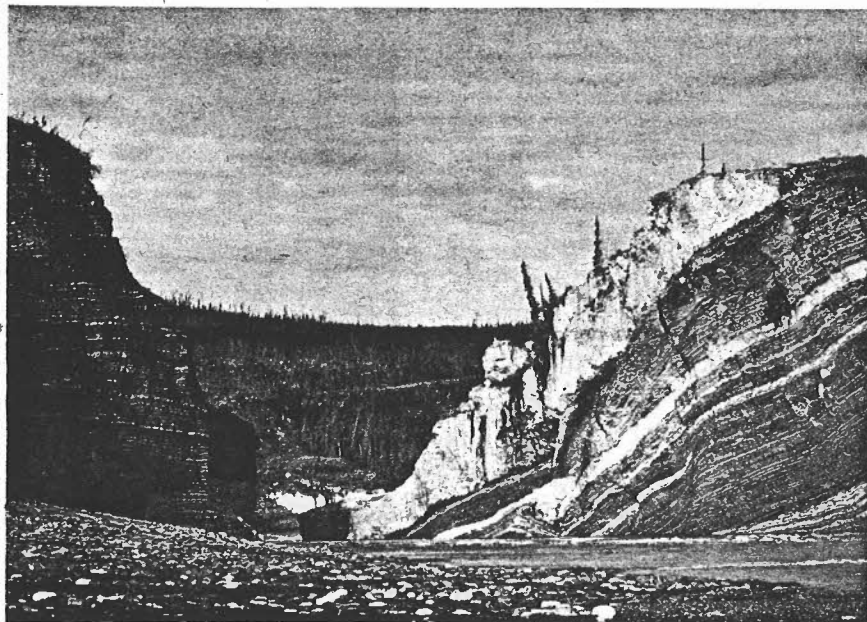
Monday 27th

10:00 On water. See group of trees on left bank with trunks painted white. Go ashore and find memorial to two members of ill-fated mounty patrol which had perished here in winter of 1911. Several miles down-stream another memorial to the other two members of the patrol who had manage to survive for another three days before dying of cold and starvation.
5:00 Sight "Shiltee Rock". Stop and climb to top, take pictures. Below "Rock" is Indian fishing camp which is deserted except for one dog which had been tethered but has broken free. Camp has been used recently because lots of fresh dried fish hanging from racks in smoke house.
7:30 Set up camp high up on emparkment. Mucky landing-step out of canoe into soft, gooy stuff. Have to walk into bush for twenty minutes before finding clean water.



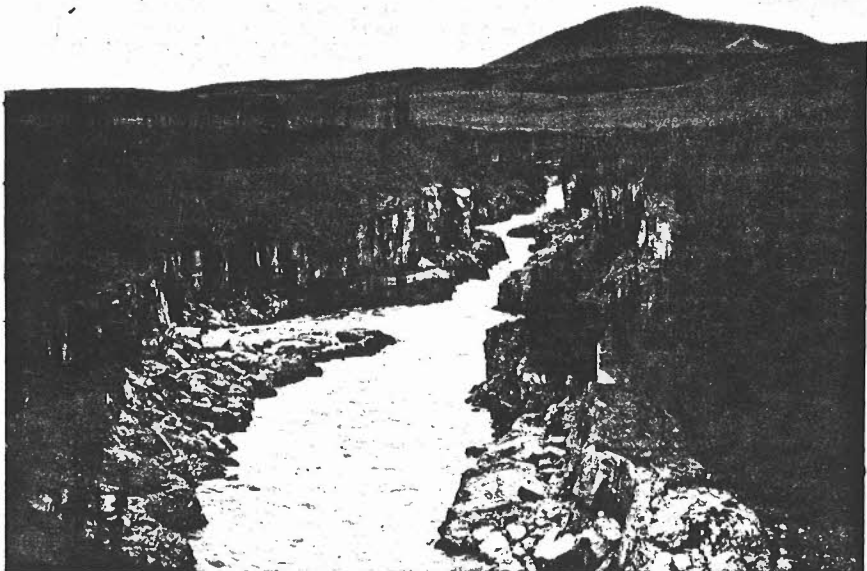
Tuesday 28th

9:45 On water - only sixteen km to Fort McPherson.
11:45 Fort McPherson. Portage one km inland to village and return canoes to Hudson Bay Store. Buy fresh fruit and milk for snack. Hire local native Canadian with club van to transport us to Inuvik. Check in with Mounties.
1:15 Start for Inuvik 184 km distant down Dempster Highway.
1:45 Driver pokes head out of window and swears. Flat front tire. All get out to change wheel-- sorry no spare. Twenty minutes wait and driver hitches ride back to Fort McPherson. Thank God it happened here and not half way between the two locations as no service stations on highway.
3:15 Driver returns with two spare wheels, truck jack and wheel nut wrench, none of which he had in van. Position jack but it won't work. Wheel changed, all get in start engine, shift into gear and let clutch out. Van shudders forward a few feet. Get out to investigate - wheel not turning, just digs groove into gravel surface. Remove wheel and find it is wrong rim, its binding on brake. How about other spare? No good, it's same size rim. Change front wheel with rear wheel - problem solved and off we go.
4:30 Engine coughs and splutters and dies. Driver reckons water in gas tank now in carburator. Wait few minutes and try engine. Starts and we proceed and, with engine coughing the last 60 km, make Fort McPherson.
7:00 Book into Eskimo Inn. Cheeseburger with small portion french fries \$5.00. Coffee 60¢ a cup. Two eggs, any style, with toast and coffee \$3.50. Slice of ham or sausages \$1.50



Wednesday 29th

4:00 a.m. wakened by sound of voices and queer wailing noise. Voices are my companions who think wailing noise is hotel fire alarm. Cannot be fire alarm - fire alarms are loud clanging bells. Banging on door and commanding voice orders us to evacuate. Graeme opens door and smoke bellows into room. Door quickly banged shut again. Get dressed and search for boots. Loud banging on door and commanding voice shouts, "Stay in room, fire is out".
We all sleep late.
The fire had been in room three down from ours and had been started by careless smoker falling asleep with lighted cigarette in hand, setting fire to mattress. Damage confined to one room. We had two days in Inuvik, Canada's most northerly town before flying, via Old Crow and Dawson, to Whitehorse where we had two more days, then to Vancouver, and finally back to Toronto.
Cost of trip, including all transportation, food, canoe rental and hotel accommodation \$1325.00 plus one lost paddle. A great experience. Where to next year?



the leisurely paddle that wasn't

Anneke Auger

At mid-point in a rather hectic summer we found ourselves faced with the delightful prospect of a day all to ourselves! The grandparents had offered to look after the two boys and the sun was shining. Quickly we got out the "top" maps looking for a likely spot. Since we were at our cottage on Haliburton Lake, the upper reaches of the Gull River seemed the logical choice. The stretch from Eagle Lake to West Guilford offered a nice route of alternating lake and river stretches with only one marked set of rapids; that being at the bridge at Eagle Lake, our departure point...We packed a lunch, some good reading material, and, at the last minute, a borrowed pair of sturdy shoes, just in case! It would be a perfect day; clear skies, a lazy paddle through familiar (by road) countryside with a long, relaxing lunch break...just the two of us!!!

Well, the clear skies remained and we met not a soul, but from there on the preceding sentence was pure fantasy!

There was fast water and it was rocky below the bridge but no doubt things would smooth out just around the bend. As the river was very shallow here, Dave took the canoe down solo while I jumped over the stepping stones along the shore planning to meet him at the next calm stretch. After a short while the stepping stones petered out and I was struggling through the underbrush with no Dave in sight. With much muttering, I finally came upon the orange canoe; I hopped in and we were off. But only across to the other side to survey the next set of rapids. We scouted downriver and then returned to contemplate

our choices: line downstream in the hopes of hitting a runnable stretch or portage back into Eagle Lake for some flatwater sightseeing.

We decided to continue and from then on spent the next two and a half hours in the water - walking. Our only respite was two short stints of actual paddling and a brief stop for a bite to eat at the brink of a small waterfall (sitting on very sharp rocks). The one redeeming feature of the route was that it seemed as though we were miles from civilization - no cottages in sight and not even a sound from the paved road which ran just beyond the steep river banks.

We were just beginning to think that the worst was over when the river curved sharply to the left and sure enough water tumbled and foamed through a narrow channel over a series of drops totalling about three metres. Someone had made a trail down to a makeshift look-out over the falls here so we unanimously decided to take this way out and wound up on highway 530 just above a bridge.

As our car was parked about five kilometres downriver at West Guilford, Dave had to hitch a lift... the fourth vehicle to pass stopped. It was a slow-moving road grader but as we were in no position to be fussy the ride was gratefully accepted.

Upon our return to Lindsay later that week, we did our research and learned that the Ministry of Natural Resources route description had this to say, "The river is low at this point and it is usually better to portage by road 1,980 yards to the first bridge." Next time we'll do our homework before we set out. (Believe me, those borrowed shoes got a real workout!)

great canadian canoe exposition

John Cross

Those who wondered about the conspicuous absence of Canoe Ontario's usual multi-faceted canoeing exhibition at the Sportsmens' Show (the pathetic little counter in the Upper West Hall hardly counts as a presence) will be interested to know that their resources and energies for this sort of thing were channelled instead into a bigger, better show at Harbourfront on June 20-21. York Quay Centre provided a pond, a lakeside landing, a theatre, a hall, and, especially, lots of lawn space, though they were fortunate that the weather was fair.

Most interesting were the exhibits by various manufacturers of their own products since it brought together knowledgeable people from whom one could really learn the answers to precise questions on construction. Since they were not there to sell, there were no show specials, but instead some half-finished or being-finished-on-the-spot canoes which one could examine and discuss. A stripper, two wood canvas (one of which is to be the second prize in the Canoe Ontario Lottery), and a fibreglass C-1 were being built on the lawn, while samples of most types of construction were spread about there and on the ship deck. Ted Cowan showed me an old canoe of his made of "linear...aah..I forget what it's called...they used to say it was the hottest thing going, but we had a lot of trouble with it." A useful lesson to us about hottest things going.

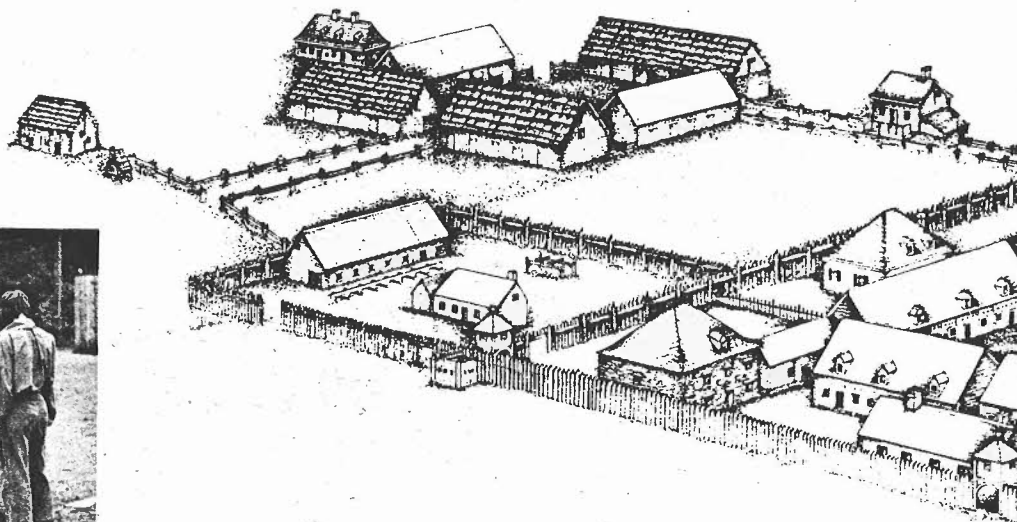
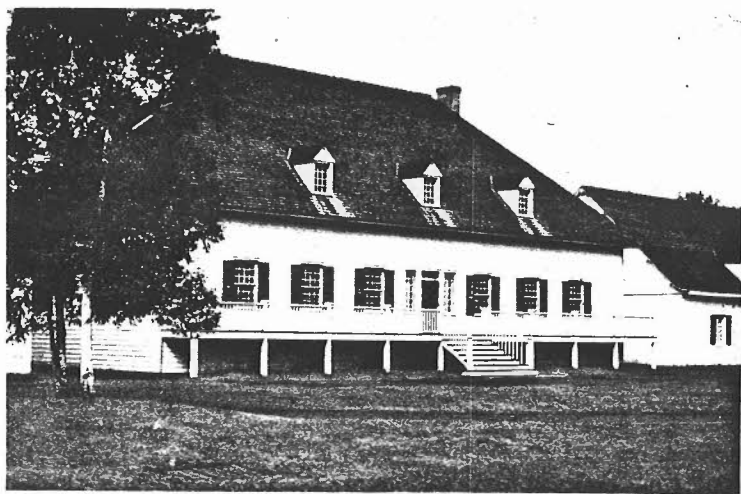
The Paddlecade Canoe Safety Demonstration, on the other hand, was a disappointment. (That is, it wasn't very good. I don't mean I didn't expect this.) The young fellow at the mike told us, "The length of

your paddle should be exactly..." (I forget how long exactly: I use three different lengths) and "If you tip over, you should always hang on to the canoe." Paddlecade describes itself thus: "In this program's pilot year, it educated 15,646 people in 194 locations."

Other demonstrations on the pond were: white-water paddling, marathon racing, and kayaking by handicapped people, which I was sorry to have missed. Maureen Bretz teaches it, for those who are interested in finding out more about it. A very useful demonstration on the lawn showed "how to pack a canoe pack." Tom Linklater of MNR loaded two people's gear and food for two weeks into two packs - quickly and conveniently accessible. None of his practises were astounding, just those sensible habits some people manage to put off acquiring for years (e.g. one person with two packs for a weekend was observed this year.)

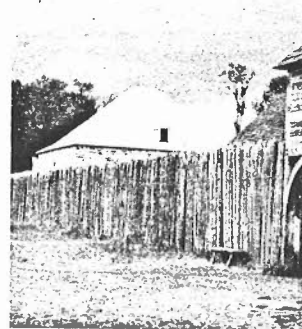
A small collection of historical canoe specimens was on display in the loft: Kanawa Canoe Museum, Ste. Marie-Among-The-Hurons, and Fort William had all contributed items. On the water, two Montreal canoe replicas took paddlers out for short rides.

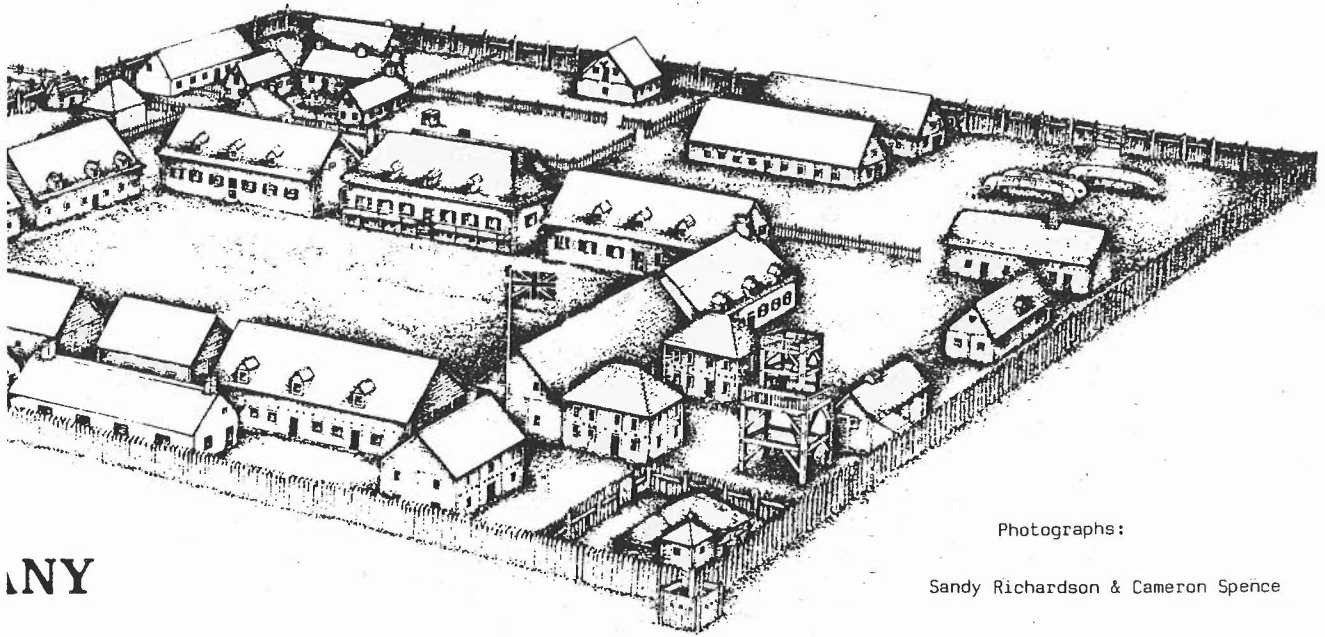
Several canoeing films were shown, including Path of the Paddle and a new MNR film, The Rivermen, including some rapid-running footage shot by Grey Owl juxtaposed with some modern film of the same rapid. I watched a slide-and-sound show on the activities of the Barrie Canoe Club, and then got into an interesting argument with George Drought, who gave the show, on ends and means of canoe clubs. That is the sort of thing that will happen when a sizeable affair of this kind draws together canoeists with different interests and approaches.



FORT WILLIAM OF THE NORTH WEST COMPA

THUNDER BAY, ONT



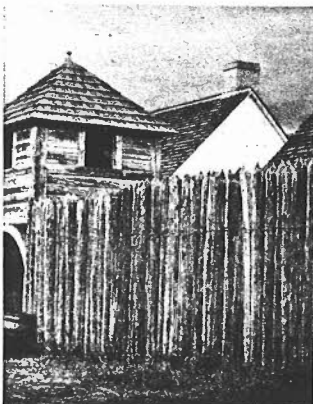


Photographs:

Sandy Richardson & Cameron Spence

ANY

TARIO



building an odawban

John Cross

When we trekked across Algonquin Park last year, our gear rode on the varied units of Craig's fleet, which consisted of two bought sledges, two magnificent handmade authentic-pattern odawban put together in a hurry. The advantages of hauling over backpacking were made plain enough (and reinforced on the Dickey Creek trip: Penny and I didn't have ours ready, alas), so several of us decided to copy the quick-built models. The first of these is simply an ordinary hill-slider toboggan, cannibalized. It offers advantages in speed of construction and ease thereof, particularly to those of us without the tools, time, or skill to build from scratch. If you are skilled, have tools, and can get hold of fine, straight-grained boards for the bottom, then quick-and-dirty methods are not for you.

If the toboggan is to be based on a cut-down hill-slider, it is necessary first to select the correct size, which requires that you know the size of the load you will be hauling. With an eye to carrying large wall tent and woodstove, with lots of food in wannigan boxes, Graham and I bought the largest size we could find: the eight foot by sixteen inch wooden toboggans Canadian Tire carried. This battleship can be cut down by two slats and still be eleven and a quarter inches wide, enough for most gear - and the two spare slats can themselves be used as the outside rails of the second toboggan, still eight feet long by as wide as you like. However, greedily acquisitive, I have been pestering my neighbours who leave worn, broken little toboggans outside their houses lately - "Pardon me, Madam, were you intending to throw that toboggan away? No? Oh, sorry to bother you." - because I want a four, five, or six footer like Jim's to carry a light-weight camp outfit - what Craig calls a "little put-put."

Once the toboggan is safely bought or begged, you can begin to improve it for cargo-carrying. The first improvement can be...nothing! Even as is, in moderate snow conditions, on an easy route, the simple (cheap) hill-slider can ease your burden and increase your convenience (of removing clothing layers, for instance - you know what a bother it is to haul off and on a sweaty backpack every time.) Each further improvement is independent of the others, so that you can make them one at a time - and use the toboggan on the weekends between.

My next change was to narrow and taper the original, to reduce the friction with the snow and allow it to slide easily along a snowshoe track. After removing two of the slats, as mentioned before, I sawed the two remaining outside ones so that, from a wide centre section (for stove or wannigan), the toboggan narrows to about eight and one half inches fore and aft. (See figure 1) (The amount of taper is restricted

by the need to leave the slats wide enough at their ends to be screwed to a crossbar.) Incidentally, the erratic grain on store-bought wooden toboggans renders them very prone to splitting (what would you expect, at the price of wood these days?): use a sharp saw, gently, and choose your direction so that splits run on to the discarded peices. (figure 2)

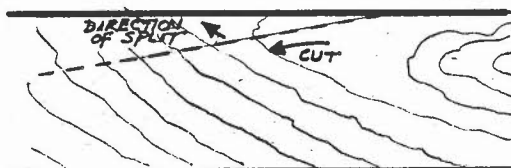


Figure 2

To improvedirectional stability, the toboggan can be given a slight "keel" at the stern: a V-shaped cross-section easily imparted by planing down the rear cross-bars. Mine, being five boards wide, is more of a "U", because the centre slat lies flat; (figure 3) Jim



Figure 3 - My rear crossbar.

split his centre slat to just beyond the third-from-last crossbar, drilled a hole to stop the split, and installed screws through bottom and cross-bar on either side of the split. Like the "V" on a Mad River canoe bottom, this shape imparts stiffness as well as directional stability, and in an odawban, that is just what is not wanted: the bottom should be flexible to follow the bumps and hollows of the ground. For this reason, the "V" is most pronounced at the rear, but decreases to nothing as it approaches midships. And the stiff, cross-grained maple of the store-bought hill-slider will never equal the performance on rough ground of the tough but flexible select wood which a craftsman can hew down to one-eighth inch thickness.

With all this sawing and planing of crossbars going on, it may be necessary to replace the holes for the rigging lines (to which the cargo will be tied). One

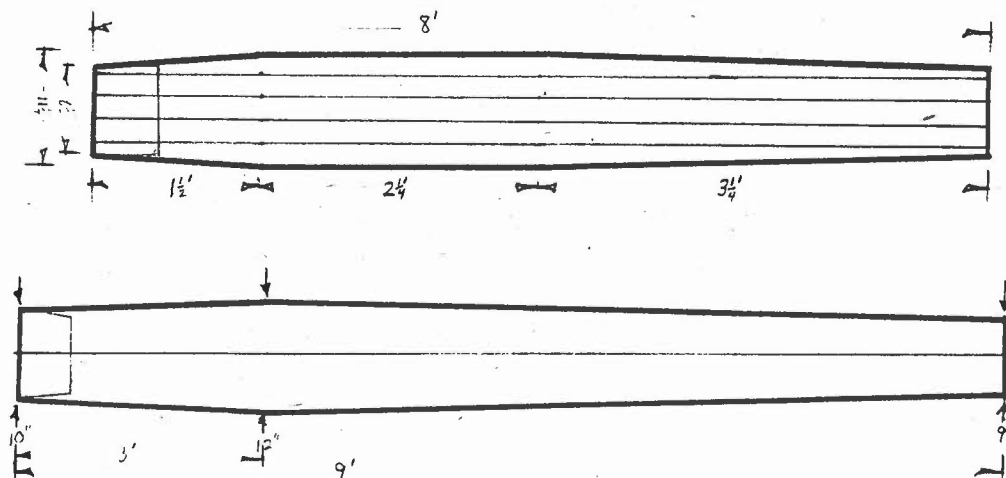


Fig. 1 - My 5-slat toboggan (with straight centre section) and authentic coffin-shaped "tabagane" from Paul Provencher's book *I Live In The Woods*, made from two 10 1/2' planks

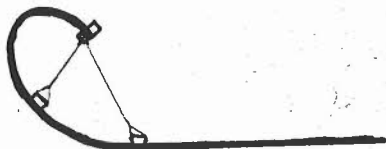
way: make several parallel saw cuts about three-sixteenth inch deep, very close together. Then break out the wood between them with a knife blade and you have a rectangular notch. (figure 3)

To protect the wood from moisture, old drill holes should be filled with plastic wood, topside surfaces should be varnished, and the sliding surface sealed, yet left smooth and slippery. Jim coated his with a wood sealer, I tarred mine like a ski base and then waxed with paraffin. (Do not use cross-country wax.)

The front-end curve on a hill-slider seems to be designed for ramming; an authentic curve, involving a more gradual upsweep, is more capable of climbing over the snow. Changing the front end shape to a significant degree has so far eluded me; simply by releasing the original chain, allowing it to spread, and retying the front curve with wire seems to have brought some improvement. Soaking the front end for a couple of days, then steaming for one-half hour, flexing the wood by hand to loosen up the lignin, more steaming, and finally tying in the desired curve, does work, Craig tells me. I was able to reshape a piece of scrap permanently after boiling in a pot. I could not fit my eight foot toboggan into a pot on the stove, so tried brushing it repeatedly with a mop dipped in boiling water. I obviously didn't loosen it enough, so my curve is not much improved, but it is no worse for the effort. (What about an immersion heater, if you have one, in the basement washtubs?)



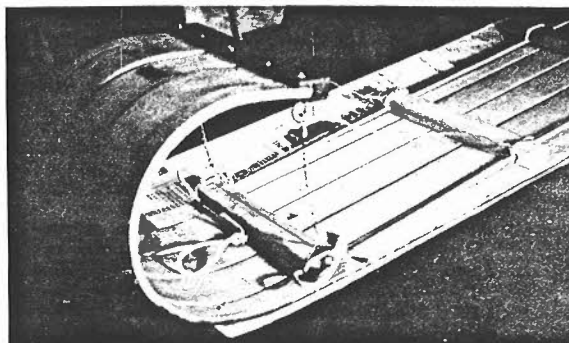
Figure 4 - Typical hill-slider front curve...



and Indian odawban pattern.

The rigging of the toboggan will consist of side-lines and loops in strategic places, and should include provision for whatever boxes or bags you will lash aboard, a hauling trace at the front, and a stern brakeline for a partner to hold descending steep hills. Leather tumplines can occasionally be found in stores, or can be custom-made by a luggage shop. For hauling a light load, a simple rope will do fine.

The second toboggan uses two leftover slats from the first. The cross-bars are made of available scrap wood (though it should be good scrap: it will have to support some twists over rough ground). Since the slats on a typical cheap maple Canadian Tire toboggan are quite

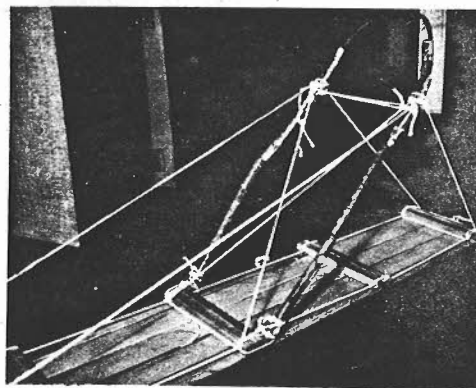


Toboggan head, wired and rigged.

likely to be warped, do not depend on a T-square applied to the slats' edges to ensure your cross bars run directly across the toboggan. Perhaps squared wrapping paper or shelf paper should be used to lay out the side rails and cross-bars: they will form a pattern like a ladder, and are subject to "parallelogram collapse", until the plastic bottom is in place.

When the "ladder" framework has been constructed (and new holes may have to be drilled in the side-rails), a "V" can be put in the rear by planing down the after cross bars, as before. New holes in the side rails are of course countersunk, perhaps with a large drill bit.

The bottom is made from sheet plastic. I purchased some flexible stuff which is sold for children as "Slide-a-boggan" (it can be cut with a saw or knife). It is so flexible that screws will pull it up right into the countersink holes in the wood, thus leaving the screw heads flush with the base. However, for the second layer, I'm looking for slightly cheaper stuff. Craig recommended two layers on the centre section between the slats, and three around the front turn-up.



Upstand on toboggan

This toboggan, too, can be slightly tapered fore and aft. The rigging is the same as for the other one. I hope to experiment this winter with an "upstand", a handle to help a friend push the thing uphill. (Fig. 5).

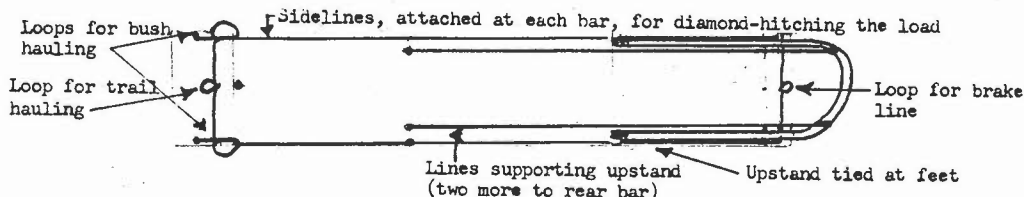


Figure 5 - Rigging

Make or buy some narrow, sausage-shaped duffel bags, make some plywood or varnished cardboard wannigans, and ...happy hauling!

highlight of the summer

Graham Barnett

After another six hundred kilometre canoe trip punctuated by all the usual squabbling of partners and disagreements over dividing up the remaining food and gear, and after another wilderness solo hike to Kluane and a wrestlin' match with a b'ar, the Barnett decided to tackle the Chilkoot Trail. O.K.! No big deal! The Chilkoot runs from Dyea, Alaska to Bennett, B.C. and was used by the gold stampedeers of '98 to transport their goods over the coastal mountains.

"But what if I encounter one of those horrible bears?", wondered a young British lass at the beginning of the trail. "Don't you have a bear bell?"

"Nope, I've a whistle, Ma'am," I said. "I just blow this, you see, and the b'ar comes, and I give 'im a number..."

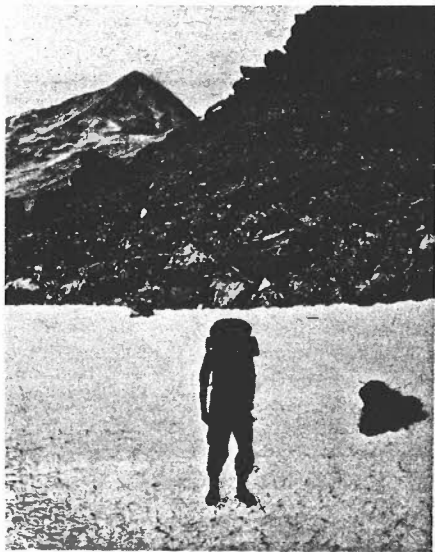
"Number nine," says I.

"Thank you," says the bear.

"Oh! Do you think it might work for me?", she inquired.

"Never fails," says I.

Anyway, the Barnett and an Austrian acquaintance (Not another one! I can't seem to get rid of them!) steamed up the pass, passing friends and Americans alike. I could tell they were Americans because they all used the word "por'-ridge". After considerable contemplation I decided it was not a breakfast cereal and indeed must be a way of transporting your canoe from one body of water to another or around dangerous rapids or falls.



Well, anyway, after having his picture taken in the snow at the pass (Having your picture taken in the snow at the top of these passes is getting to be like riding the toy horse at Woolworth's when you were a kid!), the Barnett and the Austie quietly and unceremoniously descended and without fanfare reached Bennett.

Passengers on the White Pass and Yukon Railway (some Indian wise-guy had painted out the "p" on the sign) are served lunch at Bennett station. The Barnett and Peter Somebody-or-other-from-Edmonton were first through the door, of course, when the head waitress blew the whistle, and they laid claim to two chairs closest to the swinging kitchen doors.

What horrible luck! Some kid, perhaps in his late teens or early twenties, sat down across from us. He had that look - you know, the one with the big floppy ears that droop into your soup, abundant freckles, a perpetual toothiness that is indistinguishable from a smile or a sarcastic grin, and reddish brown hair of which you cannot really tell whether it is on the verge of falling out or is actually a healthy head.

"It's Alfred E. Newman!", I thought.

With him were his haggly old mother who resembled B.J. Gumby's aunt from Monty Python, and his sister or some br..., er, I mean woman, who looked like Arthur's wife from *On the Buses*. To hear the old woman croak, you'd think that they'd just rivalled Hilary and Tenzing in coming over the Chilkoot Pass.

"A trip like that really builds up the appetite," rasped the old woman.

"Hmm, food," thought the Barnett.

Before the Barnett could make his move, the Kid, Alfred, siezed the stew platter-for-four and emptied two-thirds of it onto his plate. His sister, Alfreda E. Newman, soon had her clammy paws on the rest. The old woman was liberally helping herself to the beans and quickly passed the rest to Alfred. The Barnett went to take the bean tray.

"They're all gone!" said the kid. "Perhaps we can get some more."

The Barnett ended up with five lousy carrots in gravy and Peter Somebody-or-other-from-Edmonton had a potato.

Well, you just don't do that to the Barnett at the dinner table, especially after five weeks in the bush. Laugh when he dumps his canoe in the rapids, insult his vehicle, or comment on his wardrobe or gear, but never, never, never take his dinner!

It was time to take action! Peter Somebody-or-other-from-Edmonton secured the apple pie. One-half a pie was left for the five of us.

"I'll cut," announced Peter, neatly slicing it in half and dumping a piece so top heavy on my paper plate that it almost knocked it off the table.

"Could we have some more stew and beans?" demanded Alfred of the waiter.

"Some people hardly had any!" interjected Peter.

"We don't usually do this. Those helpings are supposed to serve four," explained the waiter, "but I'll see what I can do."

On guard this time, the Barnett siezed the stew tray, generously helping himself. Peter Somebody-or-other-from-Edmonton grabbed the beans. In the rush to exchange platters, some of the beans fell on the floor. Alfred's eyes were agog. Peter Somebody-or-other-from-Edmonton quickly passed the stew down the table - a shrewd and deft move instantly earning the utmost respect from the Barnett.

"A well-travelled, seasoned, mature man," I thought.

"I want some more!" screamed Alfred. "I ordered that stew and beans!"

"What locusts!" yelled the old woman, "I've never seen such vultures in my life!"

"Pass it back, pass it back! I got that stew!" insisted the kid. "Ah, sh---ucks, they're gone! There'll be none left!" he sighed.

"We didn't get any pie either," complained the sister to the waiter.

"That's funny," he said, "There's definitely supposed to be a piece here for everybody. I'm afraid you're out of luck."

Meanwhile, my cheeks bulged with apple pie as I desperately tried to reduce the portion on my plate to the size of one piece. Peter Somebody-or-other-from-Edmonton could barely restrain himself from shrieking hysterically. We gulped down some coffee that the old woman had previously proclaimed to taste the equivalent of, or worse than, dishwater, and hastily departed from the table.

Later, as we scoured the empty dining room, by Jove, if there weren't two pieces of apple pie sitting untouched on a table at the other side of the room.

We walked toward the Whitehorse train eating pie. Incredible! Alfred, the old woman, and his sister were coming the other way, obviously trudging toward the Skagway train which would take them south of the border where they belonged.

"I ate too much pie: can feel it sitting in my stomach," proclaimed the Barnett.

Peter could offer nothing more than a "munch, munch, munch," and a "Hmmm!"

"Muter, mutter, mutter," was heard from our three acquaintances.

Peter Somebody-or-other-from-Edmonton and I savoured the justice of the moment all the way back to Whitehorse.

equipment

LIGHTWEIGHT WOOD STOVES

John Cross

The emphasis on light-weight tripping in recent years (which I believe to have been placed by the Americans because of the unsuitability of their terrain for long-distance, heavy-weight trips) has caused us to lose our contact with the equipment and sources thereof which were commonplace on canoe and toboggan expeditions years ago. The value of an assured source of heat, place to cook, and means to dry clothes is worth the price of carrying a wood-stove and large wall tent, if the trip is long and through miserable weather. Here, then, is a run-down on some light-weight wood stoves.

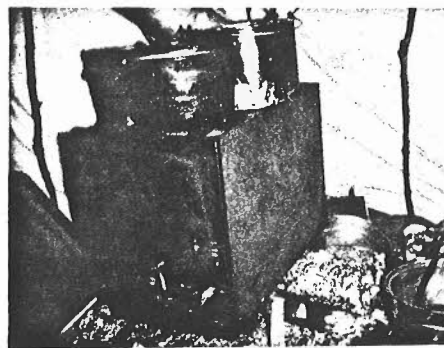
Folding types: Supposed to be easy to carry, because they fold flat. Even if warping doesn't make it impossible to close and open (it will), where are you supposed to carry the pipe?

"Mistassine": This is a name I heard Craig MacDonald apply to a class of small (one foot by one foot by two feet), rectangular stoves often used in Northern Quebec. They are light and compact enough to fit easily on a toboggan or on top of a tump line. They use telescoping pipe so that many sections fit inside the stove, but those things could be a problem if they warp even slightly: they wouldn't pack together, or, if packed, wouldn't unpack. Because the difference in height of the air intake and pipe outlet is so small, the draft will not be very great and they should not be expected to put out much heat. (Paul Provencher recommends tilting them up at the rear, I suppose, to increase the draft slightly.) Their small size means they will need stoking more often than one would like, or else they must be allowed to go out at night. We must suppose that the Indians who use them are less averse to being cold, or getting up often at night, than are we. Even if we reject them for winter use, we might find them useful on a cold, Quebec canoe trip: the wetting they will likely get will rust them open after a season or two, but they are cheap enough (forty-five dollars with pipe) that some may find this acceptable. The version with built-in oven has a ridiculously small firebox; you can do your baking in the wash pail on top of the stove. (A Quebec brand is sold in Toronto by LeBaron sporting goods.)

"Shepherd": A U.S. model similar to Mistassini with oven. Too small for our climate, although perhaps the Americans in the desert southwest (cold at night) find them useful on pack-horse trips.

"Yukon" (with gasoline burner): A U.S. army model (Specifications and photocopy of blueprints available from the U.S. Department of Defence, free), which being eight by ten inch by two feet, is too small for our purposes. I was curious about this stove because it carried a clip-in gasoline burner plate, which I thought would be useful to have when camping where no wood was available (e.g. the roadside campground Friday night after the long drive up). Cal Rutstrum, in *New Way of the Wilderness* suggested it be used with the oval airtight, and made all sorts of claims for it. I received an answer from Natick Laboratories, saying in effect, "Sounds like you've been reading Cal Rutstrum. Don't pay any attention." They (U.S. army) do not recommend all the substitute fuels Cal mentions ("unuseable"), or the use of a damper ("For hidden"), or the stove-pipe configuration shown in the book ("very poor"). Army procedure is that someone be awake, on watch, at all times when using these things. Sounds like a catalytic heater would be better for Friday nights.

Oval "Airtight": These are cheap, light, carry a full load of wood for hours without restoking, and are tall and well-ventilated, so they can blast out the heat. They have two serious drawbacks: they do not fit on a narrow, hand-drawn odawban (though they will on a sledge or snowmobile toboggan), and they open



from the top. This means that you must remove the pot to restoke the fire, and as you do, the flames rush up to singe your hand. When you put the pot on, the stove lid limits versatility in multi-pot placement. (All the other stoves mentioned here open from the front.) These are sold in stove shops or general stores everywhere: the popular brand around here is Great Western (made in Winnipeg). Reeves Steel Co., Dover, Ohio makes another. Although Cal Rutstrum praises these highly, I believe his insensitivity to the inconveniences of this stove, like those of his wedge tent, is personal to himself, and we should not count on sharing it.

"Odawban" winter camping stoves: This is Craig MacDonald's patented design, which several of us will be taking on snowshoe trips this winter. It is narrow (eleven and a half inches) enough to fit on a hand-toboggan, but large enough to carry six two foot pipe sections inside, along with ash shovel, etc. It puts out a tremendous quantity of heat (we were opening the tent door at minus thirty degrees, it was so warm), and on low heat will go for hours without restoking. (Perhaps with hardwood, one might last the whole night, but we were burning only spruce). The stove top is large and flat, and so permits cooking with several pots, toasting bread, or baking in a pail (see Provencher, or some of the makeshift ovens in Dian Thomas, *Roughing It easy*). The door is on the front, and, unlike the others, is hinged to close by itself (fire safety); the intake is fitted with a spark guard. Two fire-trays insulate the bottom and hence prolong the life of the stove: the other designs don't seem to have this (Provencher recommends putting a layer of sand in the bottom of the Mistassini for this purpose.) The small legs permit it to be mounted more securely on skid logs in the tent, or on the toboggan. These can be ordered from Craig. With the stove comes instructions for use (including tent setup and siting), which are very important. While wood stoves may improve comfort, they do so at the cost of providing many opportunities for the blunderer to trip himself. The other stoves mentioned here are usually sold to ice-fishermen, who are nearer help than long distance winter trippers; consequently, instruction is not provided to get the most advantage even such as, with their generally small fire-boxes, they may be supposed to afford.

Tents to put wood stoves in... must be cotton. Nylon combusts at a lower temperature than does cotton, gives off poisonous fumes, and melts into dripping globs that stick to you as they burn and burn. Fire danger is to be avoided only by being ever conscious of it.

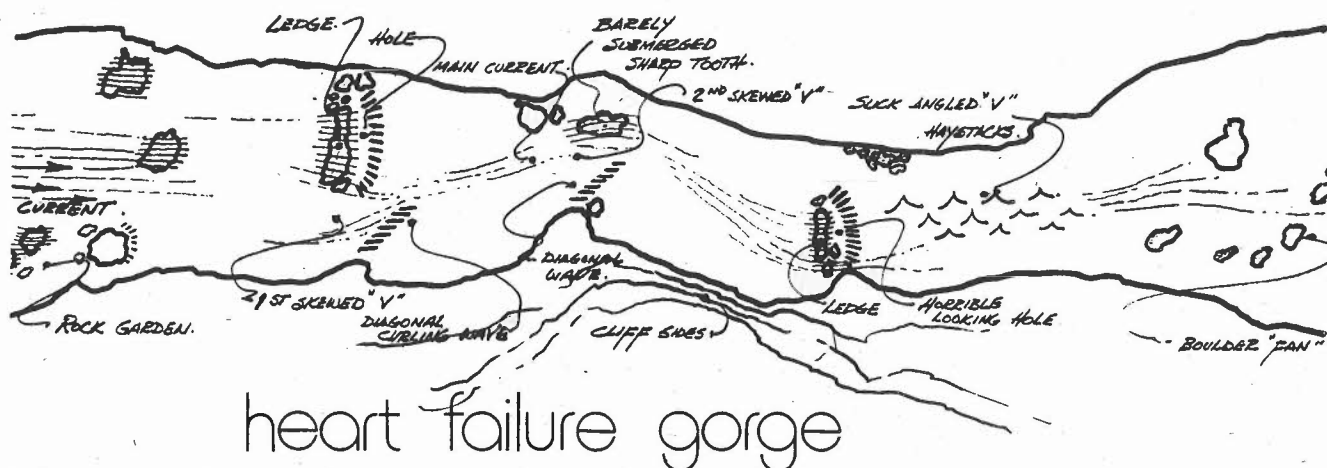
Although Cal Rutstrum says his wedge tent is best for this sort of travel, we suppose he possesses greater tolerance for a gnome-like existence under a low roof than do we. Wall tents are more usual, the ten by twelve feet being suitable for four people. The nearby sources I know are:

A. Homemade. Blacks, among others, sells good lightweight cotton, but it is orange (dark tent) and expensive (more than the ready-made Woods, less than the custom-made N.W. canvas.)

B. Custom-made. North-West Canvas, in North Bay, make splendid tents of light, strong "sail silk" (Egyptian cotton), but they are expensive. Check also the Yellow Pages of various major cities for other tent makers who might do the same.

C. Ready-made. Graham and I just bought tents of eight ounce duck from Woods Bag and Canvas. They are surprisingly cheap, but quite heavy and bulky. We ordered asbestos thimbles for the stove pipe from N.W. Canvas.

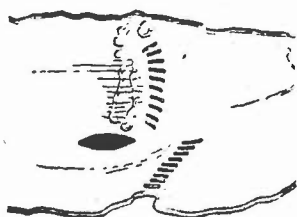
(The Happy Outdoorsman of Winnipeg also makes canvas tents, with the asbestos already in place)



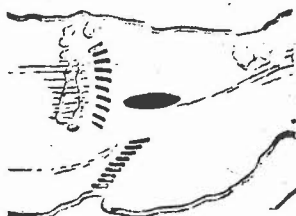
heart failure gorge

John Gross

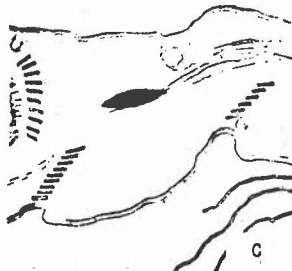
-Well...we might be able to run it...
 -All the ledges have "V"s through them...but they're all at the wrong angle: they aim you so you can't line up properly for the next one.
 -That first "V" we'll have to run on the left: just shave the ledge: otherwise we'll take on too much water in the diagonal wave and we won't be able to maneuver farther down. Then we'll have to back ferry right before we get to the next "V": we'll crash through the wave but that's better than being washed into the tooth.
 -But we don't want to get too far right: Look, the current just after the second "V" takes you over to the right; it looks really powerful. If we don't hug the left hand wall we'll wind up in the big hole. We've got to make that slick on the left.
 -Yes, but if we're not over right on the second "V", we'll crash into that tooth. Look how the water flows around and over it: can't you just see us crashing broadside into that! We'd never get the canoe off! We have to be over right when we hit that second "V". Then the moment we're past it, we have to kick the stern around and back ferry like mad for the left-hand wall.



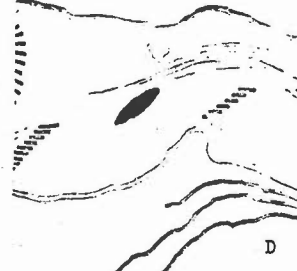
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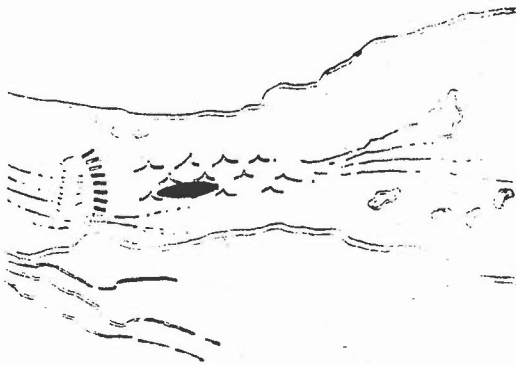
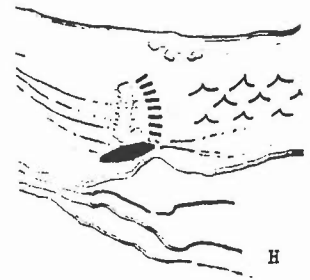
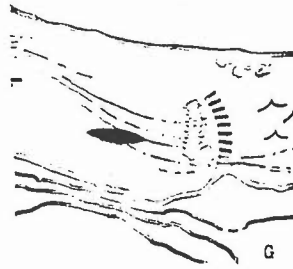
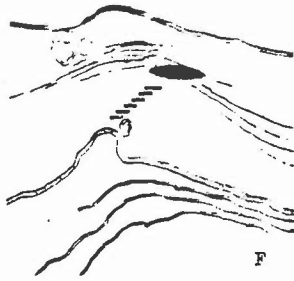
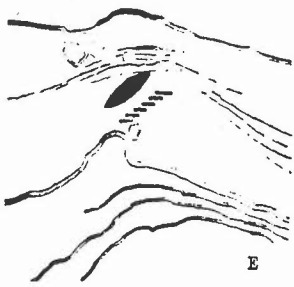
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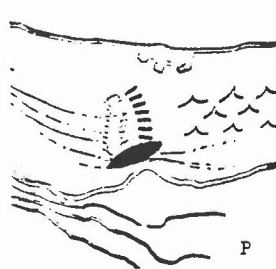
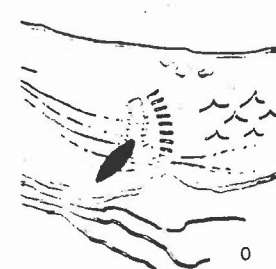
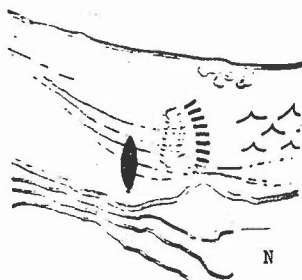
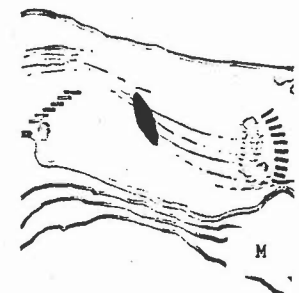
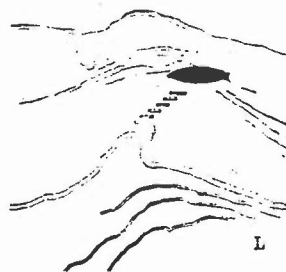
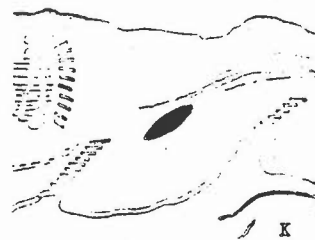
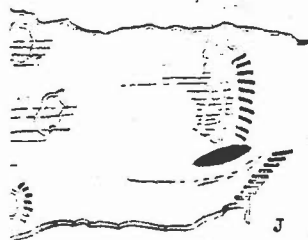
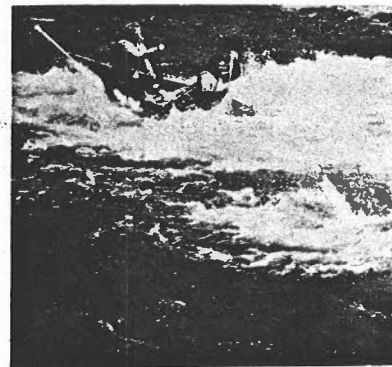
-Oh, look, here comes Herb. (A)
 -He's taking the first "V" on the left.
 -Wow, look how the current threw him over left! (B)
 -He's too far left. He's going to crash into the tooth! (Herb later told us he hadn't even seen the tooth until this point.) (C)
 -Oh, good, he's back ferrying. Look how his boat hangs in place. He doesn't have a keel. (D)



-He's going to miss the tooth. (E)
 -But now he's not around for a left ferry. (F)
 He's right in the main current.
 -That current is strong. See, he's being carried over to the far right. He doesn't (G) have a chance to make the "V".
 -But we can ferry more strongly than he can. There are two of us.
 -He's got a covered boat. He'll be all right. (H)
 But we had better miss that hole.
 -We should be farther left on the second "V". (I)
 -But then we'll hit the tooth. Did you see how narrowly he missed it? We can pivot the second we're past it. Say I paddle on the right, and you can draw the stern over left...
 -Oh no, I can swing the stern over much faster if I pry. I'll paddle on the right.
 -OK, and we start our turn as we pass the tooth.

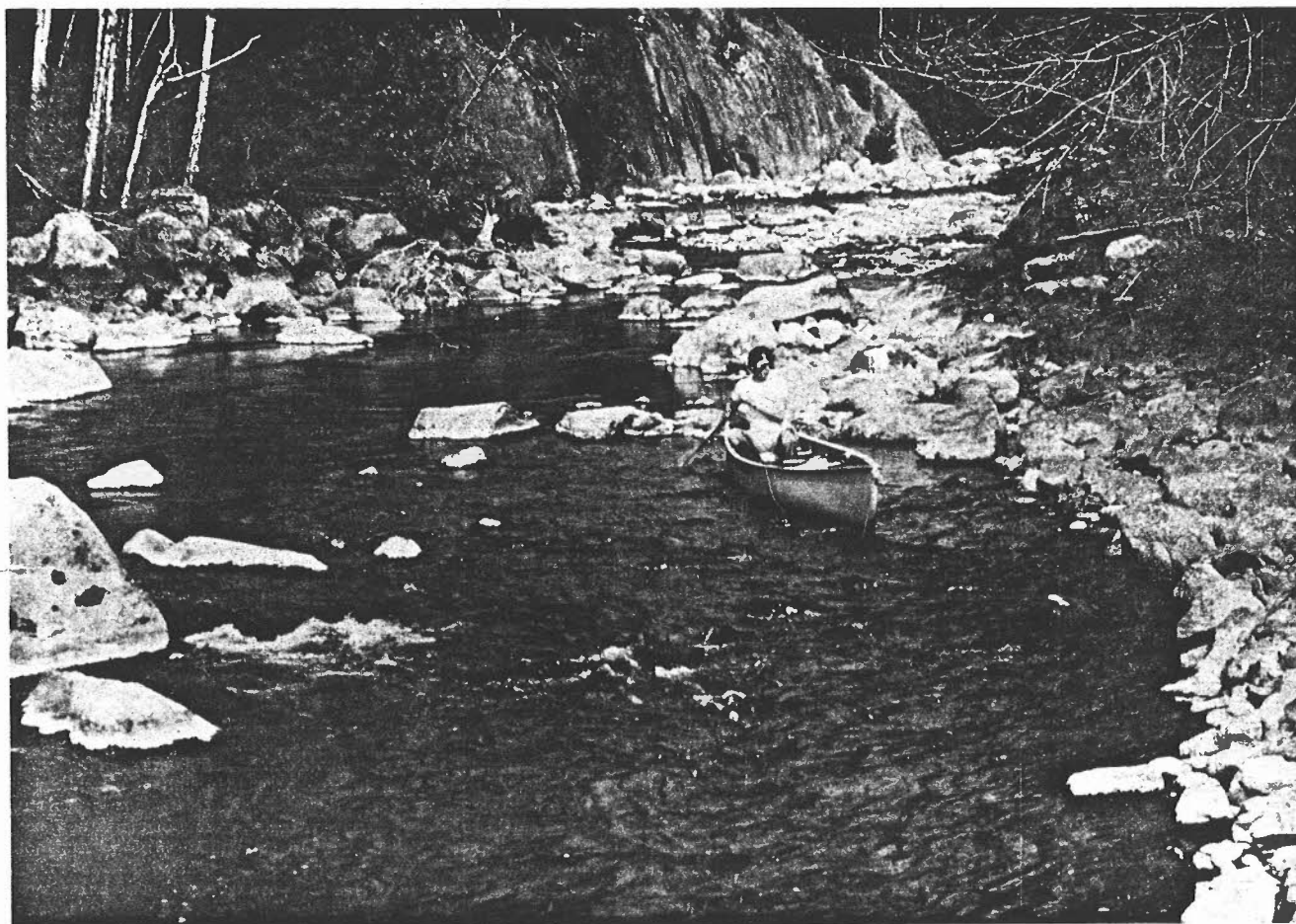
I

-Ferry right! (J)
 -Far enough. (K)
 -Ferry left! (L)
 -Backpaddle, backpaddle! (M)
 -Draw! We have to straighten out! (N)
 -There's no time! We'll have to go down... (O)
 -...backwards. (P)
 -Ham, we'd better turn around. (Q)
 -Looks like we're only half full.



spanish river

George Fairfield



We had only three members for our Spanish River trip in late May 1981. The organizer, Ken Ellison paddled solo in his sixteen foot Mad River "ABS" and Karl Schimek and I teamed up in Karl's seventeen foot Grumman White Water.

We decided that we would meet at the dam at the head of the Spanish. Ken and I would get there by train from Sudbury to Biscotasing and by canoe from Bisco to the dam. Karl would fly in from Agnew Lake.

Friday, May 22: Ken and I caught the local train (the Budd Car) from Sudbury at 9:40 a.m. and arrived at Bisco at 1:30 p.m.. The cost was reasonable - \$9.00 for each of us and \$12.00 for the canoe. (They charge the same for a canoe as for 300 pounds of baggage.) There was no restaurant in Bisco so we lunched on butter tarts and ice cream bars purchased at the general store.

In examining the map Ken had noticed a shortcut which would cut twenty km. of paddling off our trip from Bisco to the dam. We could cut across an intervening peninsula by utilizing two deep bays and three small lakes and bushwhacking in between.

When we started across the peninsula we were delighted to find well cut portages. It seemed too good to be true. It was. The third portage turned out to be seven hundred m. of well cut bog. At one point I sank down to my knees and couldn't get out until Ken came to my rescue. We found it easier to

leave the churned-up portage trail and stumble our way through the bush. We finally made it through to the dam and were pleased to find a campsite complete with fireplace and latrine.

We had just started to set up camp when a Cessna 185 flew in and landed with Karl and his canoe. I was surprised to see that the pilot was Glen Davey, a W.C.A. member.

Saturday, May 23: In setting the time of the trip in the latter part of May Ken naturally assumed that (a) the black flies and mosquitoes would not have started, and (b) there would be plenty of water in the river. We now had to face two unpleasant truths; the bugs were out in force and the dam was closed to maintain the level of Biscotasing Lake. North-eastern Ontario had suffered a period of high temperatures and drought. The rapids were nearly dry and there was no current to help us on the flat stretches between them. Therefore our first day on the river involved long periods of heavy paddling interspersed with periods of lining and lifting our canoes through shallow rapids. Ken managed to slither through the rapids without much difficulty but for Karl and I with the aluminum canoe it was heavy work. On the other hand on the flat stretches with the stiff head-wind Ken was the one in difficulty. We were neck-and-neck by eight p.m. when we arrived at our campsite five km. above the confluence of the Spanish with the East Spanish.

Sunday, May 24: I awoke at four a.m., got myself a cup of left over cold tea, wandered down to the shore and fell over Ken's canoe. I was afraid I had awakened the others but there was no sign of movement. (Later they told me they thought it was a bear but decided not to investigate.) I sat on a rock and watched the dawn arrive. At first only a veery was singing and the occasional startled cry of a spotted sandpiper. As it started to get light a robin, an ovenbird and then a redstart joined in and soon I was treated to the usual dawn chorus that is one of the things that brings us back to the bush every spring. A beaver was swimming rather aimlessly up and down before me and then a cow moose appeared out of the tag alders across the river and a short way down stream. She wandered up the far shore until she was opposite our camp, only a hundred metres away from me. She stopped there and stared apprehensively at our tents, then wheeled around and trotted off into the bush. I was more than pleased that insomnia had got me out of bed in time to see such a show.

This was a much easier day than the last. Sufficient water had entered the river from tributary streams so that we could run the few rapids and swifts we encountered. However, we lost some of the feeling of wilderness as we had frequent views of the railroad which follows the river closely from the confluence of the two branches to a point five km. south of Pogomasing.

The weather remained warm but changed from the brilliant sunshine we had enjoyed so far to overcast skies with occasional light showers. Our rain jackets were on and off several times before we made camp. We camped on a sandy terrace beyond the point where the river diverged from the tracks. Many more kilometres of river were paddled at the campfire that evening than the twenty-five covered during the day.

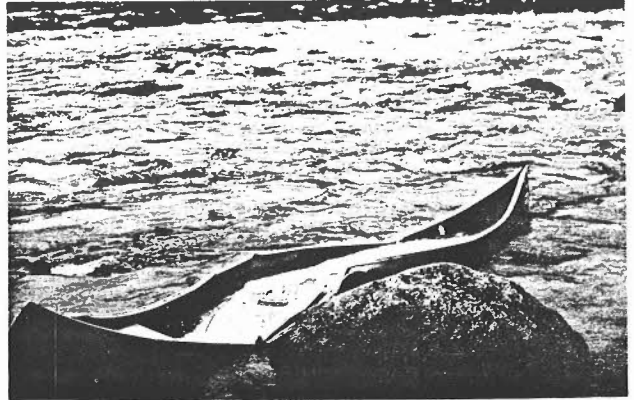
Monday, May 24: The river by now was a respectable size. We had a good many hours of flat-water paddling until we got to the south end of Spanish Lake. From there we had ten km. of rapids and swifts to our next camp place at the Elbow. The river was very shallow, but there was a channel with enough water to float our canoes. To follow this channel required continually winding from one side of the river to the other but the current kept us moving along at a good clip. As bowman I was kept busy avoiding rocks and only once did I land us squarely on top of a large boulder. This gave Karl the opportunity to demonstrate the art of rocking a canoe off a boulder without dumping.

The old logging camp clearing at the Elbow provided an excellent camp site. It was open and flat and offered a magnificent view of the river, both upstream and downstream. The only drawback was the beer cans and other garbage that previous campers (not W.C.A. members I am sure) had left lying around. But it is surprising how quickly the signs of man's interference with nature disappear. It was only seven years since the last river drive on the Spanish but the camp buildings were gone, the old rock-filled cribs were deteriorating and soon there will only be the occasional metal bolt protruding from the rock to show where the boom logs were once anchored.

As it grew dark we were treated to a performance of the woodcock's nuptial display. The male sits on the ground giving a nighthawk-like nasal "peent" at regular intervals. After several minutes he takes off flying in a high circle with a continuous twitter-

ing sound made by the wings. He then plunges to the earth to take up his "peenting" again at the original song post.

Tuesday, May 26: I had expected that this day would entail some long difficult portaging. The Ministry of Natural Resources description reports two 1.5 km. portages, one at Graveyard Rapids and one at the mouth of the Agnes River. I was pleasantly surprised to find that, due to the low water we were able to run all but the worst rapids and we had to make only three short portages.



The remainder of the river to Agnew Lake was fast and often shallow. We had kilometre after kilometre of easy paddling and were conscious of our speed only when we looked at the boulders "racing by" on the river bottom. We were making such good time that it soon became obvious that we were going to be able to finish the trip one day early. At the last good resting place above Agnew Lake we stopped, made a big pot of coffee and gathered our strength for the long paddle down the lake. Again we had a pleasant surprise; when we got to the lake we found we had a stiff tail wind to help us on our way. It was just seven p.m. when we arrived at Agnew Lake Lodge, having covered fifty km. since we left the Elbow at 8:30 a.m.

What put the icing on the cake was that we now had no car shuttle to worry about. Karl's station wagon was waiting for us at the lodge; we loaded on our two canoes and headed for Sudbury. There we transferred Ken's canoe to his car, paid our ransom to the parking lot attendant (twenty dollars) and headed for home. Two dozen donuts and a couple of gallons of coffee kept us awake until we arrived at Toronto at 2:30 a.m.

It had been a great trip and a learning experience for me, thanks to the expertise and patience of my two companions. The only advice I have to offer is if you are going to run the Spanish in low water, get the Budd Car to drop you off where the East Spanish enters the Spanish. This will let you canoe the best of the river and avoid much lifting over dry rapids and a good deal of flat water paddling.

upper madawaska - lower oxtongue

John Cross

This, the third time some of us had run the upper Madawaska this year, provided very low water levels, a surprising contrast to the record highs of three weeks before. Most of the rapids were run with ease. It seems that the days when this stretch was unknown are gone, as more and more groups are discovering how much more exciting this section is than the others. We ran into a large group from Canadian Universities' Travel Service and another group of seven canoes from Trailhead. It seems some people have not got the message of the party size restrictions in Algonquin Park. Does every ecologically sound measure have to be legislated?

Sunday, we ran the section of the Oxtongue River from Oxtongue Lake to Hw. 35. This part was new to us, familiar as we were with the upper section in the Park. The water level was perfect for a scouting trip:

just enough to run a canoe down all the rapids, but no surplus force to run us over the falls. In spring, far greater care would have to be exercised (there, you see, I forgot that June seven is usually called "spring;" not this year though, three and a half months late in the season), for some of the waves and ledges we ran easily would swamp an open boat. The falls are strategically positioned at the end of apparently runnable rapids, which lack comfortable shore eddies, probably in the hope of catching and eating half-swamped and out-of-control boaters. The main rapids-falls section is paralleled by a picnickers' road.

Like the Amable du Fond, this river contains a number of nasty surprises, so I think that in spring, every party should include someone who's done it before.

a lesson in high water

John Cross

In the week preceding Victoria Day, Hermann Kerckhoff told Jim Greenacre the Madawaska watershed received ten cm. of rain. All the dams were open and the river was higher than he had ever seen it. While Jim was taking a course on the middle Madawaska (Bell's Rapids), Graham Barnett's trip was flitting over other portions of the watershed: the Opeongo, the upper Madawaska (between Whitney and Madawaska village), and the lower Madawaska (Snake Rapids). They were all higher than we'd ever seen them. Glenn Spence's estimate for the Snake was three metres above normal.

Saturday on the Opeongo opened with grey skies, a cold wind, and a slow, chilling rain that seeped into the cracks in our rain gear. In such obvious conditions for hypothermia, I worried about the hords of other canoeists at the Shall Lake landing who were not wearing rain gear, and who were setting out in feeble fourteen foot cottage canoes. Fortunately, they were not accompanying us down the river.

We ran over the new log bridge before Victoria Lake that I had been complaining about to the others as too low to get under, traversed Victoria Lake, and started down the main rapids almost immediately. They begin with a drop which is normally runnable, but has sometimes caused grief, and then continue in a long stretch with very little opportunity to stop. We remembered Tony grabbing at tree trunks on the steep valley sides during a high water upset nine years ago, and decided to portage. Jack McGinty thought that it could be run solo. I think it could have been, but wasn't, by him, that day. As he hit the cold water, he very properly ignored the old saw "always hang on to the canoe," and headed for shore, leaving the canoe to take care of itself. Glenn and I thought for a moment that we could take care of it, but we were soon fully occupied taking care of ourselves. After we saw the canoe pin itself on a rock (one of the few), and after we had swallowed three big waves, we said goodbye to the paddles and headed for shore while we were still under control. (There was no shore; I should have said "side of the valley.")



We assembled at Russ Miller's canoe, rolled up or took off our trousers, and proceeded to lift, pull, and pry. One of the dangers in such an operation is success: once the canoe came free, it could be whipped downstream by the current, bulldozing anyone in the way; or the belaying rope we had to shore would swing down and slice anyone downstream of it. When we raised the upstream gunwale, the downstream one broke, spilling out much of the water. I remember Craig MacDonald telling us of some sages of the woods, who when their wood-and-canvas canoes were pinned, would slash the gunwales with axes so that the canoes would fold up "like a purse", they could then get them free with the canvas pretty well intact and only a little of the woodwork to replace (we speak of men to whom it is a little thing to cut and shape a replacement

rib with axe and crooked knife). The Kevlar-nylon sandwich, if not as flexible as canvas, still bent to a remarkable degree without cracking.

We proceeded cautiously, ready to portage what we usually ran, but two more dumpings decided us on a fire at lunch to dry everybody off. At that point about two p.m., the sun came out, so the prospects for excessive chilling declined. Even so, we made two portages after lunch around usually-run sections, one of which contains the only serious hydraulic jump on the Opeongo. It was now impossible to contemplate risking the narrow passage next to the log pile, so we submitted to a bush thrash.

Eight km. of rapids had taken us about five and a half hours; the last sixteen took two hours. We were practicing our ferries, braces, and backwaters to avoid swamping in large rollers. Jack and Russ decided to call it a weekend; the canoe was somewhat the worse for wear. It is interesting to note, though, that even where the hull was cracked, there was no leak. Russ says that if the Kevlar does break, the layer of nylon, only stretches, so that no open hole is formed.

The next two days were clear and sunny, with cold morning winds keeping the flies at bay. Can anyone remember another year when the first three months of canoeing season were flyless? We were a little shy after the previous day and passed up several sets we might have run. In fact, after ascertaining from Whitney that the first few sets were certain portages, we elected to save time and bother by starting from the power lines. The first set there, normally an exciting but not dangerous run, was now an impossible expanse of howling curlers which we of course portaged.

At Broken Yellow Canoe Rapids, an S-shaped bend, we caught up with a party of physical education students from U. of T., about fifteen canoes. They were making a common error: shot down the right shore as far as they could see it was safe to run, then, when one of their party apparently had trouble around the bend, scrambled for a very uncomfortable landing on the right shore, and then discovered that the right was not the shore to be on, and they were too far down to go back and correct the mistake. No doubt they scrambled through the bushes to the end. (The physical education professor was leading from the rear.) We back-ferried out to the centre well before that point, so that we could see downstream while our options to head for either shore were still open. On the other hand, at a later rapid, I left the decision on which channel was best too late, and in the fast slick above the rapid, even our strongest forward ferry was insufficient to get us across in time. We reached the correct channel at the last moment, and so had to run it backwards.

On Monday, we ran the Snake Rapids - if "run" is the term to describe our hesitant descent. "Normally," said Glenn, "we stop on a rock near here to look over the next bit and decide what to do."

"Where is it?", I asked.

"Covered."

"Where was it?"

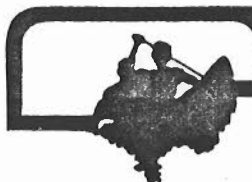
"Oh...over there somewhere...or there...or there..."

"What's next, Glenn?", asked Bill when he caught up with us.

"Don't know, Bill. This is a different river."

The frightening feature of this big river was the turbulence, which, unlike waves was not constant, not predictable, and sometimes not even visible. On the Opeongo we had run some fairly large waves which held none of the menace a bigger river could provide: some of the "flat" water, crisscrossed by swirls, whirlpools, and suddenly-erupting boils, switched direction so that a downstream brace could become an upstream one without warning. As usual, we passed up some good runs.

We will probably return later in the summer to run what we missed and to compare the then water level with the high-water tideline.

Moon River Loop Sat. Oct.3-Sun Oct.4

Organizer: Bill Ness, 1-416-499-6389

Book as soon as possible

This is a pleasant 38 km lake and river circle trip from Healey lake. There are 12 portages, most of which are quite short.

This area has superb fall colours, so bring your camera along.

Limit: 4 canoes Level: novice

Algonquin Park Sat. Oct. 10- Mon. Oct. 12

Organizer: Herb Pohl 1-416-637-7632

Book as soon as possible.

A base camp will be set up just across the lake from Achray on the east end of Algonquin Park. From there we will do three easy one day trips to explore the picturesque surroundings.

The word "explore" is used to indicate that the organizer is familiar with most but not all of the terrain. It is a great area for the photographer.

Limit: 4 canoes , Level: Novice

Beausoleil Island October 17 - 18

Organizer: Herb Pohl 1-416-637-7632

Book before October 10

A short 3 km paddle from the public dock at Honey Harbour will bring us to a campsite for a relaxed weekend of hiking with few in any other people around to disturb us.

Limit: 4 canoes , Level: Novices able to dodge power boats & cope with wind

Upper Credit River Outing October 18

Organizer: Jim Greenacre, 416-759-9956

Book: October 1-8

This will be a 20 km trip down the easier sections of the river between Terra Cotta and Huttonville. Low water could mean "wet feet" when walking the canoes over shallow spots, or the trip may be moved to the Head and Black rivers.

Limit: 6 canoes, Level: Novice with flat. exp.

Algonquin Park October 24 - 25

Organizer: Herb Pohl 1-416-637-7632

Book before October 15.

This trip will take us from Tim Lake down the Tim river, across to Misty Lake and up the Petewawa river to Magnetawan lake.

This is an exploratory trip for the organizer but there are certainly at least ten portages ranging from 100 to 1000 metres in length and with low water levels at this time of year there may be additional obstacles to overcome making for a strenuous trip.

Limit: 4 canoes Level: Intermediate

St. Nora Lake, Kennissi Lake Loop (near Dorset)

Organizer: Rob Butler, 416-487-2282

Date: October 25, Book: Sept. 25-Oct.11

This will be a long day of flat water paddling through the scenic Haliburton countryside. We will pass through a number of lakes via a number of portages the longest of which is 3/4 km.

Limit: 4 canoes , Level: novices in good cond.

Frost Centre Hike Sunday Nov. 1

Organizer: Bill Ness 1-416-499-6389

Book between Oct. 4 & 18

The cross-country ski trails at the Leslie Frost Centre near Dorset make fine hiking trails in the off-season. This will be an invigorating hike of about 12 km following the paths as they wind through the autumn woods. This brisk weather and absence of bugs should make this a pleasant jaunt.

Algonquin Park X-C Weekend December 12-13

Organizer: Bill Ness 1-416-499-6389

Book between Nov. 15 & 29

This outing will provide an early season opportunity to brush up on your cross-country and winter camping skills. We will ski the Leaf lake & Sunday lake trails on Saturday, spend the evening in the Mew lake Campground & tackle the Fen lake trail Sunday.

Armchair Outing Friday Jan. 22

Organizer: Bill & Rita Ness 1-416-499-6389

Book after January 1

For those of us who can't wait for spring to experience the joy of canoeing again we invite you to join us for an evening of vicarious paddling pleasure as we screen a selection of films about canoeing. During intermissions relax to recordings of chansons des voyageurs and early lumber camp ballads. If you have slides from your summer adventures that you would like to share with us bring them along.

Limit: 20 people

Rivière Noire (Québec) Weekend Dec.31 - Jan. 3

Organizer: Dave Berthelet 1-819-771-4170

Book: as soon as possible!

This area just north of Pembroke on the Québec side of the Ottawa river was quite active in the logging days of times gone by. The woods have many interesting trails from that period.

The plan for the trip is to ski the 20 km to the old cabins the first day, to explore and photograph the woods the second and third day and then ski out by a different route the fourth day.

Limit: 8 skiers Level: Suitable for hardy souls at the intermediate level & up

products and services

Canoe For Sale

Sixteen foot Old Towne ABS river canoe. Almost new condition. Price \$690 (one-third off new price). John Sprague, 166 Maple St., Guelph, Ont. N1G 2G7. Phone 519 824-8329.

Canoe Wanted

Used Grumman Whitewater, in reasonable condition wanted. Contact Dave Perthelet, 107 Froment St., Hull, Quebec J8Y 6E2: phone 819-771-4170.

Coleman Craft Canoes:

Coleman Craft Canoes, of hand-layed-up fiberglass, are available in 12'8", 14'8", and 16' L.O.A., with either a lake keel or shallow keel for river use. Custom made and sold only at our shop. Maximum production is limited to 100 per year. Please phone if you are interested in viewing films of our canoes and discussing their features. Bill Coleman: (519) 623-1804/1894. Shop located at 333 Dundas St. (Hwy. 8), Cambridge (Galt), Ontario.

Spray Covers:

Custom made for any canoe from waterproof nylon. Contact Rockwood Outfitters, 45 Speedvale Ave. E., Guelph, Ontario N1H 1J2. Phone 519 824-1415.

Bluewater Canoes:

Lightweight Kevlar-S-glass, fibreglass, and nylon canoes made with epoxy and vinylester resins. As well, we have an excellent line of canoes - Mad River, Nova Craft, Woodstream, Bluewater Royale - and canoeing supplies. Rockwood Outfitters, 45 Speedvale Ave. E., Guelph, Ontario N1H 1J2. Phone 519 824-1415.

Trippers:

Rentals of exceptional quality canoe and trail equipment. Cannondale tents, Lowe Alpine Systems backpacks, Mad River and Bluewater canoes. For information and reservations call Tripper's at 416 489-4378, Toronto.

Discounts on Camping Supplies:

WCA members who present a membership card will receive ten percent discounts on many non-sale items at:

Margesson's, 17 Adelaide St. E., Toronto.
Don Bell Sports, 164 Front St., Trenton.
A.B.C. Sports, 552 Young St., Toronto.
Rockwood Outfitters, 15 Speedvale Ave. E., Guelph.

Members should check at each store to find out what items are discounted.

Odawban Wood Stoves:

Odawban portable wood-burning stoves for tent or cabin use are now available. They are sized to fit on a toboggan or sled, carry twelve feet of pipe inside them, and take a big wood filling for a hot, long-burning fire. Contact Craig MacDonald at 705-766-2885.

Waterproof Camera Bags:

Purse-size rubber gas-mask bags for carrying camera, lunch, or spare socks and wallet in waterproof comfort are available from John Cross, 416-487-0678. Stronger than plastic, rolled-seam snap closure, web straps.

Adventure Bound

Adventure Bound offers quality equipment for all light weight travellers; including: Eureka tents, Camp Trails backpacks and sleeping bags, Old Town Oltonar Canoes and much more. Write or phone for personalized services and price lists. Adventure Bound, 3535 Braemore Place, Burlington, Ontario, L7N 2N1. Phone 416 637-3645.

Long Range Weather Forecasts

To help with planning your trips, thirty-day forecasts for all of North America are offered in a monthly newsletter. Send \$24.00 for twelve issues to: Future Weather Inc., Box 2632, Station "A", London, Ontario, N6A 4B9.

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I enclose a cheque for \$10 — student under 18
\$20 — adult
\$30 — family

for membership in the
WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION. I understand that this entitles me/us to
receive The Wilderness Canoeist, to vote at meetings of the Association,
and gives me/us the opportunity to participate in W.C.A. outings and
activities.

NAME: _____ ADDRESS: _____
_____ phone: _____

Please check one of the following: () new member application
() renewal for 1981.

Notes: -This membership will expire January 31, 1982.
-Please send completed form and cheque (payable to the Wilderness
Canoe Association) to the membership committee chairman.

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