



THE TORNGATS AND NORTHERN LABRADOR BY CANOE

George Luste

My 1987 summer canoe trip was a memorable and remarkable one and will probably always remain so in my memory. That was the summer six of us paddled and hiked one of Canada's wildest and most spectacular regions: northern Labrador and the Torngat Mountains. Since access to this isolated corner of Canada is both difficult and/or expensive, it is not what one might call a casual trip. Getting to northern Labrador and back safely and at modest cost by canoe was a challenge and an adventure in itself. But the visual and personal rewards of the experience more than justified the extra effort.

The concept of the trip was simple enough. We had planned to paddle north from Nain, the northernmost settlement in Labrador, to the Torngat Mountains, about 450 kilometres further north, hike in the mountains for a week, cross the Torngats to the Korok River in Québec, and paddle down it to Ungava Bay and the settlement of Kangiqsualujuaq (or George River or Port Nouveau Québec in the recent past) at the mouth of the George River. It was estimated as a tight five-week trip: four weeks on the water, plus one week of climbing in the Torngats, with an additional week of provisions taken along in case of delays. The 'we' consisted of Tom Elliott (age 51), Jim Greenacre (66), Dick Irwin (48), Karl Schimek (60) with son Peter (21), and myself (47 at the time). Excluding 'young' Peter, the average age was 54.

To reach the Torngats, in the northern extremity of Labrador, without an expensive boat or airplane charter, one has to paddle a fair distance in the north Atlantic Ocean. For part of the way there are protective islands but a substantial portion is out in the open and unprotected. This passage by canoe along the rugged coast of northern Labrador was one of the most exhilarating and intimidating open-water paddles I have experienced. Numerous new factors and new circumstances contributed to this mixed sense of exhilaration and intimidation.

Paddling on the ocean with its cold water, its tides and tidal currents, its rolling swells, crashing surf, and bothersome chop represents a new experience for the conventional convert used to lakes and rivers. The loss of contact with land in the sometimes drifting sea fog; along an uninhabited, sheer coastline; amidst the occasional shifting pack of ice debris; past the odd rogue iceberg and the ever-ominous protruding headlands; all depict the real as well as potential dangers we encountered.

The fact that our group also felt the pressure of a tight time schedule (due almost entirely to our desire to stop to hike and climb as much as possible), and our misfortune that we picked a year when the July/August weather in Labrador was uncharacteristically rough, added further stress to our trip. The sometimes marginal and unstable weather was a serious issue. In crossing bays and in committing ourselves to unprotected runs we had to try and anticipate the likelihood of the always worrisome weather shift. At times one wondered if one might be playing Russian roulette.

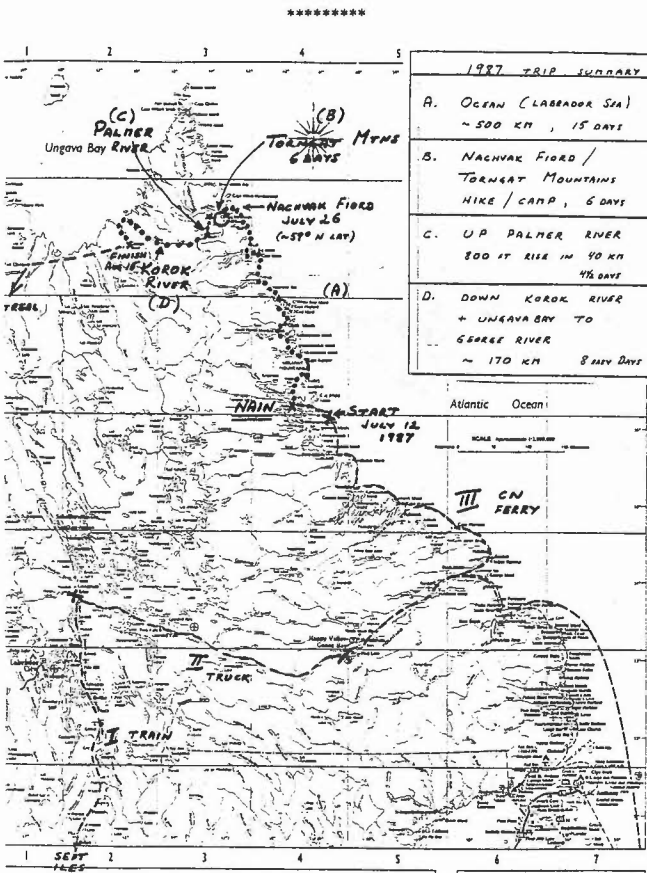
In their book, "In Wild Canada," John and Janet Foster have a section on northern Labrador, where they write: "Travellers who opt for the coastal route are faced with sheer cliffs on one side, the treacherous Atlantic on the other, and nothing between but their own courage and sheer determination." But what struck me even more than these words were their beautiful photographs, which depicted the stunning coastal scenery. In another book, "Northern Lights," Desmond

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Holdridge writes: "From Mugford north to Chiddley there stretches the most spectacular piece of coastline on the Atlantic side of the Americas." He was recollecting his 1925 small (10-m) boat travels along the same coast. While I am opposed to the notion of adventure or danger for its own sake and would much rather appreciate the quiet joys of tranquility, it seemed that the magnificence of nature in the rugged rocks of the northern Labrador was worth some risk.

Good fortune prevailed and we returned safely from a marvelous summer of canoeing and hiking, without any serious incident. The memory of the landscape we saw on intimate terms and the sense of my own personal experiences will always be with me. As I write these words and recollect the summer of 1987 again, a deepening sense of awareness and gratitude washes over me.



Exposed Kaumajet Mountains shore, near Finger Hill

The second leg was the 500-km paddle up the Labrador coast past Nain, past the Kiglapait Mountains and the Kaumajet Mountains, to our farthest north destination, Nachvak Fiord in the Torngats. We reached Nachvak late in the day on 26 July, 15 days after starting out. Adverse weather and wind had cost us a total of three days delay on shore and an additional day was given up to side trips in the Kiglapait and in exploring the abandoned settlement of Hebron. In order not to compromise our hiking time in the mountains and to still keep to our fixed schedule with a pre-arranged charter flight from George River south to Schefferville, we had to put in some long days on the water. To illustrate, in the last 36 hours on the open coast, north of Saglek Bay, we paddled a total of 120 km. That is a respectable two-day distance on flat water, without the aid of current or tailwind and in loaded, notoriously slow Grumman canoes.

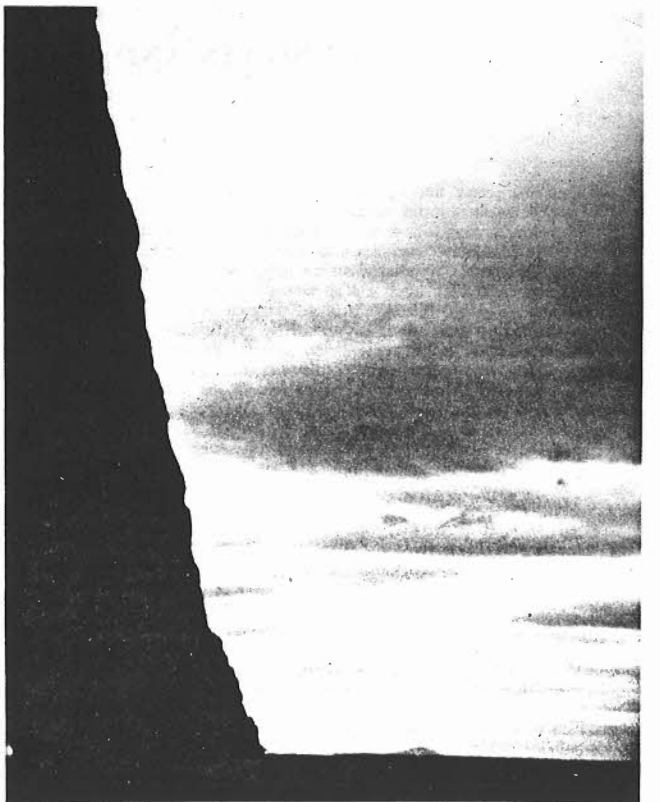
The third part consisted of seven days on land in the Torngat Mountains, south of Nachvak Fiord. We set up an ideally located base camp, an easy day's hike inland, on McCormick Creek, and from there climbed and hiked some of the highest snow-capped peaks in the Torngats, including L1 (also referred to as Mont d'Iberville), the highest elevation on the continental east coast. Our second day in Nachvak was spent resting, as it rained at sea level and snowed above 900 m (3000 ft). But then for three glorious days the weather co-operated and we had sunny, warm conditions. Ideal for our needs, as various members went to the tops of L1, Cirque, Cladonia, and Gneissberg, all above 1500 m (5000 ft) and within sight of the Atlantic Ocean to the east. This was a grand reward for our paddling efforts. (Without the prior advice of friends John and Janet Foster back in Toronto and Ray Chipeniuk in Ottawa, this hiking and climbing portion of the trip could easily have been a marginal affair. We are indebted to them. Thanks again!)

The fourth part was a punishing uphill grunt, across the Torngats into Québec via the Palmer River valley to the Korok River. The distance was only about 60 km but it took four and a half hard days to paddle, line, man-haul, and portage up to the Korok, 240 m (800 ft) above sea level. The weather was glum and overcast most of the way and so we worked hard without too much appreciation of the spectacular surroundings. Robert Perkins, in his book, "Against Straight Lines," describes this route in further detail.

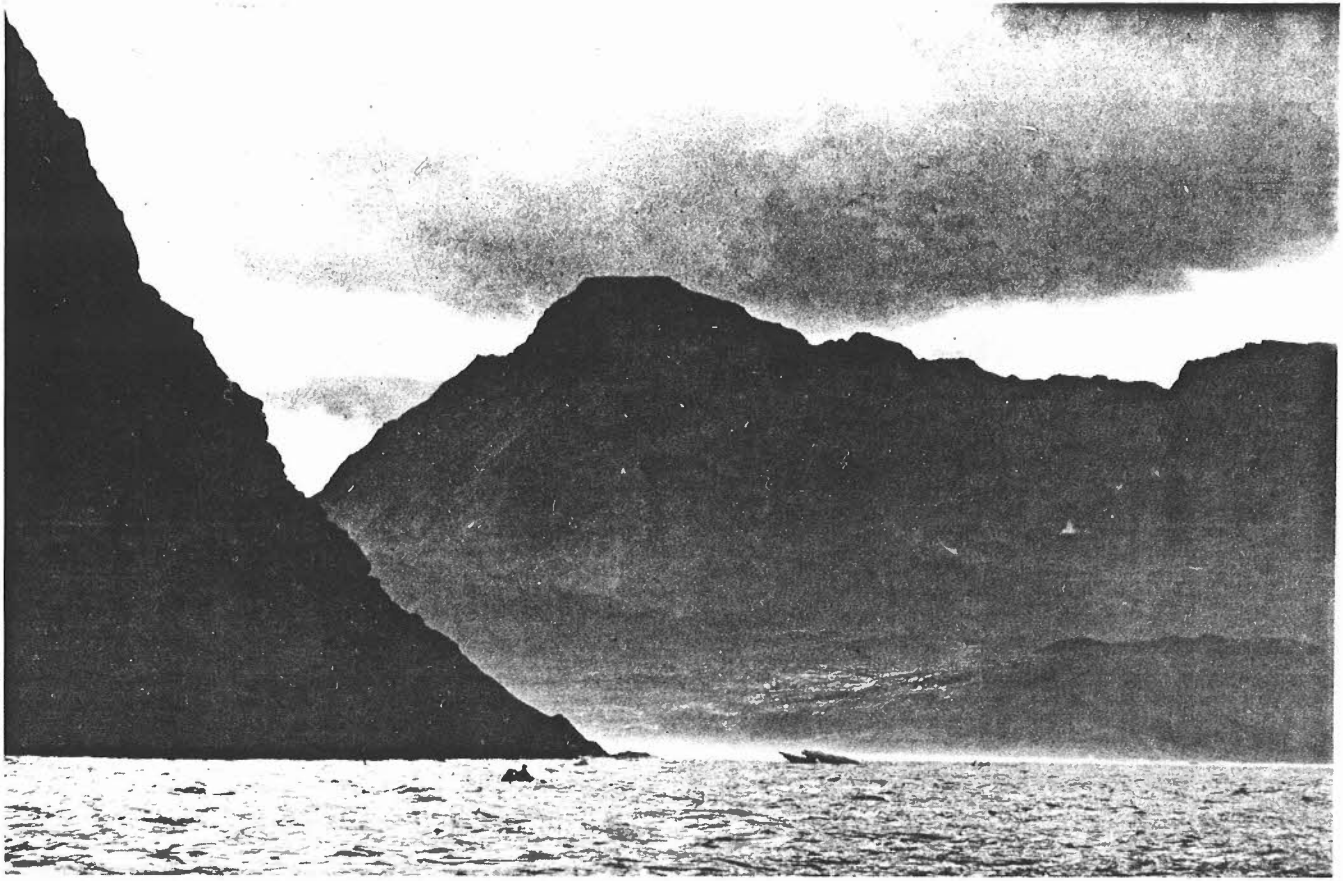
The trip from door to door had six distinct segments. The first was getting ourselves and our gear to Goose Bay in Labrador, on board the Taverner, one of the Newfoundland-Labrador Marine Atlantic (CN) marine ferries, for the anticipated 'easy' cruise to Nain. One should, of course, always expect the unexpected. And so it was. The Taverner encountered unusually heavy drifting ice conditions north of Hopedale. With some effort it made it to the next settlement, Davis Inlet, but not to Nain, next and final port. The ferry was stopped by heavy ice and forced to turn back some 50 km short of its destination. This occurred in the early morning of 12 July. Fortunately, the weather and sea were calm at the time and, with the aid of the ship's crane, we disembarked by lowering our gear and canoes over the side, amongst the ice floes surrounding the ship. As we departed, heading north, the receding ship, steaming south, gave us three short toots. A nice 'goodbye and good luck.'



Working through ice towards land



Exposed vertical shore near Cod Bag Harbour in Kaumajet Mountains



The fifth leg, the descent down the Korok to Ungava Bay and around the Bay to George River, was more or less traditional, easy downriver canoeing. Now back in the trees with ample shelter and warming fires, it was a welcome change and a return to normal conditions, going with the current and running rapids. With minor delays, including one layover day at Korluktok Falls, we reached the George River settlement on the afternoon of 15 August, four days before our Schefferville charter was due. But I was still concerned. In 1976, with a similar arrangement, poor weather left us stranded for six days in George River and we finally had to leave our canoes and seek alternate transportation.

For the last segment, the unexpected overtook us again. Because, by chance, we were able to leave our canoes with the once-a-year oil-supply vessel from Samia anchored offshore, we abandoned our charter plans to Schefferville and managed to catch two successive planes that same evening, first to Chimo, and then to Montreal. What a numbing transposition that was from an arctic sunset at our last campsite on chilly Ungava Bay one evening to the night lights of hot and humid Montreal the next. Peter never even had time to change his shredded and now two-piece trousers before we arrived at crowded Dorval.

I hope the few photographs selected for this article speak for themselves in communicating the rugged beauty of northern Labrador and adjoining Québec. Rather than describe in minute detail what we saw and how we coped on a daily basis, my plan is to shift to a brief discussion of a few specific planning and execution topics related to the trip. While the subject of planning and execution may not sound too exciting, it is an essential part of any successful venture. But again I must be brief and only touch on this very extensive topic.

An immediate question is of course "Why the Tomgats? What was the genesis for this particular trip?" There is no quick, simple answer. It was an evolving personal interest and accumulating experience over many years. As early as 1976, in canoeing down the George River, I can recall wondering what the Labrador landscape beyond the horizon to our east was like. We even tried hiking from Indian House Lake up to the height of land back then, to stand on the Québec-Labrador border. But eleven years earlier I was strictly a river canoeist and canoeing on the ocean was not in my realm of musings. In the ensuing years I made two more return trips to Labrador, one a canoe trip down the Notakwanon River and the other a winter trek on snowshoes across Labrador and along the Kogulak valley, made friends in Nain, and learned more about the Labrador coast. In 1983 my daughter and I canoed the length of Lake Superior, which trip was particularly significant. It assured me that a well-decked canoe was both essential and acceptable in large, exposed water, that one could paddle and make steady progress with chop or breakers washing over the canoe decking. (The Grumman in particular has minimal freeboard, yet this is of some advantage when paddling against a strong wind.)

At the same time I had become increasingly fascinated with some of the information in my library of northern books that dealt with Labrador. The photographs in "Northernmost Labrador from the Air," by Alexander Forbes, and the boating around Nain in "In Northern Labrador," by William B. Cabot come to mind. In particular, the pictures in the Forbes' and Foster's books depicting the wild and primitive mountains around Nachvak Fiord were compelling. Thus my desire to go. Other very useful references and information came from Stephen P. Loutrel's article, "To Cape Chidley and Back," in the December 1975 issue of *Appalachia*, Eric Radack's article, "The 1980 Torngat Expedition: by Kayak Along the Labrador Coast," in the June 1981 issue of *Appalachia*, and Rob Beebe's "Of Myths and Mountains" in the April 1982 issue of *Canoe* magazine.

Late evening search for safe landing and campsite

Then there is the growing concern that, should my health or circumstances change in the years ahead, I could no longer count on doing it sometime in the distant future. In other words, I was becoming increasingly conscious of the frailties of life and the slow but sure decrepitude of middle age and beyond. (Also known as the Herb Pohl "I'm-getting-old" refrain.)

Every trip has to deal with the issue: "What size group and how to select that group?" On the question of selection, the reality is that in practice it usually is difficult to find sufficient numbers of people who have all the necessary qualifications, such as; experience, interest, mutual compatibility, free time, and money for an extended far-northern trip. Thus one usually has to compromise. To illustrate: my own strong preference is for a small group, two canoes, for example, rather than three. There are numerous reasons for this preference. To fully discuss them would take a chapter in a book. But in brief, I think that a small group is more efficient at covering distance and so has more 'free' time for various activities, such as hiking, photography, sleeping, or what have you. A small group is more likely to be a compatible group and, for intricate reasons, also a safer group. On the safety issue, nowadays I even wonder if a one-canoe trip isn't the safest of all for an experienced individual. This statement might surprise the reader. Just a few years ago I would have been surprised myself.

Given my preference for a small group, why then six on our trip? The sharing of logistic expenses is the crux of the answer; minimizing expenses was of paramount concern for some and thus a determining factor. The major expense on any of these trips is getting to the put-in and returning home from the take-out. The cheapest and surest way to get both our canoes and ourselves out of George River at the take-out, and back to Toronto, seemed to be to charter a plane to get us to Schefferville and from there via train to Sept Isle and the cars. The most economical (per person) charter solution is a six-way split on a Twin Otter, and Air Schefferville had a Twin. This was the compelling reason for going with six that at the outset overrode my preference for a smaller group. We did prearrange a charter on a fixed day with Air Schefferville, who cautioned me that its schedule was too busy to come any other time. Unfortunately we could not have anticipated or counted on the oil supply ship being in George River at the planning stage of the exercise. Sharing the costs on the overland truck transport from Esker to Goose Bay six ways was a similar, albeit reduced dollar argument.

Given six individuals, it's important to balance the canoes in paddling experience and power as well as to distribute the other group responsibilities in some purposeful manner. I'm not a proponent of rotating canoeing partners on a trip where one may encounter risky situations. It seems to me that it adds to safety and efficiency if you have the same canoeing partner throughout. There is a decided advantage in being in a familiar canoe with a familiar partner in emergency situations. Balance, anticipation, communication, hesitation, all sorts of things between partners can become critical in the fleeting moments of a crisis. The average speed of all the canoes must also be reasonably balanced. Thus it comes down to some compromise between power, experience, and compatibility as to who should paddle with whom.

I'm a strong advocate of minimizing 'wasted time.' Having the same canoeing partner helps establish an efficient system and routine for loading and unloading your gear. By wasted time I mean time when one individual or one canoe keeps the others waiting, who have no option to do anything else but wait. If one wants to explore the interior, go for hikes, become involved in serious



View of entrance to Nachvak Fiord and Mount Razorback in far background, from top of Mount Cladonia

photography, write, sleep, or anything else that provides enjoyment, one needs time. On a long canoe trip, time is a precious commodity and one should try to use it to maximum benefit. And wasted time really adds up. For instance, a needless delay of only 30 minutes every morning would total to 17.5 hours on a five-week trip. That is two full days of paddling or ample time for additional hiking, writing, or photography. Why waste that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for using as much time as possible to its maximum potential? But I must confess that my canoeing colleagues don't always see this issue in the same light as I do.

Whenever possible, I'm in favor of a different partner for tenting, for cooking, and for paddling. A simple rule that seems to work well is that everybody's tenting partner should be from another canoe and everybody's cooking partner should be from a third canoe. This helps make a quick morning departure possible and encourages daily communication of some sort between members from each of the three canoes and thereby lessens the chance of individual isolation, or 'losing' a canoe.

Finally some comments on precautions, minimising risk and anxious moments.

In doing something new in unfamiliar circumstances, one of course tries to prepare as much as possible beforehand to avoid any serious mishap.

I haven't carried a firearm on any canoe trip since 1969. We didn't on the Torngat trip, although people have reported polar bear sightings in Nachvak and I do worry about any chance encounter with a polar bear. But so far my experience has been that the dangers to oneself from a firearm exceed the risk of really needing it. The weather was a far greater threat and risk in my opinion. With this in mind I did buy and bring along two weather aids. One was a small altimeter, made by Gischard, costing about \$75. In some of our exposed runs, I would constantly keep an eye on it. Its purpose was to warn me of an atmospheric pressure drop and so foretell of an approaching storm. It reassured me, like a life jacket does. The second item was a high-quality (and a high-price) Sony (ICF-2002) small, portable radio with world-wide-band coverage, including FM/LW/MW/SW. I had hoped I might be lucky and get regular and useful weather information via northern short-wave radio stations. Although I did hear the occasional weather report in English from CBC North, I never succeeded in doing this consistently or when it was really important. However, some evenings I did

get very clear reception from the BBC in London or Radio Moscow (in English). Beforehand, in Toronto, I did try to get advice from the Canadian Coast Guard office on how useful this short wave radio might be in northern Labrador but again with minimal success.

Ever since the long Barrenland trip of 1974, I have been taking a battery-powered Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) with me. So far I've never had to use it. (Likewise I've never had to use my life jacket either but I always wear it.) My ELT is an old model and probably weighs close to 4.5 kilograms. Today far smaller and lighter models are available and I'm a strong proponent for having them along. (I plan on getting a small one soon.) Ideally there would be one per canoe, carried on a person at all times, perhaps on the inside of a life jacket. With an ELT along one has some recourse in a medical emergency or even in an accident where you might lose the canoe or the packs and be stranded. If activated they beam out a fixed-frequency signal, which is then picked up by a space satellite (Russian, it turns out) that continuously monitors this frequency. The source location is determined, an alarm is sounded, and a rescue effort is launched. Clearly you should never ever use one unless it is as a last-resort, life-threatening necessity. If you should turn on the ELT, it seems to me that the individual, or the group, must be prepared to pay the full cost of the rescue operation, even if this might result in personal bankruptcy. Otherwise I think we are abusing the real purpose and privilege of having an ELT along. And don't forget to let the RCMP know you are carrying one, so if a rescue effort is launched, they have some notion of who it might be sending the ELT signal.



Late lunch stop in Perry's Gulch before evening crossing of Snyder Bay



A 2½-hour lunch stop for a tired group, near Finger Hill

Earlier I mentioned the importance of a good spray deck cover for the canoe. I would not travel without one anymore. On the Labrador coast it would have been suicidal to try. By a "good" spray cover I mean one that does not leak, sheds excess water readily and does not have to be fussed with to throw off water, one that will withstand abuse and has very reliable fasteners. One possible worst-case scenario on the Labrador trip might have required that we ride out a stormy night on the open sea. Fortunately we never had to put this to a test.

One of the handicaps of a canoe is that it is vulnerably slow in big water and heavy winds. Very minimal horsepower is available from the paddlers and the canoe is painfully slow relative to any power boat in a similar situation. Should bad weather catch one in an exposed situation, "racing" to safety can be a slow, uncertain possibility. Under more normal circumstances, say on a large lake in the Barrens, one would argue that staying close to shore is the wisest choice if a storm is threatening. If the storm comes, safety is close at hand and one simply lands and waits it out. But what if landing involves dealing with two- to three-metre seas crashing in on a sheer rock face? Survival may be unlikely. Then it seems to me that one must minimize the risk by minimizing the time one is exposed to the danger. The situation is similar to the one that the legendary mountain climber Reinhold Messner describes in traversing the dangerous and



Rest day at Korluktok falls
on Korok River

unpredictable Khumbu Icefall at the base of Everest: "Speed was, in our opinion, the most decisive factor for survival in this unpredictably dangerous territory." In other words, one might have to accept new dangers, but lesser ones for the sake of speed. In some of our longer traverses on the coast, once committed, I had a similar view, to lessen the risk: we must hurry and so lessen the time we are exposed to risk, even if, for instance, this might mean travelling at an uncomfortable distance from shore. But of course I 'mustn't' mislead you into believing that a rigid generalization exists. Every situation requires its own best judgement call, based as much as possible on a clear understanding of the situation at hand.

Finally let me share some thoughts on the question of: "What were the most anxious moments of the trip?" First I will describe a real situation and then an imagined situation, one that I was afraid of but which never transpired.

To get to the safety of Nachvak Fiord, we had to first paddle around Gulch Cape. This is a massive, 300-m (1000-ft) high peninsula that sticks out for about five kilometres from Delabarre Bay on the south and for 15 km of exposure to Nachvak Fiord on the north. It had been a long day and the swells had prevented our stopping and landing for lunch. We were already tired and stiff when we approached the Cape, the last major obstacle before turning into sheltered Nachvak Fiord. All day we had been riding the swells, going up and down, sometimes almost losing momentary sight of the other canoes a wave or two away, in a different trough. It was clear that it would be a bit rough in going around Gulch Cape. The ocean swells were hitting it from three sides and with the reflected waves coming back in all directions, we would have to pass through an ever-changing interference-pattern maze of chaotic waves. There was no way to judge for sure how bad it would get but it seemed acceptable and so we went on.

One gets used to riding a repeatable, steady pattern of swells. It's not difficult or threatening. But canoeing through an ever-changing pattern of big waves, where at times you are surfing and the waves threaten to break, first from one direction and then another, is another matter. There is constant anxiety, anticipation, adjustment, and balancing involved. During the worst piece I became concerned for our safety, in large measure because my own sense of balance seemed to be slipping away at critical moments. Perhaps because of the long day and tiredness but more likely I was becoming seasick. Without a reliable sense of balance in those waves, one could easily go over and face disaster. Thus I was most grateful when the worst was over and we passed into calmer waters again. I now recall our memorable campsite that evening and a spectacular display of golden afterglow from the dying sun. It seemed friendly again and we were finished with the open ocean portion of our trip.

Finally, the imagined disaster. As one paddles vast expanses, sometimes for endless hours, mile after mile, there is ample time to daydream, to think, and to worry. In our exposed paddles along the potentially threatening coast, I would sometimes think about what might arise in various imagined disaster situations and try to think about what one could do or should not do. A recurring and troubling scenario came to mind several times. For example, if a sudden gale should catch us and we were blown offshore, perhaps amidst the churning ice pack, what does one do if another canoe goes over as you yourself are struggling to keep upright and survive the next moment. (I never seemed to really worry about what to do if I went over, but rather always if the other canoe did.) My head tells me that if assistance is almost impossible, then save yourself and forget the other canoe. But if faced with the situation, could one really make that decision and could one really abandon one's friends? Truly, I don't know. I was hesitant in discussing this question with the group. In part I was concerned about the alarm it might raise and that the alarm could itself be a problem. But we probably should have discussed it. It may seem like I'm being overly melodramatic, but I don't think so. George Grinnell recently expressed the thought that perhaps one of his sons needlessly sacrificed his own life in a vain attempt to help his brother in another canoe out on Hudson Bay a few years ago. Conventional canoe lore seems to assume that more canoes are always safer. Rarely is this dire choice considered by canoeists as one of the added risks in a group.

A number of individuals assisted us in various ways and helped make our trip a safe and grand experience. They include: Ray Chipeniuk in Ottawa, John and Janet Foster in Toronto, Robert Perkins in Cambridge, Andy Rudzitis in Montreal, Herb and Dorie Brown in Goose Bay and Nain, Eric Skoglund in Goose Bay, Dick Learning in Goose Bay, Jacques Garipey in Ange Gordien, Paul Nochasak in Nain, Wayne Jenkins in Nain, Gordie Whitbeck in Salisbury, Captain French and Captain Hatfield. Our thanks!

George Luste is professor of physics at the University of Toronto. He has been canoeing in Canada's north country for more than 26 years.



View of McCormick valley,
our base camp for four nights;
Nachvak Fiord in background

EDITORIAL

At last, Nastawgan is getting a new look.

Putting together our newsletter is a marvellous but very time-consuming job, most of which is done by the editor. All his preparatory work, from the first telephone call to the last camera-ready copy, culminates in Paste-Up Day when in a frenzy of soup-fed activity the actual putting-together of the newsletter is done with scissors, wax, and tape by a faithful group of experienced "paste-uppers." The camera-ready "mechanicals" are then sent to the printer for printing.

Unfortunately, the editor's job is getting too big for one person to do properly and still have some time left over to go canoeing himself. Some things simply have to change to keep the work attractive to this and future editors.

We have therefore taken a first step to get a more efficient and less time-consuming production process going, and that step is electronic wordprocessing of text and titles. Not all the text is as yet done this way, hence the mix of old and new typefaces, but it's a promising start. We are very much in the learning stages, so some mistakes like typos and missprints are still present in the copy.

A welcome additional advantage of this approach is a thinner newsletter, but with the same amount of information. Because less paper is now used, the printing costs (which have increased more than 100% in two years) are also lower.

In future issues of Nastawgan more changes will be implemented, such as the creation of a small group of assistant editors, each with her/his own responsibilities, and also a smaller physical size (8½ x 11 in.) of the newsletter. More information on these and other developments will be given in the spring 1989 issue.

Please contact me to give your comments on present and future changes.



PARTNERS AND INFORMATION WANTED

COPPERMINE RIVER One paddler required to complete a group of eight who are canoeing down the Coppermine River, NWT, in July 1989. White-water experience required. Contact Paul King at 416-581-1334.

DOGSLEDDING Two partners, male or female, wanted for 14-day dogsledding trip in northern Manitoba; see article in Nastawgan, autumn 1988. Trip will last from 12 to 25 March 1989. For more details, contact Jim Greenacre in Scarborough at 416-759-9956.

WILDERNESS CANOE TRIP I would like to participate the coming summer in a wilderness canoe trip, about two or three weeks in length. Doreen Vella, 1636 Gerrard Str. East, Apt. 209, Toronto, M4L 2A6, phone 416-463-9973.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir:

Hap Wilson's attack on my article, "A Word or Two Against Commercial Tour Operations," reprinted in the summer 1988 issue of Nastawgan, comes from several different angles.

First, Mr. Wilson suggests my views about tour businesses stem from personal failure in that field. This is the argument 'ad hominem' and deserves no response, since even if true it would not bear on the correctness or otherwise of what I have to say. His innuendos about "macho canoeists" and the extent of my dedication to the preservationist cause, to the extent that I understand them, make no sense at all, because I am a quite unskilled and hesitant canoeist but have income tax receipts and could provide testimonials of service to establish my bona fides as a worker for wilderness.

Second, Mr. Wilson alleges that my arguments are worthless because, he says, I want the wilderness for myself. Actually, I do want the wilderness for myself, and I am indeed motivated to make my case because the damned tour operators are pushing me and my friends out of river after river, mountain range after range. However, I do not want wilderness only for myself. I want it for everyone who is prepared to make the small effort required to enjoy it to the full, and I want it even for those who are too busy or too inexperienced or too lazy to make the effort. My article spoke of limiting tour operations, not banning them.

Third, Mr. Wilson says the person who wants to enjoy wilderness without bought help should go there in the off-season. Well, now. Why should it not be the tour operators and their clients who canoe the Coppermine in October?

Fourth, Mr. Wilson divides tour operators into two categories, the good and the bad. The good are those who sell guided canoe and hiking trips and the like, the bad are those who sell guided hunting and fishing trips and their like. But my argument is that they are all bad because they all get in the way of a genuine wilderness experience.

Fifth, Mr. Wilson sees the "venture tourist industry," as he calls it, as a desirable alternative to extractive industries. So do I. But that does not mean "venture tourism" is better than the exercising of self-reliance in wild natural surroundings.

Sixth, Mr. Wilson implies that the clients of tour operations provide the foundations of the Canadian environmental movement in our time. Maybe, maybe not.

As far as I can see, Mr. Wilson's counter-arguments are either weak or beside the point. My article mentioned two specific kinds of harm done by tour operations: harm to wilderness and the people who wish to experience it, and harm to the native people. I am still waiting for Mr. Wilson's rebuttal to this assertion of harm.

Raymond Chipeniuk



Fall Meeting

A CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE WCA

Sandy Harris

The Toronto Sportsmen's Show at the Canadian National Exhibition was my official introduction to the Wilderness Canoe Association, about five years ago. Up until that point, I had heard only rumors. The crowd around the booth was animated. Newsletters with trip reports, photographs, and reviews were piled high, slides flashed on and off, a map of rivers frequented by club members hung on the wall next to a list of upcoming club outings. Beside each trip listing, the skill level required to participate was indicated. It made me feel that safety was a concern of the club's members. An attitude of conservation was also evident in the talk I overheard and in the newsletter's articles. It was obvious that the club was thriving.

Assured by a grizzle-bearded member that I would be welcome in the club, I approached a young woman of my age and stature who answered my nervous questions and clinched my decision to join. Here was an association of like-minded individuals whose guidance, instruction, and knowledge I so keenly sought.

The very next weekend, I joined a day trip on the upper Credit River. I had paddled a little whitewater the previous year—enough to realize that it was an intimidating and exciting sport. I also thought the club was for experienced canoeists which added to my anxiety. If my courage lasted, the vast wealth of information on the wilderness would be available to me through the club's members.

With a shiny new paddle and personal flotation device in hand, I met my ride on that Sunday morning. Immediately I was enveloped in a warm (despite the temperature) and enthusiastic crowd of paddlers. No one laughed at my woolly sweater, work boots, and rain suit as I looked at the flush of wet suits, helmets, and sophisticated paddling gear that I too would later acquire.

That day, I met members whose joy of canoeing was infectious. They would teach me how to canoe whitewater, introduce me to kayaking, river tripping, winter camping, and food drying, to mention only a few activities, and they would become my friends. As I became more active in the club, I developed an awareness of the many reasons for seeking the wilderness. It is a retreat from the hectic business life, a place to draw, paint or photograph, a place to study flora and fauna, astronomy, archaeology, a place to be quiet and reflective, or a place to push oneself to one's limits. I was strengthened by all my new friends' enthusiasms. The interests and skills of this diverse group inspired me, and I wanted to learn.

George Luste, an active member of the club, writes in *Canexus: The Canoe in Canadian Culture* about the wilderness experience: "It is a totally absorbing physical, intellectual, and spiritual experience." I cannot agree more. I also believe that the club's members share this feeling and as a result have a bond with each other, the Wilderness Canoe Association being the formal mechanism through which it is articulated.

As a relatively new paddler, my equipment purchases reflect new technologies. I have just purchased an ABS canoe outfitted for whitewater. I enjoy the properties of polypropylene, warm and quick drying, and in cold weather/water I wear a wetsuit.

I have another "convenience" which prior to the club's formation would have been harder to achieve. By joining the club I have found an instant group of people who are fascinated with the wilderness. As a member, I am exposed to many methods of paddling (distance-oriented paddling vs. weekend trips), rivers, and philosophies. I am able to learn my paddling and camping skills from watching members in action, from slide presentations, from reading books and our newsletter.

The initial incentive for joining the Wilderness Canoe Association and for learning to paddle whitewater was so that I too could feel confident to experience the wilderness the club's members write and talk about.

Every year my canoe trips and those of my peers become more and more adventurous. Eventually, we will be the members inspiring the newcomers to experience the wilderness in confidence and safety.

By its very nature, the wilderness experience is subjective. It is the resulting controversy and differing opinions which I enjoy so much and which I think makes the WCA such a unique organization. Where else would one find avid whitewater enthusiasts using the latest high-tech equipment paddling gunnel to



Photo by Karyn Mikoliew

gunnel with men and women who have trekked the Barren Lands or snowshoe across Labrador in winter? Each group is true to their beliefs and the materials of their equipment, and each learns from and supports the other.

Unfortunately, I sense an undercurrent of unrest amongst some of the older members which troubles me—the club is changing and not for the better, they say. We now offer flatwater and whitewater instructional weekends, more kayaks are seen on club excursions, and diverse activities are incorporated into club events. The club is no longer the domain of the wilderness paddler. It is a pity these activities are viewed by some as a threat to the club and its mandate, for I see this as a healthy adaptation to a changing environment. My concern is that we should not exclusively promote one aspect of canoeing over another and as a result alienate those who want to follow different paths.

The booth at the Sportsmen's Show perhaps initiated the changing role of the WCA. The slides presented are of members having fun in whitewater, not of extended wilderness trips; the large and prominently displayed notice board lists weekend trips close to urban areas. We advertise ourselves as an accessible weekend-oriented club! Perhaps, we should re-evaluate our public image. The receding wilderness also contributes significantly to the club's changing activities.

Man has developed the canoe from dugout and birch bark to cedar and canvas strip to aluminum, fiberglass, and kevlar to ABS and other materials yet to be discovered. Historians have acknowledged the many changing roles of the canoe in society. The Wilderness Canoe Association should grow and evolve along with the canoe.

I think the club is evolving, maturing, and growing. In the past, the Fall Weekend was a sufficient forum for discussion. Now our members host a wilderness symposium, a wine and cheese party, as well as our business meetings and weekend outings. There is a renewed interest in producing a guide to rivers in Ontario similar to one published approximately ten years ago by the club,² perhaps expanding it to encompass rivers travelled by our members in other regions of Canada. We are involved in saving many wilderness areas through financial support and through the time and efforts of our members, for example the Red Squirrel Road in the Temagami area, the Voyageur Route on the French River, and closer to my home the issue of paddling freely on the Credit River.

Our members are finding other wilderness areas, exploring, documenting, and then presenting their experiences to us. We are interacting with other associations, participating in their activities and their members in ours.

I think we are witnessing a healthy period in the Wilderness Canoe Association's history, though I hope we do not lose sight of the club's mandate:³

- a) For the promotion and advancement of the interests of wilderness canoeists.
- b) The aiding in educating the public to awareness of, and concern for, the natural forces in the delicate balance inherent in the wilderness environment.
- c) The provision of a flow of information pertaining to canoeing and wilderness matters to members of the corporation and the public.
- d) The encouraging of closer communication among canoeists and among related organizations.
- e) The further exploring of new canoe routes, and ensuring and preserving the right of way on those routes now established, while stressing the careful and considerate use of all such routes.
- f) The encouraging of individual responsibility in canoeing by providing a program of practical canoeing experiences.



Elora Gorge, May 88; photo by Bill Ness

1. Luste, George J. "Solitude and Kinship in the Canoeing Experience" in Raffan, James, and Horwood, Bert (eds.) *Canexus: The Canoe in Canadian Culture*. Toronto: Betelgeuse Books, 1988, p. 151.
2. An undated guide of rivers in southern Ontario written by Roger Smith for members of the Wilderness Canoe Association.
3. Excerpt from the original incorporation document of 1978, written and signed by Roger Smith, Gord Fenwick, Glenn Spence, and Cam Salsbury.

news briefs

MOISIE RIVER THREATENED

The Moisie River, one of the greatest salmon rivers in the world, is being threatened by a Hydro-Québec project which could cut water flow in the upper reaches by over 40 percent by diverting two important tributaries, the Pekans and the Carheil.

The project, which could have a significant effect on salmon fisheries, is in its initial environmental assessment stages, but indications are that reduced water levels may make navigation of certain sectors very difficult for outfitters (and presumably canoeists) on the river. For more information on the proposed diversion, call The Atlantic Salmon Federation in Montreal, 514-842-8059.

NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE Articles, trip reports, book reviews, photographs, sketches, technical tips, and anything else that you think might be of interest to other members, are needed for future issues. Contributor's Guidelines are available upon request. The deadline dates for the next two issues are:

<u>issue</u>	spring 1989	<u>deadline date</u>	5 February 1989
	summer 1989		7 May 1989

WCA MEMBERSHIP LIST Membership lists are available to any members who wish one for personal, non-commercial use. Send a \$2.00 bill (no cheques, please!) to Cash Belden, 77 Huntley Street, Apt. 1116, Toronto, M4Y 2P3.

WCA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1989 The coming AGM will take place on 11 February 1989 at the Frost Centre south of Dorset, Ontario. See the enclosed information sheet.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Don't forget to renew your membership for the coming year. Our Membership Secretary is Paula Schimek; her address and phone number are given on the back page of Nastawgan.

NORTHERN ONTARIO SYMPOSIUM The third WCA canoe and wilderness symposium will be held in Toronto on 27 (evening) and 28 (all day) January 1989. If you have not received a registration form in a separate mailing, please contact George Luste at 416-534-9313 (evenings and weekends).

WCA QUESTIONNAIRE The Board of Directors has made up a questionnaire to help the Board in assessing the needs, interests, and proposals of the membership. The questionnaire is handed out to members at various meetings and parties and is also enclosed in the present newsletter. Please fill out your questionnaire and return it as soon as possible.

WINTER WORKSHOP COEO Far North in co-operation with the Kingfisher Lake Outdoor Education Centre present a winter workshop called ARCTIC LIFESTYLES, on 17 - 19 February 1989 at the Kingfisher Lake Outdoor Education Centre, Thunder Bay, Ontario. This course is designed for travellers and others who realize their vulnerability in winter arctic conditions. It is also designed for persons wishing to become more aware of northern sociological and environmental issues. For further information contact Lori Jarvis, R.R.#3, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7C 4V2, phone 807-939-6053.



Fall Meeting

WCA PHOTO CONTEST The closing date for receipt of your entry in this exciting and rewarding competition is 22 January 1989. See page 20 of the autumn 1988 issue of Nastawgan for all the information you need to participate.

WCA FALL PARTY On 25 November, 132 members and friends (a record number) were present at the traditional wine-and-cheese party to share stories of their recent travels and to enjoy each other's company. They had good memories and chuckled as a collage of their candid slides from several WCA outings and other trips were shown. Highlighting the evening were slide presentations of three special trips: the Seal River, the Notakwanon River, and the Rio Grande River. Once again, a most pleasant evening, enjoyed by all.

WILDERNESS PHOTO EXHIBITS WCA member Sandy Richardson has two exhibits of wilderness photography currently showing in the Toronto area. On exhibit, titled "Mountains and Ice," is at Positive Images Gallery, 1383 Danforth Avenue, through out December (not November as previously announced). The other exhibit, featuring photographs of wilderness rivers, is at the Ship's Painter Gallery at the yacht club in Bluffers Park in Scarborough, and will run throughout the coming year. For more information, contact Sandy in Toronto at 416-429-3944.

SEA-KAYAKING CLUB FORMED A new sea-kayaking club has recently started up to promote the enjoyment of coastal kayaking on our Great Lakes. As well as providing a forum for sea-kayakers to come together and share interests and concerns, the club will also offer a program of sea-kayak trips (organized along similar lines to WCA trips), beginning in the spring. Two long-time WCA members, Stewart McIlwraith and Sandy Richardson, are on the club's board of directors. For more information, contact Stewart (club president) at 416-740-9108 or Sandy at 416-429-3944 in Toronto; or write: Sea-kayak Club, 123 Scadding Ave., Apt. 844, Toronto, M5A 4J3.



Fall Meeting

CREDIT RIVER TRIAL

To help and facilitate in the preparation of the Canoe Ontario/Jim Greenacre vs. Read court case re. the Credit River, it is mandatory that persons who have paddled the Credit, specifically in the region of Mr. Read's property at Norval, sign an affidavit to that effect. These affidavits can be obtained by phoning Christine Cybulski at the Canoe Ontario office in Toronto, 416-495-4181, or George Drought in Hamilton, 416-528-0059. The affidavits must be completed, signed, and witnessed by a lawyer or any notary public and returned as soon as possible to the Canoe Ontario office, 1220 Sheppard Avenue East, Willowdale, Ontario, M2K 2X1.



FALL MEETING

The weekend of 23-25 September 1988 marked another annual Fall Meeting of the WCA. Returning to the Minden Wild Water Preserve, we were able to enjoy the river, the camping, and a schedule of great workshops. When people weren't busy taking notes, they were down on the Gull trying out their paddling skills and the boats supplied by Algonquin Outfitters.

Sandy Miller (who recently changed her name to Sandy Harris by marrying Roger) and her crew of hardworking volunteers and guest speakers put on a program with lots of hands-on participation. The topics included basketry, orienteering, survival skills, food drying, and first aid. There wasn't just talk of first aid, but practice too with patients whose stage make-up and superb acting created very realistic simulations.

Registration reached 100 and it was good to see many new members getting involved. With the sun goddess wishing us well, we were all able to enjoy a barbecue Saturday evening which catered to the tastes of both meat eaters and vegetarians. To work off the feast, there was an all-time first for the WCA—square dancing with caller Roger Parsons. While it's true that to many such carrying-on was sacrilegious for canocists, the fun of it all became contagious.

The weekend certainly was a success. It took a lot of planning and a lot of work. To Sandy and all those who helped in so many ways, a very appreciative "thank you."

Marcia Farquhar



Photos by Toni Harting

A TORNGAT RIDDLE

Raymond Chipeniuk

1

How should one feel about the Torngat Mountains?

2

Maybe the place to begin an inquiry into the meaning of the Torngat Mountains is with maps. Any decent atlas will show two or three spot heights in northernmost Labrador at over 5,000 ft (1,500 m), and quite a lot of land contoured at more than 1,000 or 1,500 m above the sea. Actually, the elevations given are almost always incorrect, being based on altimeter readings taken in 1916, but they give the right idea: the Torngats are by far the highest mountains in eastern mainland Canada, attaining not less than 5,420 ft or 1,650 m.

What an atlas only hints at is that these coastal mountains often leap up from the sea fiords in a single bound, sculpting space into mile-deep canyons. What might hardly be imagined from our usual conception of the Canadian Shield is the existence here of sharp peaks, grand north walls, and jag-toothed arêtes.

As the eye roams over cartographic North America, it notices that the Torngats, though close to Montreal, Toronto, and Boston by the standard of jet travel, are far from any road. True, there appear to be a few dots of settlement on the fringes of the mountain mass. But the dots are ghost towns, abandoned recently or as long ago as 1905. With the exception of one newly revived military base, the Torngat country is without permanent habitation. And therefore it is remote, in the current sense of the word: expensive to get to, in dollars and days.

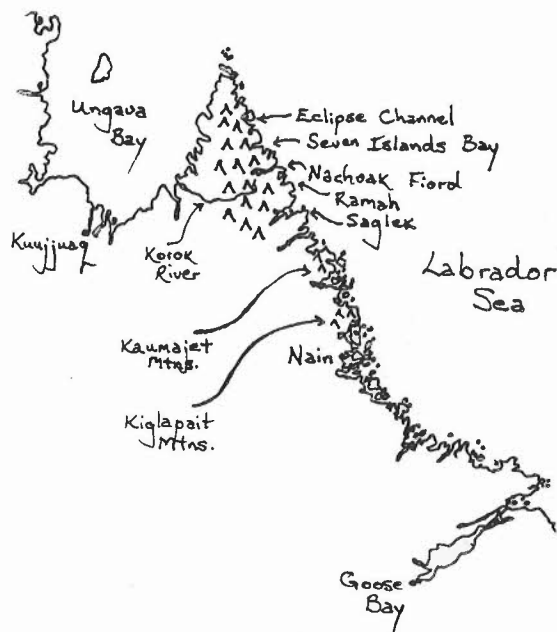
Better maps still, topographical maps, provide further clues to the possible significance of the Torngats. Many of the place-names are Inuktitut words, "Torngat" itself alluding to frightening super-natural phenomena of the early Inuit world-view. This was and is Inuit country. The few European names commemorate visits of mountaineering and pseudo-scientific expeditions in search of the unknown with an underlay from the Newfoundland sailboat fishery. Extensive areas without names at all imply a region little travelled.

Compared with the orderly ranks and files of the Rockies and other fold ranges, the pattern of the Torngats on a map seems to be lack of pattern. Whatever raised this part of the world must have done it in a uniform block. When water and ice carved the valleys, they must have done so without much regard for strata and faults. And indeed, the gneissic rock of northern Labrador was heaved up long after it had assumed its present bedding arrangement. Then it was cut through by drainage systems predating uplift. Such a landscape can be very confusing, as rivers run towards high mountains instead of away from them, brooks run in nearly complete circles, and the land tilts this way and that as if the horizon has gone crazy.

Here and there the maps show permanent ice: little glaciers, the only ones in continental North America east of the Rockies. It might be guessed that the Torngats are cold and snowy, and they are. In reality there are many more glaciers than featured on even the most detailed maps, and right through the summer one comes across snowfields and drifts that reach all the way down to saltwash. Here the climate is so severe that on some days in August a heavy down parka and woolen mitts may not be nearly enough to keep a person warm.

Who would guess, then, that the lower valleys are green and the country is full of wildlife? Who would believe that in one day in this desert of rock and ice a southern Canadian might see more wild animals than he would in thirty years spent around cities and farms? Yet in every direction from the tent door a visitor will survey caribou, arctic and red foxes, sometimes wolves, seals of many sorts, whales of many sorts, geese, snowy owls, peregrines and gyrfalcons, possibly a polar bear, black bear, or walrus, and many other creatures less spectacular or well-publicized.

So the surprises begin. From the maps one could not imagine half the wonders of these rugged, cold, lonely mountains. Brooks that pour over a skyline



and immediately flow under a stone archway. Waterfalls as clear as glass, with red arctic char hurling themselves up them. Mysterious booming noises behind the hills. Waterspouts a hundred metres high and half a kilometre wide. Winds that shift 180 degrees and 20°C in three or four minutes, blowing so hard that the only way a man can urinate is by crawling into a hole among boulders. Red garnet beaches. Icebergs with the lines of inspired architecture and the colors of the rainbow. Caribou that of their own will approach human beings to little more than arm's length, foxes that will eat out of one's hand. A heavy and delicious perfume rising from barely visible flowers on dry tundra turf. The sparkles and flashes of something alive in ice-cold sea water at night. Fogbows. And everywhere, unexpected opportunities to die an accidental death.

3

I first travelled to northern Labrador in 1976, alone. Some Inuit fisherman from Nain took me north to Kiglapait Mountains. The scenery stunned me and the people charmed me. One day I scrambled up to a crag looking far out over a royal blue sea speckled with icebergs. When I came down in the evening a rag-tag crew of Inuit urchins ran up along the beach and presented me with a bouquet of wildflowers. They showed me the carcass of the polar bear that had come into their camp and spoke of the "jello-fish" on the shore. Then their parents invited me into a warm tupik to share in their delicious caribou soup and fried salmon.

The next year I went to the Torngats with a southern companion and we made the first ascent of what is probably the second highest mountain in eastern mainland Canada, Torngarsoak. It took us ten days to get from Ottawa to the mountains: one day of jet travel to Goose Bay, one day of scheduled float plane travel to Nain, one day of preparations in Nain, and a week of butting a fishing boat against bad weather for about 250 sea-miles north. (When A.P. Coleman did the first serious mountaineering in the Torngats in 1916, it took him 40 days to sail from Toronto to Nachvak Fiord!) Our skipper was Paul Nochasak, a masterly, courageous, and intelligent man who has remained my friend to this day. Paul's wife Eva, who accompanied us as a translator and for the fun of it, gave me my first real insight into the tight intellectual discipline of traditionally educated Inuit. When our boat hung up between two islets while I was sitting on a bailing pot in the bow,

Northern
Torngat
Mountains



regretting my consumption of about two litres of wild goose soup the previous evening, she wielded a pole from the gunwales beside me as politely unsmiling as if I did not exist. She too remains a good friend and we try to be each other's bridge from culture to culture.

In 1978 no less than seven of us made a triumphant boat expedition into the mountains, accomplishing numerous first ascents, among them the first Canadian ascent of what we code-named "L1." L1 is the highest point in both Québec and Newfoundland. It has one summit on the divide that forms the boundary between the two provinces, and that summit is the highest elevation in Québec. A few metres away, on a spur jutting out on the Labrador side, is a second, slightly higher summit, and that one is the highest elevation in Newfoundland. The Québeckers call their summit Mt. D'Iberville, the Newfoundlanders call theirs Mt. Caubvik.

In favorable conditions the ascent of L1 is non-technical; that is, it requires neither fancy equipment nor special techniques. But it is not easy. By the standard approach it requires a very full day from camp down beside the McCormick River, about 5,000 ft (1,500 m) below, and in places along the Minarct Ridge a slip would mean a spectacular death. In poor weather it would be a very dangerous climb indeed. To date about a dozen groups have attempted to go up L1, and more or less a third have been successful.

Hardly any of the Torngats are technical climbs by all approaches. Generally there is at least one way up that requires just the occasional use of the hands. Moreover, the gneissic rock is usually, but not always, quite broken up by intense fract action. Consequently, the best and safest climbing is on the 1000-m snow couloirs of north and east faces.

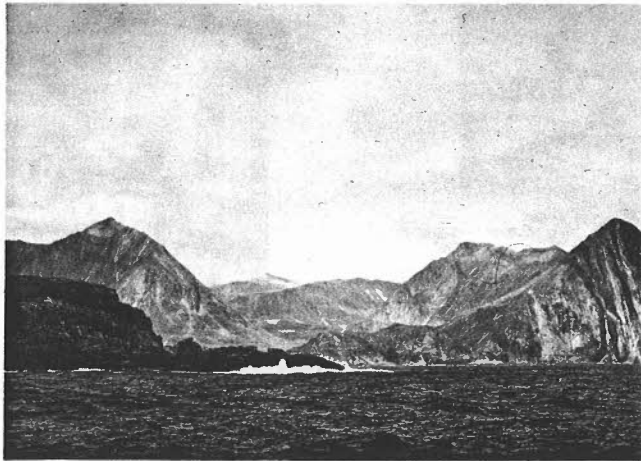
And so the pattern was set. Groups I put together were back in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984. It was in 1980 that I first visited the Torngats with Sonia, who not long after married me. (By interesting coincidence, two other couples we know married after sharing trips to the Torngats.) In 1981, for the first time, we flew in from Fort Chimo, alias Kuujuaq, not having the four-week minimum vacation needed to make the boat trip with Paul Nochasak worthwhile, especially since that year our centre of operations was the Four Peaks area, another sea day north of Nachvak Fiord. Each year we explored a different part of the mountains, ending up in 1984 at Eclipse Channel, where the peaks thrust up in a last weird demonstration of towers and pyramids before subsiding into the big hills that trail off towards Hudson Strait.

4

During the next four years we spent our vacations elsewhere. It was not that we had had enough of the Torngats—ten lifetimes would not be enough—but that other parts of the world were beckoning too. More than I, Sonia wanted to canoe in the Barren Lands, climb in the northern Coast Range, hike in Patagonia.

We were also starting to feel a little crowded. To that point we had never actually met other mountaineers or hikers in northern Labrador except by some sort of prearrangement. Usually we would encounter neither other people nor signs of other people during the whole of a three- or four-week stay. But by the later years tour operators were pestering us every few months, encouraging us to lead groups of paying customers for them, asking us for information on how to get in and out and what to do when there, looking for contacts. A friend told us an Otter on tundra wheels had turned Ivitak Cove of Nachvak Fiord into a tent city.

Yet that was not the whole of it. There had been a steady demoralization of the Inuit community in Nain. Who knows whether it is accountable to secularization, the arrival of television, or the influence of the "hotel." At any rate, year by year the violence grew worse, the suspicion about outsiders more hostile, the air of depression more pervasive.



Torngat coast at Bear's Gut; the cliff on the right is just under 2000 ft high

A government-subsidized char fishery was reaching farther north every season: Napartok, Hebron, Ramah, maybe even Nachvak. We have no quarrel with Inuit economic activities, but what we wanted to see was valleys where the caribou had never come across a human being before, not the kind of terrified skittishness we are all too familiar with in wildlife in the South.

As part of the North Warning System, the Canadian Armed Forces reoccupied Saglek air base, just south of the mountains. Now the base has a permanent staff and the kind of facilities that can create noise and nuisance for a long way around.

Even our own trips had resulted in publicity for the Torngats and promoted visitation by other outdoors-people in search of wildness, natural beauty, and adventure. From time to time we heard of mountaineers going in, canoeists, kayakers, hikers. In country where it is no feat to back-pack 100 km a week and a piece of trash might persist for a century it does not take many parties in a 200-km-long mountain range before they start to get in each other's way.

So we reminisced about the Torngats as they had been in so recent a past and got ourselves into a brown study whenever we received some additional snippet of bad news about that distant cold paradise. I at least, if not Sonia, often dreamed of the mountains, as if they had been translated into another realm of existence, unsulliable.

5

Nevertheless we intend to go back. If wilderness adventure is a "resource" for which more and more people compete, Sonia and I will obtain our share of it by simply seeking out a more and more restricted niche. If the wide green tundra valleys fill up with people who have paid thousands to a tour operator to do their planning and organizing and recruitment of friends and formulation of purposes for them, then we will move back into the stony ravines and the bleak uplands. When it becomes popular to "do" the major attractions of the Torngats, we will withdraw onto the coast and off to the other islands, places so dangerous and inhospitable the commercial guides would never contemplate taking their clients to them. And then there is that extensive tract of unexplored country, winter.

In a world much too full of people, no realm of beauty and solitude is going to stay in its pristine condition for long. But for those persons who want genuine adventure, the tapering peninsula between Ungava Bay and the Labrador Sea will provide innumerable opportunities for centuries to come. The opportunities may be available mainly for the young, but they will never altogether be taken away by mere numbers of visitors, by economic exploitation, or even by permanent settlement.

For climbers there will be the great walls. On the mountains there are a few big faces where the rock is pretty sound, in one or two cases flawless, for that matter. One would not have much company on them. But the coastal cliffs present hundreds of kilometres of challenging routes. Going from the salt-spray to the skyline of one of them, in the humid cold and manic wind and with the courage-sapping view of nothing but a frigid sea to the east, will be the real thing every time it is done, no matter how many times it is done.

For lovers of water too, canoeists and kayakers, the wilderness niches will always be many, and most of them are self-renewing, because water crases the traces of a boat's passage over it, and these waters have a way of crasing even campsites ashore. Of course the rivers are too short to provide better than a brief ride, however hair-raising. The sea, though, is another matter.

About three-quarters of a century ago an American, Donald MacMillan, canoed much of this coast. Inuit and, starting in the 1970s, Americans have kayaked it. So one knows it can be done. Whether it can be done safely is a question others would have to answer. There are damned few beaches on the Torngat shore, and I have noticed that in some exposed places the spray from winter storms seems to reach about 40 m up the bare rock.

To one who knows nothing about sea-canoeing or kayaking, it looks as if even sheltered waters of the Torngat coast would provide plenty of danger: cold water, unpredictable winds, nowhere to land. Yet the rewards would be great: whales turning up one eye to look at a little boat as they pass by a metre or two under; herds of caribou stags standing up to their waists on gravel spits to avoid the bottles; seals bobbing around by the dozen; icebergs gleaming like cities of light; the exhilaration of daring the swells from Ireland, the booming reefs, the mingled whirl of clouds and seabirds and capelin and spray ripped off the crest of waves. Five kilometres of Nachvak Fiord could age a paddler five years. A paddle across Seven Islands Bay could result in the memory of a lifetime.

Room? The Torngats are thick with room for the bold.

6

Projecting in profile from a cliff on the dominant summit of northern Labrador is a strange effigy. It looks like a hook-nosed joker, an evil harlequin, or a harpy. Without question it is a natural feature, but one would swear, studying it as in turn gazed out disdainfully across the glaciers, mountains, and fiords below in the general direction of Greenland, that either it was chipped out by a sculptor or it has some life of its own.



The Sorviluk Torngats, between Bear's Gut and Ramah Bay

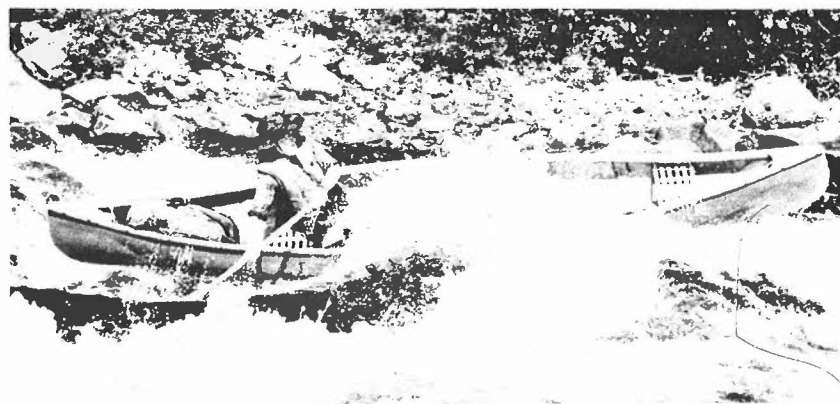
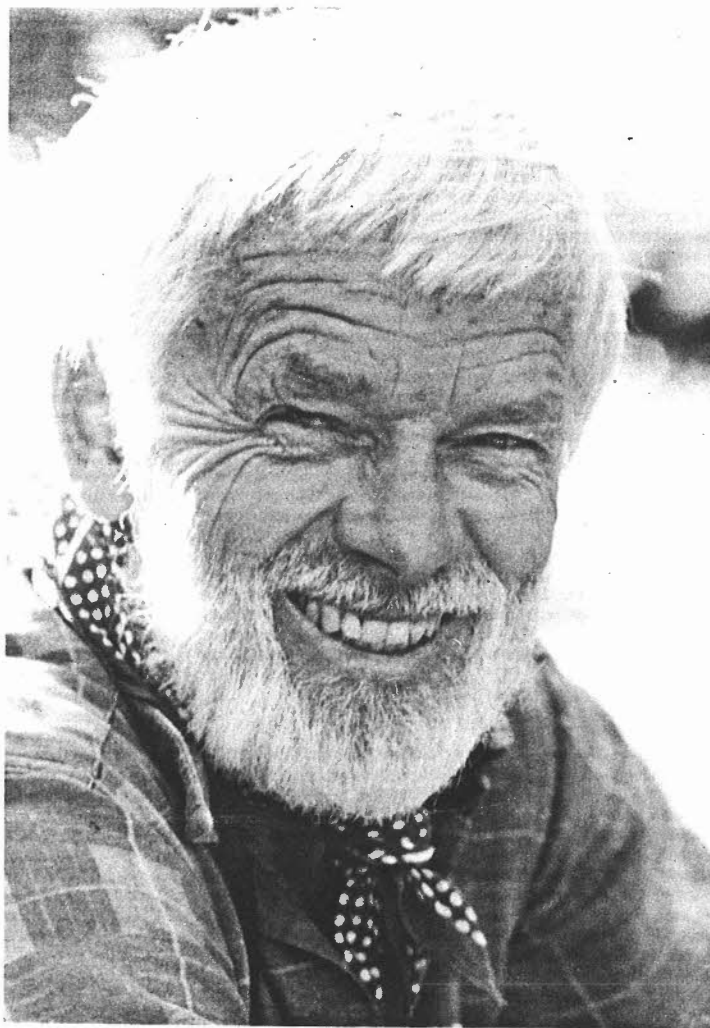
Similarly, in our dining room in Ottawa Sonia and I have a Bill Ritchie drawing that depicts the animist Inuit legend of the caribou master of the Torngats. The caribou filing to the cave of death and rebirth are realistic flesh and blood, the clouds hanging above the scene are realistic mist, the mountains are realistic rock. But the realistic rock of the mountains almost by chance is contorted into devilish visages, as if malign contempt for the petty cycles of living creatures could be an intrinsic aspect of inanimate matter.

And at sunset many times I have been held in fascination by mountain faces reflecting the glow of an unseen sun. The feeling aroused in me has been much the same as the yearning I experienced as a child when adults spoke together of something I could not fully understand or one of my parents stopped to contemplate some situation the mootness of which eluded me. What the peaks watch, like Robinson Jeffers' Pacific, is something in time scales and grandeur that shrink our human lives to humiliating puniness.

Of course there are no torngait, or evil spirits, in northern Labrador, not truly, and of course the peaks watch nothing at all. But that does not matter. So long as our perception is one of antipathetic otherness in the rock and on the sea, we can carry home the illusion of triumph from a successful foray into these perilous places. We return with a temporary conviction, if no more, that we have seen what the gods see. And since of those otherworldly places—white islands gleaming offshore in a stormy sea, thin lines of ledges and cracks trending skyward—the Torngat country has great store, and always will have, we owe the Torngat Mountains our devotion, in the very same measure as they furnish us with their indifference.

husband
father
artist
painter
illustrator
filmer
cartoonist
photographer
writer
canoeist
traveller
explorer
naturalist
teacher
philosopher
observer
guide
friend

a gentle man



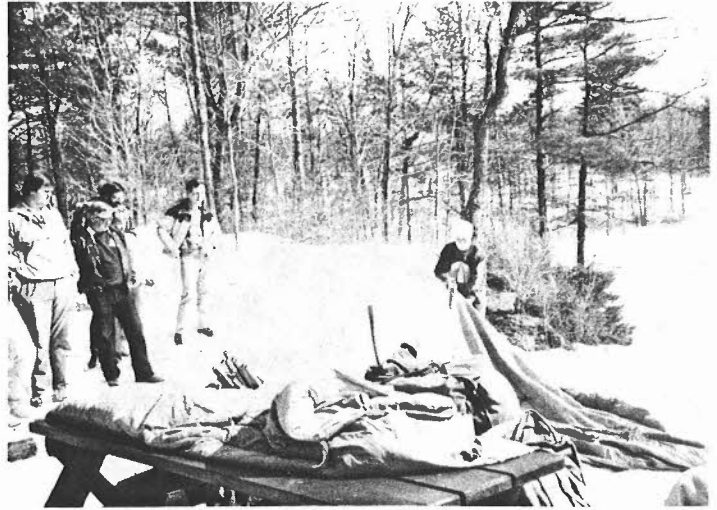
Photos by Paul Mason





bill mason

1929 - 1988



Photos by Bill Ness

Frontenac Provincial Park
8 March 1987

THE WHITE RIVER

SOLITUDE IN SUPERIOR COUNTRY

Barry Spiegel

One of the delights of solo canoeing is having the time to experience the rhythms of nature and the rhythms of the body—to move in harmony with natural and biological clocks.

Since my first solo trip some years ago on a May long weekend near Dorset, Ontario, I looked for the time and the right river for a longer trip involving whitewater. The White River, which empties into northern Lake Superior, offers accessibility, remote wilderness, a full paddling season, whitewater, and is still well travelled enough to assure me that a mishap would not strand me for weeks.

I felt fortunate that my schedule dictated an August trip—though I relish higher water, so do black flies. I was pleased not to have to force my presence upon the flies' enjoyment of the world, and vice versa.

A midweek departure gave me some hope that I would miss any large parties who might be travelling the same route, since most large groups schedule trip starts on weekends.

Equipped with a carefully annotated map prepared by Duncan "Dunkin" Taylor, which not only correctly located Angler Falls but also gave guidance as to which rapids were runnable and on which side, a trusty Old Town Royalex Kennebec canoe, and some food, I set off.



Downstream from top of Umbata Falls

Thursday, 11 August 1988: Day 1 I arrived at my launching spot about 9:30 a.m. and after culling my gear and packing freshly purchased foodstuffs, I pushed off at about 11:00 a.m. Luckily I was able to arrange a car shuttle for a reasonable fee through the good offices of the students who staff White Lake Provincial Park, so I left the car at the second bridge over the river west of the town of White River, about 15 km upstream of the park.

The river was a little low, and I had to look twice to ensure that I started my trip downstream. The stretch to the park was pleasant and straightforward with several sets of swifts and easy rapids, the last set being quite long and enjoyable. Because water was low, there were lots of rocks to dodge and I was able to practice my downstream lean and quick wading techniques after attempting to move a boulder out of the way with the broad side of the canoe. The rapids were like many on the Upper Missinaibi—those of a young river gathering its force and learning to kick.

Little wildlife was evident, but I saw or heard three or four trains per hour. The Trans-Canada highway runs close to the river at this point and I was disconcerted to see flashes of bright color flashing by through what appears as dense, remote forest on the high bank. At the end of the last set of rapids, high on the west bank of the river, is a solitary white teepee; whether a shrine, a home, or a marker of Indian lands, I do not know.

Enter White Lake, pretty and large. Paddling into the wind of an approaching rainstorm I was able finally to reach the park grounds where I complied

with the requirement to sign in and where I left keys to my car with the youngsters who maintain the park. The registration is communicated to Pukasaw so that the Ministry knows who is on the river and can track their progress.

Due to the southwestern orientation of the mouth of the river and the power of Lake Superior, it is not uncommon for canoeists to get windbound for several days. The registers at White Lake, the Pukasaw hiking trail campground near the mouth of the river, and the take-out at Hattie Cove allow good monitoring of users of the river.

Paddling out of the campground and into the river I was surprised to see on the east bank a large cross with what appeared to be a life-sized image of a crucified Christ on it. It apparently marks an Indian cemetery. I was told that they plant old Indians there so new ones can grow. A large, well-kept series of modern, mainly wooden buildings on the east side of the river at the park are part of the White Lake Indian Reservation.

I paddled into a drizzling rain for about an hour and a half until the sky cleared and I located an old Indian hunting camp on sandy ground with shelter poles, old log structures, and an abandoned boat, upright against a tree. It was a nice camping spot, especially as I had been told that there were line cutters camped down by the White Lake Dam, and I enjoy solitude. (There is a train track only a kilometre away, but you can't have everything.)

After a swim, some garlic, cheese and bannock buns, and soup, I wrote up the day, did the dishes, watched the sky, and finally slept.

Day 2 Awoke to an overcast sky, cool weather, and probable rain. After breakfast and a swim I pushed off about 10:30.

The signs of logging and railroading are everywhere. Through shallow, still waters the canoe moved silently over waterlogged timbers lying beneath the surface like the reddish bones of ancient mariners. A rusted railway spike in the sand at the end of a portage spoke of the power of the river in spring, carrying silt and steel alike.

Drifting over silent, sunken logs (all about 30 cm or less in diameter and five metres long) in the shallows, I came upon what seemed like millions of small snail shells lying in patches just under the surface. In some places they covered the bottom solidly. Here was a new layer of sedimentary rock, laying itself down—in the slow course of geological time these shells will become part of a new limestone floor, perhaps to end up on a sea floor or mountain top, as climate and tectonics may dictate.

The line cutter's camp was a riot of color with big prospector tents, different colored plastic tarps for shelter, and a food shack covered in clear plastic under a bright-red plastic tarp. No one was there, and clothes were hanging to dry under a shelter. Downriver, I saw lines that had been freshly cut, just wider than a person's width and stretching straight into the woods, stripped of vegetation. This is gold country. In fact, throughout the trip, in the deep silence of nights on the river I was puzzled by a distant sound of machinery. On the way home I discovered that the road passes by the Hemlo mines, site of one of Canada's richest gold deposits and source of one of Canada's largest and most complicated lawsuits. The large complex operates 24 hours a day. In the silent country of the White these sounds can be heard at the edge of perception for a long distance. Even trains can be heard when the topo shows them to be 20 km away.

The White has a small dam several hours paddling downstream of the park. Above the dam the river feels remote but inhabited. I saw signs of garbage and detritus, cut-lines, and at one point two youngsters mysteriously tending a fire in the root of a large downed tree on the shore.

Below the dam the river becomes more elemental, rough and wild. There are still many signs of logging, especially boom logs, with a silent, staring eye at each end, sometimes dragging a few links of rusted chain.

The rain started early in the day, first slowly and intermittently. I easily ran several sets of rapids, and lined one set with a nice chute that curved too much for my liking. I came to a set of three ledges that Duncan's group had lined, according to their description. His comment suggested that it would have been better to portage the 600 m around the three obstacles. I resolved to do just that, and as I shouldered my gear the sky unloaded.

Portages for me took two trips: one for a canoe pack, camera gear, paddles and miscellaneous gear, and the other for a small food pack and the canoe. I left the canoe sheltering the small pack and set out on the portage with the big pack and gear. In heavy rain there is something comforting about portaging. Partially sheltered by the trees, following a path and stepping in water that grows deeper as you walk, you just put one foot in front of the other and you are at the end before you know it.

As I hefted the canoe for the second trip, disaster almost struck. My greatest fear in solo tripping—next to appendicitis and being eaten by a bear—is a serious fall. I slipped on the wet rock, bringing the canoe and me down hard. Luckily, no damage was done. I was even more careful thereafter in taking small



Mysterious bones, clothings scraps, key

steps and avoiding wet rock, or dragging the canoe when the going was treacherous. I don't fear rapids, because if they are too tough I don't run them alone. I am prepared to trust my judgement and take the consequences. But slipping while carrying a full load on a portage is the type of accident that can catch one unawares, doing the sort of bone-breaking damage that can ruin a trip. So when travelling alone I wear good, light-weight hiking boots that have strong treads and good ankle support, but dry quickly.

I wondered whether to camp, but it was too early. Besides, the swirling wind and clouds told me I was in the eye of a low-pressure zone. Might as well keep warm by working. Sure enough, about 10 minutes after I left the rain came teeming down and lightning struck dangerously close; so much so that I pulled over under the trees for a break. Only the birds seem to like being on the river when the rain is that heavy, they seem unafraid of the lightning. I wondered if their ignorance of the laws of physics rendered them immune to its effects.

After offering a nice set of runnable rapids, the river opened out and I set up camp on a sandy beach under some cedars. Someone else had recently set up on the same stretch of beach; I could see the imprint of their tent and the drainage ditch that had been scratched in the sand. The rain continued until I was set up, then the evening cleared. Noodles and cheese, apple, cucumber, and tea provided a nice early dinner, since fish refused to be caught. Exploring the shore, I followed a small stream into a marshy, dried-up lake. The frequent rains nourished the lush vegetation and its deep greens were a pleasure to tired eyes in the warm evening light. Moose and human tracks as well as shotgun shells told a story. So did more mosquitoes than I wished to feed.

After a swim at sunset in fast water below the rapids, I wrote in my tent by the comforting light and heat of a candle. In reprising the day I realized that the real reason this is the White River is the mist. Opalescent and dense, hanging low over the trees, smoky in valleys, every little tributary stream has its own cloud of mist. The fogs gently drag at one's vestigial sensibilities- at the edge of sight and sound the mist exudes fingers, whispers.

"It is very quiet up here. Although I can hear far-off machinery and a waterfall in the distance, the only other sounds are the occasional bird, distant jets, and the sound of my pen. I can almost hear the candle burning."

Day 3 Inspections at 3:30 and 5:30 a.m. revealed a world of dense fog. Faint stars were visible directly overhead. In the morning, the fog did not lift until after ten. I walked and photographed until eleven, then took to the river.

Early in the day, an osprey flew around me for several minutes checking me out, as the heat rose. Later that day I was to encounter more wildlife watching me watching.

Angler Falls is incorrectly marked on the topo map and it is a good idea to go over the map prior to a trip with someone who has travelled the river, although the alert and careful paddler would foresee problems on the White in advance.

The heart of the day for me came during a long, silent paddle in a slow, straight stretch with a ten-metre-wide sandbar along the shore running for a kilometre or so. I gradually became aware that I was being watched by a wolf on the shore. As I carefully took several pictures the wolf, always aware of me, would lope along the shore for 15-20 m and then stop to watch me. It always stayed ahead of me but we kept company for some time, until finally the sandbar ran out and it climbed the bank into the woods.

This was a beautiful, solitary day. The sounds of large animals in the bush sometimes came to me across the water. Water birds were everywhere. The only signs of man were the occasional cut stumps of trees that overhang the tributaries, cut by hunters who paddled into the streams for game.

And the totalled ABS canoe. Club members who have risked life and limb to test Royalex would have been amazed. It was a green Royalex boat with the front cleanly ripped off. Near the bow of the canoe lay a pile of dried bones and some scraps of clothing and a key. It was a mystery. Here was a tale of woe on the White. It would have been quite terrifying, except that the bones were clearly too big to be human. I cannot explain the key and clothing scraps; maybe they were someone's strange sacrifice or idea of a macabre joke, but bizarre it was. The canoe, however, was indisputable evidence of the power of the river.

At about 6:30 I camped beside a cheeky little rapid with a nice surfing wave at the bottom. It drizzled all evening and I thanked the Plastic God for allowing me to spend hours under a tarp nursing my old stove to cook freeze-dried chili mexicana with emmental cheese and cinnamon and bannock "crisps."

The campsite, sited high above the rapids on one side, had a beach opening on a big pool on the other. The gentle hissing of light rain accompanied me on a perfect swim to a granite diving cliff a couple of hundred metres away. I found the solitude and the exercise enervating despite the rain.

It continued to rain all night. I calculated that I was about 50 km from Superior's shore. Already I was thinking about the short paddle along the shore of Superior to Hattie Cove. Knowing that it is possible to be weathered in, I was

conscious of the schedule, trying to balance my urge to photograph and explore every moose pasture and stream with the desire to have the time to spend at the mouth of the river if I needed it.

The best things about the long silent days of paddling alone are the smells of sweet grass and swampland, watching the shoreline and underwater vegetation waving past, hearing the sounds of springs falling into the river and the slap of the beaver's tail greeting my appearance.

Day 4 It really rained all night, waking me almost hourly. The wind rose and I hoped it would clear. The rule on the White for this trip was that a tail wind (east) tended to bring rain. The rain continued in the morning, and the wind had disturbed the shelter I'd rigged so that a lot of gear was soaked. Since almost everything was "plastic" it was O.K., except my cantankerous stove (which later proved no more cantankerous than usual). The continuing rain and overcast called for a moratorium on photography. And the very worst part was the smell of my plastic raingear.



Looking upstream to Umbata Falls canyon

I made a list of good things to cheer me up:

1. The nude climb was fantastic: up the 5.6 grade (5.7 on slippery rock) for a dive into the pool below;
2. My headache is gone;
3. My sleeping bag is dry;
4. I'm dry;
5. My dry clothes are dry;
6. My toilet paper is dry."

I set out paddling and moved at a fair clip. About noon, after portaging around a beautiful canyon, I found a camp with four fishermen and two motorboats. What a disappointment. It turned out they were from nearby Marathon and had trucked their boats in on All Terrain Vehicles along an ATV trail off a logging road near Umbata Falls. I was quietly aggravated by their arrogance as they claimed that they had to work harder than me to get their boats in over rough roads on their little motorized machines. I'm sure they were nice folks, and they even kindly volunteered to catch me some fish, since I hadn't caught any myself. (Thanks, but no thanks.) They proceeded for most of the day to move their boats downriver whenever they saw me, always staying just far enough ahead to remain a pain. I didn't express my feelings but I'm sure they gathered my intent from my silent, determined paddling.

I became rather frustrated by my own inability to ignore their presence and guilt for being a grouch, not wanting to share the river with them. My social instincts made me want to engage in idle conversation, but I also wanted to continue enjoying my own silent trip. Yet it was hard to centre my thoughts and forget about them (and their motor boats).

The next day, when I ran into four guys from Michigan in their aluminum



Gnarled cedar beauty

canoes who were portaging gym bags and a 25-litre Coleman cooler and who were already two days over schedule, I met the other attitude. They thought it was really cool that those guys from Marathon had caught them a whole bunch of pickerel so they could have a great feed. One meets all kinds on the river.

A nice gesture by one of the fishermen, however, is worthy of mention. They first spotted me as I unloaded my pack and gear prior to getting the canoe. On my return, on their path up to their campsite and my path down to the river was a pack of paper matches. As I was well provided and carrying the canoe, I left the matches and later forgot to see if it was an empty, littered package or if, as I suspected, it was the generous, silent offer of warmth to the lone traveller. An offer given without requiring loss of face. If so, I hope to return the favor to someone in need sometime.

The fishermen also informed me that they had seen a bear with two cubs the day before, and the bears wouldn't leave until the men had started a fire, talked loud, and turned on their radio. I was glad for them that they had their radio along.

The campsite that they occupied was at the end of a rapid marked on the map by four slashes. The first set is simple. The second requires an eddy out on the right. It is imperative to eddy out. Easy water beyond it leads around a corner to a drop into a beautiful pink-walled, shallow canyon.

The long paddle that day spread before me hundreds of reflections. One of the photographic projects I have worked on for several years is photographing reflections that, when viewed so that the horizon is vertical (or when seen with your head turned on its side), reveal symmetrical images of creatures much like those seen on totem poles. The reflections that day were otherworldly. I could have taken hundreds of pictures.

But rain and mist intermittently greeted me, brought predominantly by headwinds. I was forced to keep in distressingly close proximity to my raingear most of the day. The winds rotated from south to west and then into the north.

I camped at about 5:30 after 18 km. I hoped to go farther but the map showed no nearby campsites and a stretch of six kilometres, directly into the stiff north wind. As I turned the corner into this northerly stretch I came upon three large log pilings driven deep into the bank. They may have been the remains of a logging road bridge or just some anchor system. I climbed the bank and discovered a meadow with an old camp.

The only structure still standing was a building that had a high step-up to enter. I was surprised to find a luxurious privy, built to provide a royal view of the river from a seat on the throne. It was raised, I presume, to avoid having to dig too deep in the rocky ground. The construction used 7.5-cm diameter poles where we southerners might have used 2 by 4's. The roof was supported by a four-sided series of these poles which all met in the middle. Very neat construction from local, easily obtained materials.

I camped and put up a cooking shelter. My stove worked and I had carrots, tea with Irish whiskey, and noodle soup, thickened with emanthal cheese—hot, rich and good. Then went to bed.

"Now is where it gets a bit scary. Noises outside. Is it the rustling of my tarp? Far above the river and miles from anywhere. Every strange noise is a cause for alertness. What could it be? Wolves? The bear with cubs? Hundreds of them? Just now something pushed against my tent! A toad or a small rodent but oh my gosh! Started me."

Day 5 Awoke at 6:50 to sun just coming over the trees. Magical light had not yet reached the north stretch of the river and I was privileged to watch the warm light of day kiss the trees and greet the blue light of night, before ushering the blues away to bed. My dreams were filled with people. The more solitude on this trip, the more richly peopled were my dreams.

The far-off hum was the only sound. I noted in my journal that it might just be my cars humming, but now I know it was Hemlo. Morning mists lifted, unveiling a high mackerel sky.

I was on the river by 9:30 after taking some early morning photographs. The last two days were the best opportunities for photography both from weather and scenic opportunity points of view.

I passed a beaver house and could hear the beavers munching away inside. Later I saw five beavers frolicking by the shoreline. I was drifting downstream taking pictures and at one time there were three of them within seven metres of my canoe. That day I saw many butterflies, some brightly colored and some a beautiful, intense purple black. And a small furry creature, on my long nude portage.

The portage around Umbata Falls, though long, is simple. It follows an ATV trail and, although it goes far out of the way, by the map, it is level and easy. Hydro lines cross it (and the river) near the end and the portage drops steeply down the road through the forest to the river, opening up into a magnificent view. It reminded me of beautiful mountain valleys in British Columbia with the wonderful sense of space that bright sunlight can give.



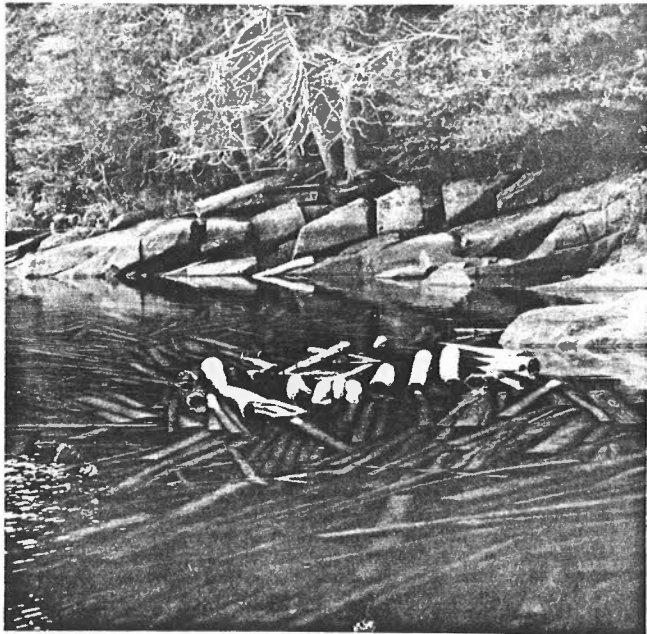
View from swing bridge



ABS canoe has seen better days

I had a stimulating swim across the mouth of the river above the rapids that enter the canyon, and completed the whole portage in two trips and under three hours. Ministry documentation suggests that it is 2500 m, but I believe it is longer. The day was so hot and beautiful and insect-free, I enjoyed portaging in the nude, an experience not to be missed.

After finishing the portage, about 5:00 p.m., I couldn't resist the hike to the falls. The trail is on the west side of the river and is reached by going under the bridge and along the shore. It is marked in some places by colored surveyor's tape. The woods are rich with growth from the moisture of the falls and the not infrequent rains and mists. The hike is about a kilometre long and is refreshingly vigorous.



Umbata Falls in late afternoon on a beautiful day is magnificent. I felt it was the cleanest air I might ever breath, filled with ions and clean water vapor and sunlight. The sun, lowering in the west, was shining up the canyon made by the river and reflecting off the reddish granite walls almost 200 m high. A trick of light reflecting off the walls far down the canyon made it appear that there were three monolithic Egyptian sentinels carved into the rock walls of the gorge, guarding the falls and the surrounding lands.

Later, I set up camp and was chagrined at the arrival of the four fellows from Michigan. I was impressed, however, since they had fashioned a very functional paddle out of a cedar log to replace a paddle they had broken on their first day.

I realized later how lucky I had been, since apparently there was a party of six behind them, and I discovered in the register that among a number of parties in the week previous there had been a 12-member Outward Bound group. My mid-week start proved a fortunate choice.

The canyon offered a bountiful selection of driftwood and I was able to have a wonderful low fire that lasted for hours and cooked dinner, warmed me, and allowed me to write my journal till late.

Time: 11: 45 pm.

Physical: full, fat, tired, blistered.

Weather: Mars has risen in the south—clear and reflecting red in the bay. There is cloud rising in the east. Lightning too—far, far away. If no rain then tail winds- hallelujah!

Psychic? Getting spiritual. Except about mosquitoes. And even those I only kill in the tent, or if I catch them in the 'actus reus'.



Campsite with assorted plastic

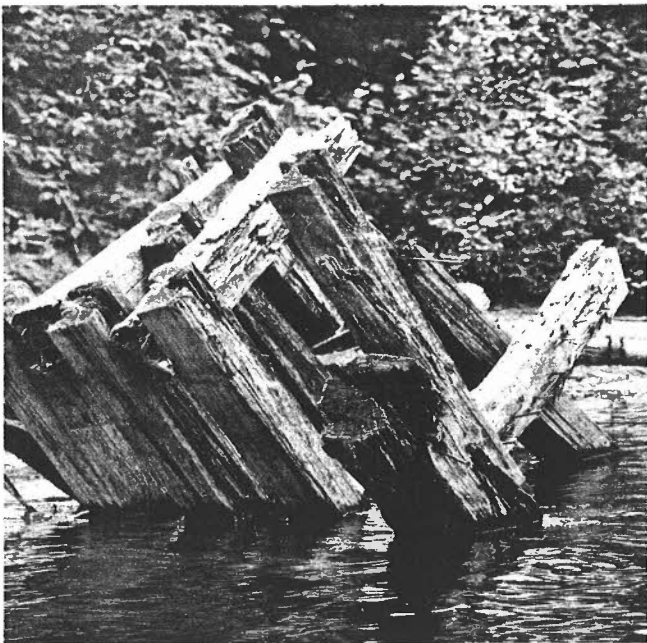
Day 6 6:30 a.m. I arose to watch the sun rise over the falls, bringing a beautiful day. The kind of day that makes the heart sing and the blood flow. A perfect day to explore in the midst of Superior country's rugged and fabulous scenery.

I ran the rapids under the bridge, about 150 m of nice rough water, and left the boys from Michigan behind about nine o'clock.

The paddling was very pretty and the rock walls higher, the terrain rougher, and the paths much steeper. Believe it or not, once in Pukasaw Park the portages have stairs built in the tougher places. Because of the steep and rocky landscape the portages would have been extremely demanding without the stairs.

After running some nice rapids I encountered an inviting chute of big standing waves that was runnable—but I could see another portage about 300 m downstream. Not the type of risk that is acceptable for a solo paddler.

At the entry to this set, prior to eddying out above the chute, I watched a duck backferrying through a fast tongue leading into the eddy. I was in some doubt about whether to go left or right around a large rock almost in the centre of the tongue, and the eddy I had to catch was on the right. The duck ferried down the right calmly and, after getting to the rock, seemed to gain take-off speed and flew off. Since it looked so easy and I could see my eddy, the rock, and all but a bit of



the water in-between, I didn't scout, but followed the duck. Well, did I get "ducked up!" I discovered why the duck took off. There was an angled curling wave coming off a rock, just strong enough to throw an unsuspecting canoeist onto the rock in the centre. Nothing serious, just some water in the boat and wounded pride, but another valuable lesson in how to read the currents from objects found floating in the water. (In fact it provided me with a good laugh—even though it was at my own expense).

The falls at the 275-m marked portage are beautiful, ending in an open bay with high quartzite and granite walls. And after a short paddle across the bay the swing bridge on the Pukasaw Hiking Trail appears. This spectacular spot marks the crossroads of a well-used hiking trail from Hattie Cove to the interior and coast of Pukasaw Park, and the steep, tough, and penultimate portage on the White River Canoe Route.

The swing bridge crosses high above a rock-strewn, kilometre-long gorge. It is made of steel cable with 2" by 6" boards as walkway. But it is still very scary! The view is worth the fear though. But all too soon the feet must do the walking over the portage. At the top of the steepest part are a canoe rest and the register. What better opportunity for a pause. One can read the book and see how many parties had better fishing, worse weather, and sillier comments.

There are several campsites just before the end of the portage, set back off the trail, with woods on one side and river on the other. They offer a view of the bottom of the gorge. These sites are so well manicured as to be a treat for group

camping, with sand-filled, square tent-pads and custom-made, federal-government-issue fire drums with grills. I know that if I had been with friends I would have been excited to camp at one of these places. But after days by myself I couldn't bear the thought of staying in a country-club campsite, unless, of course, it had satellite TV. Nor was I comfortable with the thought of camping next to the Michiganans, or anyone else.

So, after an exciting swim across the outflow of the gorge, I took off into the headwinds of the White, Superior bound. While nursing my blisters at the end of the portage, I picked up some pretty stones from the pile of pebbles that the river brings down in its travels. Imagine my surprise when several weeks later I examined a piece of white quartz under a loupe and discovered small flakes of gold! No surprise, that close to Hemlo. Next trip, I'll be prepared to make my fortune.

Paddling downstream into a strong headwind, I met a couple coming upstream in what looked like a 20-foot-long Prospector canoe. They were taking a sightseeing day off from their trip down the shore of Superior to Michipicoten. Afraid to ask too many questions about the weather on the lake, I continued for some time into a stiff headwind.

I began to grow more and more edgy about where I could camp, since the wind bode ill for the Superior crossing. Finally, I reached a point where I could see a line of white breakers marking the mouth of the river, about two kilometres away, in the southwest. I looked west for a spot to camp and saw a sandy patch. Just at that very moment I spotted a large hairy, ursine creature shambling across the beach. But my prospects of escaping the mouth of the White into Superior looked slim. After a respectful pause, I paddled to the beach. No tracks were clear, but the moss on the bank was disturbed where a large animal had scrambled up into the woods. There were also signs for both a portage and a campsite.

I explored for several hours, discovering that the portage led only about 30 m into a sheltered bay on Superior. And a Pukasaw campsite with fire drum, tent pad, and even a three-metre-high food-hanging pole was no more than 20 m from the beach.

There was great rock-scrambling to be had on the shore of Superior and the blueberries were ripe and more profuse than I have ever seen them. I wonder if bears don't like to climb rocks, because these berries looked unscathed.

I was reluctant to stay at the site, thinking the Michigan party or the party behind them might show up. I was aware from Duncan's notes that there was a small beach in Picture Rock Harbour. I hemmed and hawed until the weather seemed to calm. About six p.m. the wind died. There were clouds, but the wind was calm and low in the southwest, and though I could hear thunder, it was far distant and not threatening. I had heard that storms can rise on Superior in minutes and so decided to head for Picture Rock Harbour, only about three to four kilometres away.

The swell was running calm and large—45 degrees behind me and onshore. The water was the unique color that is Lake Superior—a kind of green-blue that is beautiful and pure and powerful all at the same time. As I paddled, over the sound of my heart beating I could hear the thunder, the train, and the sounds of far-off industry.

Picture Rock Harbour came and went. I saw three people in a freighter canoe with a motor coming south and heading for that harbor. But the swell was moving my canoe along so briskly that I knew that the time was right to keep going. Within an hour I had crossed the two large bays and rounded the point to the bay that held Hattie Cove. The entrance to the cove is through a narrow break in the rough, high, bare rock that is the shore of Superior. The break is only about 10 m wide and short.

From the metre-high swells, the water was suddenly dead calm. It was magic. A peaceful cove with a number of small buildings, obviously the Federal Park campground. As I landed at the beach I noticed that there was a current in the water passing the shore at several kilometres per hour. It was as if there was a strong tide. An old local resident said that was usually the sign that a big storm was coming in.

The White River can be run from a variety of access points. There are reputed to be 63 sets of rapids starting from the headwaters. The water levels are sufficiently stable to allow navigation throughout the season, though high levels provide challenging rapids and low water is more appropriate for intermediate and novice paddlers. Due to the remote nature of the river, I do not consider it a trip for unaccompanied beginners.

The trip I completed in six days can be done in as little as three to four. Alternatively, days could be spent hiking the Pukasaw coastal trail, from a base camp at the swing bridge campground. There is a site just beyond the portage around the canyon, a short paddle away on the west bank. Hattie Cove offers a Parks Canada campground for those who want to camp at trip's end.

After signing out in the register, I packed up and hit the road. I soon found a hitchhiker to keep me company to Sudbury and, true to form, by 10:30 that night the rains were fine and heavy. Luckily in the car I was spared the need to don my odiferous rain gear, and I was on the long road back from a great trip.



Bay of Lake Superior; White River in the distance

BEAUSOLEIL ISLAND

Bill King

It's a funny thing about weather! Of course it's enjoyable when it's good but it seems just about as enjoyable if it's thoroughly bad. What depresses me is a day which can't make up it's mind and just sulks along with overcast or drizzle. Anyway, we certainly had fine examples of both varieties on our recent outing to Beausoleil Island.

I suppose I should have taken more notice of the force with which the gusts of wind on the highway buffeted my car in the predawn of that Saturday morning, 29 October 1988. The snow flurries as I searched in vain for the "public dock" in Honey Harbour didn't seem out of keeping with the season. After all, I reasoned, we would be in the shelter of other islands for most of the one-hour paddle across to Beausoleil; it shouldn't be too bad. Well, we certainly needed to make use of every bit of cover we could find. Not only did the 50 km/h headwinds cause some difficulty maintaining our direction, but they also blew hailstones up to one centimetre in diameter right into our faces. Very invigorating!

In Little Dog Channel, north of Little Beausoleil Island where the western gap is only about 15 m wide, my partner and I got into trouble. The combination of the headwind and the current produced by the waves funnelling into the opening had reduced our progress virtually to zero. Just at that moment a huge power boat decided to come through in the other direction. A gust of wind blew us right into his path but fortunately he was alert and able to reverse his engines in time. We decided that "the better part of valor" would be to pull out on the rocks until the channel was clear. After switching paddling positions we made somewhat better progress but we were all pleased to arrive at the calm and shelter of Oakes Bay where we set up camp.

The rest of the day we spent hiking on the numerous scenic and easily followed trails which wind around Beausoleil's many bays and peninsulas. I don't think I can recall another day where it hailed, off-and-on, all day long—no great problem without the wind. This is fine hiking country, mostly volcanic rock, frequently patterned by lava flow or glacier abrasions and covered in sections by mixed forest. The trails take advantage of every ridge and clearing but still require frequent log causeways in boggy areas.

Our search and rescue skills were tested briefly when we realized that one of our members, whom we had left behind on the morning hike to proceed at his own (photographer's) pace, had not returned to camp. Despite the maze of trails, getting lost on Beausoleil would not ordinarily be a problem due to the excellent signposting and frequent maps. However, we realized that our missing person probably didn't know the name of the campsite for which he was looking. As it was about four o'clock we had 1-2 hours of daylight. We split into two search parties, my group to retrace the morning route to the north of the campsite and the other to search to the south in case our "victim" had returned along the right trail but missed the turnoff for the campsite. The whole thing became anticlimactic when our victim found us about 10 minutes after we started. He had, in fact, been wandering for much of the day but had managed to spot the tents from a rocky point on the other side of the bay and was following the shoreline back to the campsite. The timing was just right so that the southern search party had had just sufficient time to get out of range of our prearranged whistle signals and ended up with an extra 10 km of hiking before abandoning the quest. Everyone thawed and dried out as we cooked our dinners around the old wood stove in the campground shelter. There was even talk of moving the tents in there, but as it was a 400-m hike over the rocks, nobody did.

Lying in my tent that night, warm and comfortable in the sleeping bag as the wind howled in the trees and snow/hail rattled periodically on the flysheet, I reflected that people who spend all their lives under roofs miss out on a primal experience of security which is almost womb-like. There's just no way you can be that comfortable at home—there isn't enough contrast. After three rather short nights in a row, I slept like a baby!

In the morning there was three centimetres of snow on the ground but the wind had dropped and the day was already promising fair. After breakfast we set off to explore new trails now in bright sunshine. The leaves on each pond and puddle were trapped in surreal patterns by a thin film of ice. The powdery snow along the trail told a tale of the night's activities as first a rabbit track and then fox tracks were apparent (they later diverged, suggesting a happy outcome for the rabbit). The creatures themselves remained hidden. Only one spruce grouse, an old patriarch, fully the size of a rooster, disputed our claim to all that we passed.

After a leisurely lunch in the sunshine, it was time to go home. Emboldened by the moderate wind which now pushed us along, we took to open water between the main islands and returned via Big Dog Channel.

Thanks to Herb Pohl for organizing a weekend which had something for everyone.

CAMPING LICENSE

Dear Canoeing Friends:

Last summer, a new Ontario regulation went into effect which requires all non-residents of Canada to obtain a "camping license" to stay overnight on Crown lands in certain portions of northern Ontario—mainly those areas north of the French and Mattawa rivers. From a canoeists point of view, that's virtually all of Ontario.

I understand the fee will be used, at least in some measure, to clean up Ontario waterways. We all know the scenario and the part we paddlers play in cleaning up after uncaring slobs. Most experienced American canoeists I know carry an extra large, double-ply trash bag when touring Canadian waters which are frequented by fly-in fishermen. We bitch and moan plenty, but we never leave trash—ours or anyone else's—behind. And that, fair or not, is how it should be.

Now, there's this god-awful fee which takes the wild out of the wilderness. It's not the price we object to. After all, \$3.50 a day is peanuts compared to the experience gained. Rather, it's the principle of the thing. Each morning when I arise, a mental cash register reminds me of the daily charge. I find it very difficult to retain wholesome feelings for the land when I have to pay

rent each day. In fact, it requires real discipline to pick up the trash others have left behind. The daily charge looms overhead: "The feds will pick it up, the feds will pick it up." Of course, I know better, but the hurt remains.

The net result is that my pleasure trips are now confined to Saskatchewan and the NWT.

Conservation officers I've talked with flatly stated that the camping fee was never meant for canoeists, yet it was happily applied to them. Ironically, the maximum charge for violation of this law is, I understand, \$50 Canadian, which makes it downright profitable to disobey the law on trips of more than two weeks. Admittedly, there aren't a lot of Americans who make lengthy forays into the Ontario woods, but there are a few. And these few will probably diminish still more given the unfairness of the new regulation. Ironically, it is these caring few that Ontario should seek to accommodate, rather than discourage.

Slob fishermen and hunters will not be discouraged no matter how high the price. You and I know that and so do the Ontario feds. So why apply this fee to us? Why not limit it to motorized traffic?

Okay, given the state of the bureaucracy, I'd compromise with an annual camping fee which was administered similar to hunting/fishing licenses. Then, I'd pay one up-front charge and happily canoe my fool head off all summer long.

I hope someone in your organization will carry our concerns to the powers to be. There is a great deal of bitterness about this on my side of the border. Note that this displeasure is being felt by experienced, caring paddlers, not by pork'n beans, yuppies, and Vanbago gawkers.

Thanks for listening. Any help you'd care to give us in fighting this unfair regulation will be most appreciated. I'd love to hear from WCA members.

Cliff Jacobson
928 West 7th St.
Hastings, MN 55033
USA
Phone: 612-437-7497

WCA mailbox

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE ONTARIO MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ministry is requesting input from all interested parties on proposals concerning Bon Echo Provincial Park, the largest provincial park south of Algonquin. As documented in the report titled, "Bon Echo Provincial Park Background Information and Issues," there are a number of changes being considered: development of a commercial resort, a new visitor centre, expansion of the park boundary, as well as a review of recreational uses such as snowmobiling, rock climbing, and the management of vegetation, fish, and wildlife. To obtain information or provide feedback, contact: John Immerseel, Planning Team, Chairman, Ministry of Natural Resources, 1 Richmond Blvd., Napanee, Ont. K7R 3S3, or phone 613-354-2173 or 1-800-267-0257.

Timber management plans are being developed for the Killarney, Trout Lake, and Wanapitei Crown Management Units which will outline potential areas for harvest for a 20-year period. The plans address road locations and other users of the forest. For information or to comment on specific concerns, contact: John Vining or Don Potvin at Sudbury District Office, Box 3500, Station A, Sudbury, Ont. P3A 4S2 or phone Zenith 73000.

The Algonquin Region of MNR is also in the early stages of developing a 20-year timber management plan. A schedule has been established for public input at different locations. For further information and a copy of a newsletter entitled, "Timber Management in Algonquin Region," contact: A.J. Stewart, Regional Director, Algonquin Region, MNR, P.O. Box 9000, Huntsville, Ontario, P0A 1K0, or phone 705-789-9611.

REPORT FROM THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

A discussion paper has been received from the Ministry outlining proposals to greatly reduce industrial contaminants entering lakes and rivers from municipal sewer systems. Entitled, "Controlling Industrial Discharges to Sewers," the document proposes the use of industrial sewers.

INFORMATION RECEIVED

The Conservation Council of Ontario has circulated for commentary a draft update to its 1986 report "Towards a Conservation Strategy for Ontario." The purpose of the report is to review new Ministry programs and initiatives.

A report entitled, "Selling Canada's Environment Short: The Environmental Case Against the Trade Deal," is available at a cost of \$1.00 from the Canadian Environmental Law Association, 242 Queen St. W., 4th Floor, Toronto, M5V 1Z4.

PERIODICALS RECEIVED

The Environment Council of Alberta: "ACS Update" (describes the Alberta Conservation Strategy project which focuses on the integration of economic development and environmental conservation)

The Conservation Council of Ontario: "Ontario Conservation News"

The Environment Fund: "news"

THE NATURE ADVENTURER'S GUIDE TO KAYAKING IN GREENLAND

David B. Brooks

Several articles in *Nastawgan* (e.g. spring 1987) as well as in other journals (e.g. *Explore*, May/June 1987) attest to the growing popularity of kayak trips in the fiords of Greenland. With First Air offering twice-weekly flights from Iqaluit (Frobisher Bay) to Nuuk (Godthab), and Black Feather having a depot with kayaks and equipment at the museum in Nuuk, such trips are quite feasible. And the kayaking itself is straightforward. Fiords tend to be protected from the worst winds, and wave action is not generally a serious problem.

After a two-week trip last August, I can share in full the enthusiasm of those articles. The sheer, crenulated rock of the fiord walls, the thin waterfalls crashing down, the reindeer (semi-domesticated caribou) and flowers, glaciers, and ice! Perhaps most exciting, the discovery that icebergs vary in color from pure white to azure blue, depending, I am told, on the nature of the fracture surfaces in the ice crystals, and thus on the wave lengths of light reflected from the fracture.

However, the purpose of this article is not to add another trip report to the literature. Rather, my purpose is to add some words of caution to thoughts of scenery and icebergs.

Let's start with the weather, which can be sunny for days on end, but which can also be soggy. We ran into three days of steady rain, and about eight days of overcast and fog, sometimes heavy. True, some people paddle in T-shirts—lots of radiation when the sun shines at those latitudes—but you should be prepared to paddle in rain gear as well.

Before we left, we debated the need to lug wet suits with us. Heavy and bulky, they add considerably to overweight or air freight charges. We agreed to bring them because of several three- to six-kilometre crossings of the fiord. As it turned out, we spent at least half our time paddling in wet suits just to stay warm. In our opinion, they are essential equipment, as are some kind of mitts and booties, and a toque!

Needless to say, weather conditions make it essential to have lots of warm dry clothes—and to keep them dry, which is not so obvious as it sounds. Two-person folding kayaks tend to leak a bit, and so-called waterproof stuff sacks tend to abrade and develop holes when pushed against the structural members that support the hull—a nasty combination.

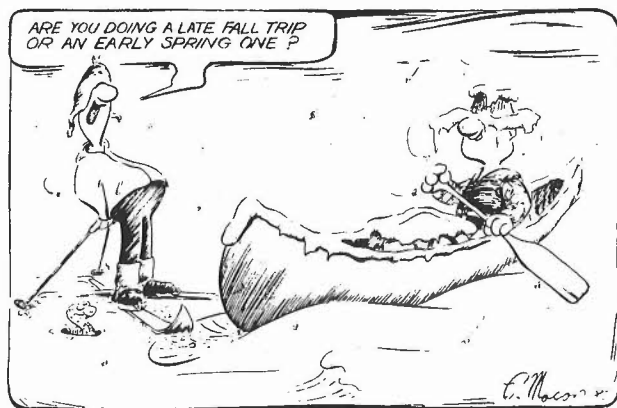
You might also think about ways to cook in the rain—perhaps an extra tent, or a fly with some set-up that works in the absence of trees.

All of this becomes critical because, ultimately, everything has to get inside that kayak and, much more than weight, volume is the limiting factor. Yet those wet suits and extra sweaters and maybe an extra tent all take up space. No doubt there are solutions to these dilemmas, and it probably doesn't matter which solution appeals to you, so long as you choose one of them.

Another point of caution involves the scale of the country. It is huge, and we kept tending to underestimate distance (and therefore time). There were days when, after eight hours of paddling, we could look back and see in the distance the point on which we had camped the previous night. Unusual lighting conditions compound the problem; they alter depth perception and tend to exaggerate shapes.

The huge and open distances have the unfortunate effect of introducing an element of fatigue and boredom while paddling. They also make it important to keep canteens full and handy. One can get pretty thirsty paddling several kilometres across a bay, and you can't just dip your paddle and drink from that "lake." (You can, however, cook your noodles in seawater—but that is something that more experienced sea kayakers presumably learned long ago.)

Finally, the large distances mean that boats travelling together (and I consider it unsafe to have less than two double or three single boats in the party) can easily get separated. Kayaks do not sit very high above the water and, with a little distance and some wave action, they disappear from sight. We faced this problem within a single bay, and spent an anxious afternoon looking for one another. Apropos, we found that the police-style whistle, so easily heard above the roar of rapids, was inaudible beyond a few tens of metres of open ocean.



CANOE TOONS
PAUL MASON

Camping itself is perhaps the main problem along the coast in Greenland. By their very nature, fiords have steep walls, and there just isn't much flat ground. Moreover, that which is flat tends to be boggy. So you may have to paddle a way to find a suitable campsite, and one quickly learns not to pass an acceptable site at 5 p.m. unless you are pretty sure another is beyond the point. When you do find a dry, flatish spot, it is apt to be exposed. Rock your tents down! Don't count on the pegs which may or may not get a good purchase in the tundra soil.

Greenland is of course the Arctic, and the Arctic has bugs. Bug jackets were effective, but next time I would take a head net too. July is reputed to be the worst month for bugs—but it is also said to be the sunniest month. You make your own choice!

We were very glad to have built in enough time on our trip for layover days. This time allowed us to sit out one very rainy day and not risk getting our camping gear wet. Moreover, the hiking is interesting and all but essential to get to the bigger icefields. However, just as with campsites, one has to expect boggy conditions between the outcroppings of rock. Wet feet are a condition of life in Greenland or, rather, they would be except that everyone wears rubber boots. (It is a treat to see Inuit children in oversized hand-me-down boots with tops cut back to fit them.) Also, the bugs get worse as one moves inland away from the sea breezes. We did meet Danes who were backpacking in Greenland. I cannot think of why. Backpacking would seem to package all of the least pleasant aspects of tripping in Greenland while missing many of the best ones.

The added time could also be useful as sea conditions change. Two days after we made a crossing, the wind shifted and overnight ice moved in and totally blocked the passage. Such a situation could force you to remain on shore for several days waiting for favorable winds.

In a few ways, camping in Greenland (at least southern Greenland) can be easier than elsewhere. Notably, the bears find it unbearably tropical and have moved north, and there are no raccoons. You can leave food around without worry, which is just as well given the absence of trees from which to hang packs.

You can count on fishing to supply food, at least if you like cod. We got one with almost every cast. If there was a problem, it was catching anything but cod.

One other item should perhaps be mentioned. The most common kayak trip involves Godthabfiord, a complex of three fiords with the city of Nuuk at their common mouth. It is the cheapest and simplest circuit, and offers most of the scenery that can be seen elsewhere in southern Greenland. However, it is not wilderness. There may not be many people, but there are enough to leave lots of trash on the shore, and for much of the day one can hear the drone of a motorboat. This adds an element of safety of course, but it detracts from the feeling of solitude that one might get in fiords further north.

If I had to sum up our experience, I would say that kayaking in the fiords of Greenland is easy, at least in July and August. However, camping in Greenland will not be, even in July and August.

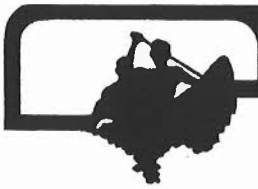
Note that, in raising areas of concern, I have focused on aspects unique to the fiords of southern Greenland (perhaps generalizable to some other Arctic coasts), not on general cautions for ocean kayaking. Nor have I said anything about the added element of caution needed around icebergs, which can disintegrate or roll over at any moment. Good books (e.g. John Dowd's *Sea Kayaking*; see review in *Nastawgan*, spring 1987) will tell you most of what you have to know. In fact, the rule is dead simple: enjoy, admire, marvel, but keep your distance!

Certainly, nothing in this article is meant to be discouraging. A kayak trip in Greenland is a wonderful adventure. My hope is only to make it an adventure in the good sense of the word.

SOME USEFUL INFORMATION FOR TRAVELLERS TO GREENLAND

Thoughts about tripping in Greenland will not of course focus exclusively on safety. Convenience, economy, and fun will also occupy your thoughts. Here are a few suggestions based on our experience.

- Even if you rent your boats in Nuuk, it is hard to avoid excess baggage. It is much cheaper to ship items by air freight than to pay excess baggage charges—and, from our experience, it is reliable.
- Airlines are naturally loathe to take fuel in your baggage, so you will have to buy it in Nuuk. Kerosene and white gas are available. So are Bluet containers but you will have to search for them (we found them only at the marine supply shop).
- The cheapest and in many ways the best place to stay in Nuuk is the Scamen's Home (Sommandshjemmet). Run by a mission, it offers clean rooms at about C\$50/person-night, a cafeteria that is frequented by the full cross-section of Nuuk society, and a warm, friendly atmosphere.
- All restaurants are fiercely expensive. The only one we found that serves "Greenlandic" food (whale, reindeer, ptarmigan) is the Hotel Godthab, a seedy reminder of construction before the era of big cranes. Dinner will cost you around C\$30, but you will have the pleasure of seeing how tuxedo-clad waiters with European manners deal with trippers in scruffy clothes.
- Buying food in Nuuk is also expensive—but not so much so as you might think. While formally a part of Denmark, the Home Rule government opted not to join Denmark in entering the Common market and, as one result, gets lots of surplus dairy and meat products from Denmark at low prices.
- Do save a bit of time to walk around Nuuk, and don't miss the museum.
- Arts and crafts have not been developed on a commercial basis. What one finds in the shops is expensive and, for the most part, does not meet the standards of quality found in the Canadian Arctic.
- If you do bring back any carving, be sure to get a formal declaration that it is not made from any of the species listed in CITES. You will face Canada Customs on your return to Iqaluit, and they are looking for things made of narwhal, sperm whale teeth, etc. You can bring back locally smoked and salt fish without trouble, but you'll have to outfit customs if you want to bring back some of that wonderful Danish cheese.



CANEXUS

The Canoe in Canadian Culture

Editors: James Raffan and Bert Horwood
Publisher: Betelgeuse Books, Toronto, 1988

(Announced on page 25 of the autumn 1988 issue of Nastawgan)

The relationship between canoe and culture is a complex one, crucial to a proper understanding of the Canadian psyche. This is therefore an important book, the result of a conference of the same title held at Queen's University Faculty of Education in the fall of 1987.

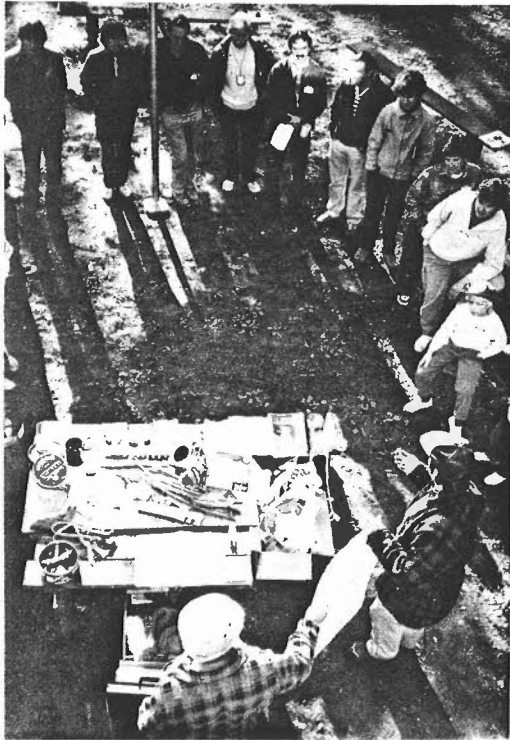
The book is too wide in its cope to be discussed in detail in a review of reasonable length. To quote from the introduction by the editors: "The book links many different ways of thinking about the canoe -- ways which reflect traditional academic points of view, historical, sociological, spiritual, technological, philosophical, and ethnological perspectives. The idea behind Canexus was to celebrate the fundamental importance of the canoe in the development and articulation of Canadian culture." This it indeed does, and very well indeed. It is therefore highly recommended to anyone interested in the canoe and its place in our society.

SONG OF THE PADDLE

An Illustrated Guide to Wilderness Camping

Author: Bill Mason
Publisher: Key Porter Books, Toronto, 1988
Reviewed by: Toni Harting

This book really does not need a lengthy critical review. It is so good, so fascinating, so loaded with incredibly useful practical information by a guy who, during his fifty canoeing years, has done all the wilderness tripping, canoeing, portaging, and hiking himself, that it absolutely will become another bestselling classic, a superb companion to his "Path of the Paddle." This is a no-nonsense, humorous collection of all the clever tips and inside information on wilderness camping (emphasis very much on 'wilderness') you'll ever need to know. Buy it and enjoy, thoroughly. Great job, Bill, thanks.



Fall Meeting

MAGNETAWAN EXPLORATION, 22-23 October

Next weekend. Anticipation. Suppressing adrenalin.
All week long...rain and forecasts of rain. Friday night: downpour, pitch-black, slippery roads, slow traffic, five hours to make three-hour drive. Saturday dawn, car radio: weekend rain and sleet. At water's edge, pack extra clothes, don gloves and rainwear. Only TWO canoes, decide to go. Visions of a night fire drying-out-huddle or a wet crawl into haven tent.
We launch. Wind comes up. Rain stops. Clouds blown away. Blue-ing sky. Stillness. Glistening waters. Darkening shadows. Vivid reflections. Flat, flat water and gentle paddling. "That suns feels good."
Fallen leaves crackle underfoot. Starry, owly night. Glorious moon beams across the still water, whitens the shore rock. Bewitching solitude.
Frosty Sunday morning, no wind. Signs of another magic day.
"Whatever have I done to deserve all this?" AH, THE WONDER OF IT ALL.

Rob Butler

SPORTSMEN'S SHOW BOOTH

The Wilderness Canoe Association has been represented at the Toronto Sportsmen's Show for many years. Over those years we have provided a unique display and informational service to the public that attends the show. The purpose of our presence is threefold. First of all, it increases the profile of our club. Secondly, it is a source of new members. Finally, it gives us an opportunity to educate and inform the public about canoeing-related concerns that are important to the WCA. Past displays have dealt with topics such as wilderness conservation, whitewater safety, and first aid, to name a few.

Due to the nature of our organization and our display we tend to attract large numbers of people that like to linger and chat with the members that supervise our booth. It is amazing to see how many like-minded people you meet while at the booth.

Our presence at the Toronto Sportsmen's Show is important to the club and to the show itself. This year's show runs from Friday 10 March to Sunday, 19 March 1989. Your help is required to ensure that the 1989 WCA Sportsmen's Show booth is as successful as previous displays. We need volunteers to help co-ordinate the display and to co-ordinate registration for booth supervisors. There is also a committee working on designing a new booth that will make better use of the space that we are allocated while at the show. If you would like to help with any of the above in some capacity, please call Ron Jasiuk in Toronto at 416-239-1380.

THE TORONTO SPORTSMEN'S SHOW

EXHIBITION PLACE TORONTO

10-19 MARCH 1989

Come on down and see us!

A CANADIAN NATIONAL  SPORTSMEN'S SHOW

A non-profit Corporation dedicated to Canada's outdoor heritage

CANDIDATES FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The following are the platforms for candidates for the 1989 Board of Directors, received before our publication date. Any other members who wish to run for the Board may do so by letting the Board of Directors know, or by placing their name in nomination from the floor at the AGM in February.

DALE MINER

I have been a member of the WCA for three years. In that time, I have benefited greatly from participating in the activities that the WCA offers, and I want to do what I can to ensure that these benefits continue to be available to others. I feel that it is important that those who feel a strong commitment to the WCA should be prepared to participate in the work of running the organization, and I am running for the Board of Directors out of that commitment.

The heart of the WCA is in its outings program. Although I have become one of the club's hardcore whitewater fanatics, I feel it is important that the full range of canoe-based wilderness activities appear in the outing offerings, and that there be opportunities for those with lesser skills to participate and to receive instruction.

The WCA is a focal point for people who have a strong commitment to the environment. However, the club is not big enough nor rich enough to financially support a wide variety of environmental interest groups. I feel we should limit the club's support to a few selected issues, and to encourage the membership to act individually in encouraging political action on the wider front of issues. My own choice of issue for club involvement would be acid rain, which I would pursue by joining the Canadian Acid Rain Coalition.

Nastawgan represents a mine of information for planning trips. I would like to see the existing *Nastawgan Trip Information Index* expanded beyond a simple index into something more comprehensive, such as a book of river maps similar to what the OKVC offers its members.

SANDY HARRIS

From a member without a canoe or a car, I have in four years acquired both, and a steady paddling partner!

On a more serious note, my involvement in the club has grown from a participant to a trip leader and most recently co-ordinator of the 1988 Fall Weekend at the Minden Wild Water Preserve. At every step along the way, I have been encouraged and rescued by members whose enthusiasm and knowledge of the wilderness is overwhelming. Because of their generosity, I now confidently explore wilderness areas which previously I had only heard or read about.

As a member I feel it is my responsibility to enthusiastically promote the club and its activities, and for me the logical step would be to stand for the Board of Directors. From that position, I would encourage new members and novice paddlers (we were all both once) and I would continue to maintain the integrity of the club.

JOHN WINTERS

Continued growth has placed increasing demands upon those volunteers who normally do most of the work. The directors, recognizing that some action must be taken to prevent burnout of our more dedicated members, have taken steps to actively search out members to assist in the organization's activities while simultaneously streamlining and improving our operations. Much work remains to be done and, having served my apprenticeship as a director, I would be happy to continue for another two years and give the membership some return on the time spent in training.

BILL NESS

During my 13 years in the WCA I participated as trip leader, Sportsmen's Show organizer, Director, Vice-Chairman, and Chairman. As well, I have prepared club position papers on conservation issues relating to the Spanish, French, and Madawaska rivers. Currently I enjoy harassing you to organize trips in my capacity as a member of the Outings Committee.

The WCA has changed a lot since the first issues of "Beaverdam" rolled off the photocopier in 1974. We've grown considerably. In addition to our traditional wilderness canoe trippers we have increasing numbers of sea kayakers and whitewater playboaters in funny canoes and kayaks.

I don't bemoan this evolution. I say, Vive la difference! Our size and our diversity have made us strong.

The purpose of this club should be to provide a focal point for all who love paddling and the outdoors to come together to share common experiences, knowledge, and concerns. I believe that our organization is currently effectively pursuing this goal through our informative newsletter, extensive outings program, semi-annual meetings, educational symposia, and Sportsmen's Show booth.

As a director I believe that my primary role would be to ensure that we maintain our present course while exercising sound budgetary control to enable the WCA to continue to provide high-quality services for a reasonable fee.

PADDLING IN WESTERN NEW YORK AND PENNSYLVANIA

There are a number of streams here in western New York and nearby Pennsylvania that WCA members might want to consider for spring outings next year. Seems likely that these would be 'canoeable' a few weeks earlier, usually beginning in early March, than waterways to the north of Toronto.

We're familiar with all the following streams and would be happy to provide information or co-ordination to WCA people looking for some different waves and scenery.

Letchworth Gorge Day trip, big water, safe (pools below drops), class I and heavy II, permit necessary, Intermediate skill level.

Cattaraugus Creek Day or overnight, various sections, class I to class III (some very nasty), Intermediate to Advanced.

Ischua Creek Short or long day trip, class I, small stream, Novice to Intermediate.

Upper Genesee River Long day trip, class I and II, very pretty, Intermediate.

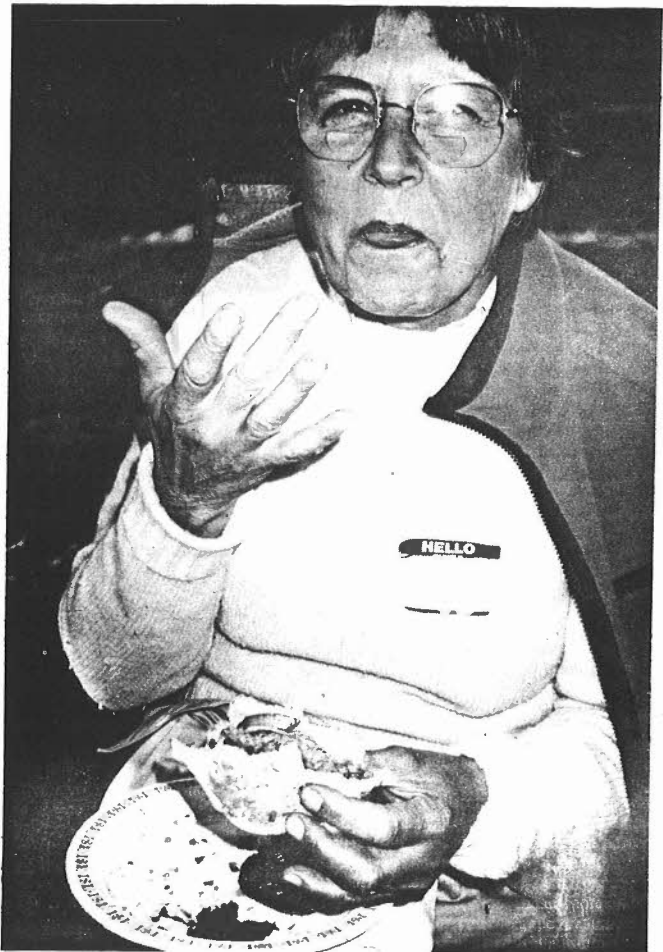
Conewango Creek Day trip or overnight, flowing flatwater, Beginner/Novice.

Pine Creek (northern Penna.) Overnight, nice scenery, Penna.'s Grand Canyon of the East, class I and II, Intermediate.

Slippery Rock Creek (western Penna.) overnight, tight-technical-fun. Two sections, lower section avoids most boat-threatening stuff. Class II to IV. Intermediate to Advanced.

Contact: David Buckley, Rt.#1, Box 6484, West Valley, N.Y. 14171, phone 716-942-6631.

(Distance by car Toronto - West Valley is about the same as Toronto - Burks Falls.)



Fall Meeting



TRIP ORGANIZERS WANTED

Would you like to get involved and put something back into your club? Then volunteer to organize a club trip, one day - weekend - week - flatwater - whitewater - whatever. If so, contact any member of the Outings Committee:

Tony Bird 416-466-0172
 Bill Ness 416-321-3005
 Herb Pohl 416-637-7632
 Jim Greenacre 416-759-9956
 Rob Cepella 416-761-9987

21-22 January CAMPING - FRONTENAC PROVINCIAL PARK

Organizer: Sandy Richardson 416-429-3944
 Book before 10 January.

Travelling on cross-country skis with lightweight camping equipment we will explore this wild park on the edge of the Shield in the scenic Rideau Lakes area. Where possible we will follow lakes, portages, and hiking trails, but some bushwhacking will likely be necessary. We will set up an early camp to allow time to explore, photograph, and enjoy the park. This will be an exploratory trip for the organizer. Participants may carry their gear in backpacks or haul it on small toboggans, and they should be in reasonable shape with some experience skiing with loads. Limit six people. Note: In the event of poor snow conditions we will change the location to an area with snow.

22 January SNOWSHOEING

Organizer: Jim Greenacre 416-759-9956
 Book immediately.

The Sugarbush area of the Simcoe County Forest north of Barrie offers a wide variety of terrain from mature deciduous forest and cultivated, man-made coniferous forest to open farmland. This area is in the heart of the snowbelt, so we can be assured of deep snow. The pace can be leisurely to suit the condition and experience of the participants. A carpool will be organized.

18-19 February ALGONQUIN EXPLORATION
 Organizers: Bill King 416-223-4646
 Herb Pohl 416-637-7632

Book between 28 January and 10 February.

Two hours travel by ski or snowshoe will bring us from Hwy 60 to our campsite. With an early start this will leave ample time for exploration. Participants should provide their own shelter and lunches. The organizers will provide supper and breakfast which will be served in the comfort of a warm tent. A modicum of fitness is a requisite. Limit five participants.

24-26 February ALGONQUIN PARK
 Organizer: Jim Greenacre 416-759-9956
 Book immediately.

The organizer will book a winterized housekeeping cottage on Oxtongue Lake, Friday afternoon, for those who can leave early, until Sunday afternoon. We will snowshoe a loop on Saturday, returning to a hot tub, hot supper, and a log fire. Sunday, more snowshoeing or possibly cross-country skiing in nearby Algonquin Park. Accommodation cost about \$30 per person. Communal breakfasts and supper arranged by the organizer. A \$30 deposit payable to the organizer will secure your place. Limit eight persons.

25-26 February ALGONQUIN PARK SKI TOUR
 Organizer: Karl Schimek 416-222-3720
 Book before 17 February.

This is a weekend ski trip with packs. We will start at the Livingstone Lodge access point and follow the Wildcat Loop trails. Suitable for intermediate skiers. Limit five participants.

11 March SPEED RIVER
 Organizer: Doug Ashton 519-654-0336
 Book before 4 March.

This is an early season trip for enthusiastic paddlers. We will start in Guelph and paddle 18 km to Hespeler. Participants should be prepared for cold water and the possibility of inclement weather. Suitable for the budding whitewater paddler. Limit six canoes.



Photo by Ron Jasiuk

4-5 February ALGONQUIN PARK
 Organizer: Dave Berthelet 819-771-4170

Book between 23 and 27 January (between 5:30 and 8:30 p.m.). A weekend of cross-country skiing is planned in Algonquin Park just off Highway 60. Base camp, a heated ridge pole tent, will be located in a good spot from which the group will explore new country. The snow could be deep and we will have to make our own trails. Light-weight skis are not recommended. Limit five trippers.

12 March OAKVILLE CREEK
 Organizer: Paul Barsevskis 416-239-2830
 Book before 9 March.

This could be a great run or it could be too early; I'm prepared to give it a try. Because of the extremely cold water and the possibility of ice-covered banks, only experienced paddlers should consider this trip. Limit six canoes.

12 March LOWER CREDIT RIVER
Organizer: Roger Harris 416-323-3603
Book before 9 March.

High water and low temperatures can make an exciting run for experienced paddlers or warmly dressed enthusiastic intermediates. Limit right boats.

17-26 March MARYLAND & WEST VIRGINIA POTPOURI
Organizers: John Schultz 301-652-6156
Henning Harmuth 301-299-7127

Book between 15 February and 1 March.

The organizers of this one-week excursion have offered to accommodate the participants in their homes in the Washington D.C. area. Outings will consist of one- to two-day trips to interesting rivers in the neighborhood. The level of difficulty is expected to vary from intermediate to expert and will depend to some extent on group preferences. Both organizers will be at the WCA symposium on Northern Ontario which will take place during the last weekend in January at York University. More detailed information will be provided at that time. Limit eight participants.



TREES IN ICE - Marcia Farquhar
(Honorable Mention, Wilderness; WCA 1988 Photo Contest)

18 March OAKVILLE CREEK
Organizer: Roger Harris 416-323-3603
Book before 14 March.

A narrow stream with the possibility of sweepers and the certainty of low temperatures. Experienced paddlers preferred. Limit six boats.

18 March LOWER CREDIT RIVER
Organizer: Mike Jones 416-270-3256
Book before 12 March.

This time of year the Credit River from Streetsville down runs cold and fast with continuous rapids. It makes an exciting trip for paddlers of intermediate level or higher. Ice conditions permitting, we will go all the way to the mouth of the river. Limit six canoes.

19 March OAKVILLE CREEK
Organizer: Herb Pohl 416-637-7632
Book between 8 and 15 March.

In spite of its small size, Oakville Creek in early spring can be a formidable challenge. The spring run-off invariably leads to ice jams and sweepers which obstruct channels. Even without this complication the many tight turns, waves, and the cold water require that participants have at least intermediate whitewater skills. Limit six canoes/kayaks.

19 March WILLOW BROOK / GRAND RIVER
Organizer: Jeff Lane 519-837-3815
Book before 12 March.

Our exploratory trip of last spring revealed that this section of river contained a number of rapids that would be challenging to good intermediate paddlers if we could catch it at its peak run-off. This year we're moving the date up a month to get the water we want. Limit eight canoes.

19 March UPPER CREDIT RIVER
Organizer: Bill Ness 416-321-3005
Book before 12 March.

The upper Credit from Inglewood to Glen Williams has developed a deserved reputation as the best early spring novice whitewater run in the Toronto area. Its continuous, moderate current, numerous riffles, and forgiving rapids make it an ideal learning experience for novices with basic whitewater skills. Limit eight canoes.

24 March LOWER CREDIT RIVER
Organizer: Bill Ness 416-321-3005
Book before 19 March.

The trip down the lower Credit from Streetsville is nearly continuous grade I and II whitewater. It's a great little run in itself and a good warm-up for bigger and better things to come. Suitable for intermediates. Limit six canoes.

25 March ROUGE RIVER
Organizer: Mike Jones 416-270-3256
Book before 19 March.

The Rouge River from Steeles Avenue to Lake Ontario makes a good six-hour trip in spring run-off. There is a continuous strong current, and if we are blessed with high water, some substantial standing waves in spots. As well, sweepers may lurk to snare the unwary. Suitable for experienced novices or intermediates. Limit six canoes.

26 March UPPER CREDIT RIVER
Organizer: Mike Graham-Smith 416-877-7829
Book before 19 March.

The upper Credit with its many swifts, gentle rapids, and canoe-grabbing rocks is a pleasant early spring run. Suitable for novice paddlers with some moving-water experience. Limit six canoes.

1 April OAKVILLE CREEK
Organizer: Diane Wills 416-493-1064
Book before 27 March.

Oakville Creek offers fast, turbulent water at this time of the year with a few ledge rapids and the possibility of obstructed channels. Experienced whitewater paddlers only should consider this trip. Water temperatures will be low so wet suits are recommended. Limit six canoes.

2 April LOWER CREDIT AND HUMBER RIVERS
Organizer: Duncan Taylor 416-368-9748
Book before 29 March.

Join us on this annual WCA outing. We will canoe the lower Credit first and then move over to the Humber, starting at Hwy 401 and taking out at Dundas Street. The Humber can offer some challenging rapids if water levels are high. Suitable for novices with some experience. Limit six canoes.

8 April UPPER BLACK RIVER
Organizer: Roger Harris 416-323-3603
Book before 1 April.

Narrow and rocky, the upper Black can be a challenge (if the ice has melted). Experience needed. A vicious stream, beware of bear traps. Limit six boats.



Photo by Ron Jasiuk

8-9 April MAITLAND RIVER
Organizer: Herb Pohl 416-637-7632
Book between 22 and 31 March.

Saturday we'll paddle the upper Maitland which has good current and a few riffles -- an excellent way for novices to start the new season. Sunday will be spent on the lower part of the river which has a much more pronounced gradient and lively rapids. Definitely not for novices. Participants may sign up for one or both days with preference given to weekenders. Limit six canoes.

9 April BEAVER CREEK
Organizer: Roger Harris 416-323-3603
Book before 1 April.

This river is similar to the upper Black, but is technically more demanding. Dry suits are nice. Limit six boats.

9 April GRAND RIVER
Organizer: Dave Sharp 519-621-5599
Book before 2 April.

We will start at Cambridge and, depending on the water level, take out in either Paris or Brantford. This is a flatwater trip for novice moving-water paddlers. Limit six canoes.

15-16 April SALMON & MOIRA RIVERS
Organizer: Glenn Spence 613-475-4176
Book between 1 and 6 April.

This special event marks the 73rd time that Glorious Glenn will brave the swirling flood of these two rivers. Paddlers of intermediate skill level are invited to come along and observe and learn. There are exciting rapids and ledges with substantial waves to negotiate. And a role model of the proper approach to save and enjoyable canoeing will lead the way. Participants are asked to conduct themselves in a differential manner when inquiring about this trip. Limit five canoes.

products and services

This PRODUCTS AND SERVICES section is available, free of charge and on a first come / first serve basis, to members as well as non-members for their announcements regarding items for sale, special products, discounts, services, courses, etc. Contact the editor if more information is required.

KNEE PROTECTORS Made of durable natural sponge rubber, HAPPINEES are water resistant and provide total kneeling protection. They're comfortable to wear, it's like kneeling on a cushion of air. One size fits all. Whether walking or kneeling, HAPPINEES stay in place until you take them off. They float. To order your HAPPINEES, send \$19.95 per pair plus \$3.00 shipping and handling (Ontario residents add 8% sales tax) to: Happinees Inc., 17 Neilson Dr., Etobicoke, Ontario, M9c 1V9. Phone 416-626-2943.

CANOE ARCTIC TRIP SCHEDULE for the 1989 season lists six outfitted and guided trips in the Northwest Territories. Contact Canoe Arctic Inc., P.O. Box 130, Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, X0E 0P0.

ALGONQUIN HORDIC Join me for our fifth year of X-country skiing from Lodge. About 20 km additional trails this year. New wells means showers are available; also hot tub and sauna. A few private rooms plus dorm accommodation. Free two-hour telemark lesson for WCA. Fri. night snack, three meals Sat. and two meals Sun. Cost incl. PST = \$112. Call Joan Etheridge in Oakville before 16 January at 416-825-4061.

X-C WEEKEND AT MANSFIELD OUTDOOR CENTRE Ski the hills of Mansfield Outdoor Centre from 6 to 8 January. A complete package of accommodation in cabins and meals plus snacks. Cost \$40 for 2 nights. Limit ten people. Call Karyn Mikoliew at 416-480-0227 (h) or 416-592-4909 (w).

X-C WEEKEND AT THE MILL, ELMVALE Ski the area around Elmvalle-Lafontaine and County Forest. Accommodation for 2 nights. We will organize pot luck food. Cost \$20. Limit ten people. Wonderful private location. From 24 to 26 February. Call Karyn Mikoliew at 416-480-0227 (h) or 416-592-4909 (w).

WHITEWATER CANOE AND KAYAK CLINICS AND TRIPS We specialize in trips and clinics on the Dumoine and Petawawa rivers. Full rental, drive-in, and fly-in shuttle service for all local rivers including the Noire and the Coulonge. Extended trips to the North including extended coastal trips on Lake Superior. Connecting flights from Toronto for weekend trips and clinics. Contact Don Smith, Box 1115, Deep River, Ontario, K0J 1P0, phone 613-584-2577 or 613-584-3973.

SEE THE BURNSIDE RIVER Extensive collection of slides being presented by George Drought and Barbara Burton of Wilderness Bound at the Ontario Science Centre on Thursday, 16 February 1989; at 7:30. Entry fee \$5. For more information call George Drought in Hamilton at 416-528-0059.

BOX TRIATHLON! A new event for kayakers and canoeists. It's a kayak/canoe slalom race, cross-country orienteering run, and mountain bike tour rolled into one. Have fun, come participate. Where: Minden Wild Water Preserve; when: 15 July 1989. Entry fee includes Saturday night meal, folk entertainment, and prizes. More info in next newsletter or if you would like to volunteer help, call Glen Skinner at 416-740-3680.

DISCOUNTS ON CAMPING SUPPLIES WCA members who present a membership card will receive a 10 percent discount on many on-sale items at:

- ABC Sports, 552 Yonge Street, Toronto,
- Algonquin Outfitters, RR#1, Oxtongue Lake, Dwight, Ontario,
- Rockwood Outfitters, 699 Speedvale Ave. West, Guelph, Ontario
- The Sportsman's Shop, 2476 Yonge Street, Toronto,
- Suntrail Outfitters, 100 Spencer Str. (Hwy 70), Hepworth, Ontario.

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

NATURAL OUTINGS SOCIETY Easy wilderness canoeing, hiking, backpacking trips. Everglades (March break), Adirondacks, Bruce, Killarney, French, Pukaskwa, Superior, White River, etc. \$299/wk outfitted. 10% off for equipped WCA members. Geological emphasis. N.O.S. Box 150, Holland Landing, Ontario, L0G 1H0, phone 416-853-7031.

CANOEES FOR SALE Restored 16 ft cedar-canvas canoe and new 16 ft cedar-canvas, Prospector model, for sale. We also repair and restore cedar-canvas canoes, and sell canoe-building and -recanvassing kits. Call Rosemary in Kinmount, Ontario, at 705-488-2375.

The desktop typesetting for this issue of *Nastawgan* was done by

COMPUFLOW

where it is



The approximate location of some of the places mentioned in this issue are shown by page numbers:

Northern Labrador	1	Beausoleil Island	18
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White River	14	Magnetawan River	20

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WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION membership application

I enclose a cheque for \$15 ___ student under 18
\$25 ___ adult
\$35 ___ family

for membership in the Wilderness Canoe Association.

I understand that this entitles me/us to receive *Nastawgan*, 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 membership application
 renewal for 1988.

Notes: -This membership will expire January 31, 1989.
-Please send completed form and cheque (payable to the Wilderness Canoe Association) to the membership committee chairman.