



## BENEATH ARCTIC LIGHT

Graeme Magor

29 March 1990: It's warm outside; the ground temperature is a balmy  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  as our small plane approaches the northernmost point of Canadian soil. Ahead loom the twin peaks of Cape Columbia — a first sighting for me and yet quite familiar because of my dedication, of late, to the annals of arctic exploration.

It was along this once unknown coast 114 years ago that a party of eight British seamen toiled to discover and name these loneliest outposts of the British Empire. They pulled together a loaded sled weighing 900 kilograms and managed only four to five kilometres per day on the much-fractured sea ice. Plagued by the cold, for which they were ill-prepared, and fighting the first symptoms of scurvy, they trudged ever onwards in the heroic tradition of British "man-hauling" — a practice which has been termed the triumph of idealism over common sense. When Robert Peary struck out

from these same hills for the North Pole in 1909, he travelled by dogsled, as did most polar explorers of his day and since.

The four of us have come here to revive that british pursuit of sledging by human power only. We will spend the next three months each pulling a sled weighing up to 115 kg across the ice and snow of Ellesmere Island, attempting to make the first crossing of Canada's northernmost land and the world's tenth-largest island. John Dunn, a Calgary photographer, first had the idea of such a ski-and-sled traverse many years ago while travelling in neighboring Greenland and casting a wistful eye westwards to the mountains and glaciers of Ellesmere. He and I have been planning intensively for this expedition over the last two years. The minor mountain of gear now assembled in the plane before us is a testament to the labors of preparation — of obtaining sponsorship, of fundraising, of presentations to schools, of eval-

uating equipment, of performing the innumerable small tasks which collectively create the best and safest chances for the expedition's success.

I have been to Ellesmere before, but never on such an ambitious scale. I am drawn to this land like no other, and now have the opportunity to become fully immersed in its grandeur, to see it end-to-end and through-and-through. I've mentally rehearsed each stage of the 1200-km journey beginning at Cape Columbia, the struggles with ice and rock which must surely lie ahead, and the jubilation which will attend ultimate success. I'm here at last at the threshold of this personal dream — and all I feel is fear. I look at the pristine landscape below the wing, but can only dread its cold grip. I crowd the baseboard heater at my side, the last external source of heat for months to come. I'm not at all in touch with the reason for coming here; just apprehensive about the discomforts and already missing the warmth and security of home. Why have I given these up?

30 March: It's cold in the tent as we eat supper — not much warmer than the outside temperature of  $-32^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Nobody has much of an appetite. I have a headache. Our "front door" opens on the frozen polar sea, a chaotic jumble of pressured ice extending 760 km to the North Pole. Out there somewhere, a party of Koreans as well as two Norwegians fight their way towards that invisible beacon. We are their companions in isolation and we are, for this brief interval, the northernmost Canadians; only the tip of Greenland lies closer to the polar axis. I am glad to be on terra firma, rather than on moving ice, and glad for the symbolism of our path southwards — towards the warmth we've left some 4000 km behind.

In our short pull to this first campsite, we've been sobered by the slowness of the surface. The sled runners would do no worse on sand than on the snow at these extreme temperatures. The tremendous pull on our harnesses has convinced us to pass up a planned route atop the icecaps at 1650 metres above sea level in favor of a lower corridor to Lake Hazen, site of the first of two food caches placed during the flight north.

The sun has gone down, but there is a lingering twilight which will stay with us through the "night." Mike and John are snoring; I can sleep through anything else.

3 April: I have a feeling of beginning to arrive here. I am no longer apprehensive; rather I feel a slow, reassuring adaptation to this environment and to the demands of the elements. We have been able to make up to 10 km per day across these northern fjords. In deep snow, we rotate the more onerous duties of trail breaker. As long as we're active, it's warm enough. We have rest-stops every two hours or so to reassemble and to snack for 10 minutes, or as long as the cold permits. Then, at the first feeling of bone chill, we must be off setting a frantic pace initially to generate warmth for the extremities. My nose has become slightly frost-nipped and I must sacrifice my fingers to the cold from time to time to rewarm it and to recover sensation there. At the slightest sign of warmth in our backs, we must either slow down or shed a layer of clothes. It is axiomatic for cold weather travel to sweat as little as possible; the subsequent chill on ceasing activity can be uncomfortable or much worse.

After eight to 10 hours of effort, we pick a site and lose no time in pitching the tent. The cook of the night dives in, arranges the sleeping mats, and gets our white-gas stove going with briefest delay. We will have no water for at least six weeks and must melt snow for all our needs. Tonight we're having a brew of hot chocolate followed by cream of asparagus soup and an entree of potato cheese casserole. The food is plain, but very welcome. Even more welcome is the faint warmth of the stove and of our companions in this small space. I am able to relax just a little and to take stock of my co-adventurers.

John Dunn is unquestionably the strongest of our number. We are becoming accustomed to the sight of him up ahead at the next headland or atop the next ridge, surveying for the best route forward. He is, as well, dragging an additional payload — a formidable array of photographic paraphernalia. Under the worst conditions in which I am happy just to continue forward momentum — when wind, cold, and sheer effort are exacting their due — I marvel to see John at work at the tripod optimising exposures to capture the dubious mood of the moment. He has single-minded resolve to complete this journey; I see him reaching out over the many weeks and hundreds of kilometres to come, striving to touch our destination at King Edward Point.





The Arctic is a land of contrasts — of light and dark, of harshness and beauty. Mike Sharp is fittingly a man of contrasts. He is slightly dishevelled and admirably immune to the dictates of fashion. He went through adolescence with the rest of the world in the '60s and retains some of the flavor. He looks as though he might be unaware of the day of the week, let alone the time of day. Not so. He has three watches on the go — one for each of Greenwich mean time, zone time, and sidereal time. He is the only member to have a hair brush in tow and the day is not begun without that ritual of grooming. He brings British efficiency to his packing. We see his smaller sack of personal gear and chide him for excessive minimalism; we then discover he has included no less than three toothbrushes. His golden hair and tanned face testify to his vocation as an expedition guide in Antarctica. An accomplished mountaineer, he shuns exercise for its own sake, but shows splendid fitness and endurance in the field. He is also a handyman of no small talent and

we are grateful for these skills in our isolated situation.

Bob France is the most recent addition to our team. This is his first trip to the Arctic but he has winter climbing and skiing experience in the Rockies. He has a doctorate in freshwater biology and a research interest in lake acidification. During our time on Ellesmere, he will be taking samples of snow and vegetation in an effort to determine to what degree this environment — apparently set apart from humanity — has in fact been tainted by its industrial fall-out,

Supper is a good time, a time we can let down our guard, laugh a little, and exchange stories of the trail. Afterwards we allow ourselves the luxury of burning the stove a short while longer, to write our journal entries, or to do some mending. When the flame is all-too-soon extinguished, we tumble out of the tent to pay our last respects to the day, then dive back in for the coziness of our sleeping bags. We hope our bladders will last the night through.





4 April:  $-31^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The first sign of life in a silent land. This canyon floor is riddled with fox trails, the slopes above showing trampled areas where arctic hare have found feeble pasture, and a ptarmigan whirs briefly above our heads. We feel very alone. We derive little comfort from the exhaust trails of intercontinental jets on the transpolar route. Four Amstels to go please and what movie are you showing on today's flight?

8 April: Our first day off. Mike and Bob are off to climb a 1050-metre ridge while John and I begin our ascent of a lower peak standing on its own beside a fjord. We ski as high as we are able and then scramble on loose rock to the broad summit. Neither of us can suppress his competitive drive in the final push and we sweat far too much. I am admiring the hazy expanse of the fjord beneath us and in the process supply foreground for John's pictures.

I notice his attention suddenly diverted and, following his steadfast gaze, am startled to see four adult muskoxen not 50 metres away. These are magnificent animals, superbly adapted to the arctic environment. Their full winter coat reaches almost to the ground. One is snorting, breath congealing in the air, a foreleg pawing the earth. With a weight of 340 kg, a humped spine, and large curved horns, they present a primordial image in this glaciated landscape. I have watched muskoxen for hours at a time in the arctic summer, admiring their ability to find sufficient forage. It is all the more incredible that they survive here in the winter, when temperatures can reach  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$  and the winds are punishing. Like the few other land mammals of the Arctic, they move in rhythm with the seasons; they spend these cold months in the high country, where the hardy dwarf willow has been exposed, before retreating to lower and more lush pasture for the brief summer. After several minutes they turn as one and negotiate a steep descent with surprising swiftness and agility. I reflect that for all the concerns about arctic sovereignty in the human domain there is little doubt as to whom this land really belongs.

10 April: Ten kilometres to the good today and not without a lot of "grunting," as we say. We have entered a long valley framed by high mountains and transected by several glaciers whose broad snouts we will have to traverse. We contended with a 60 km/h headwind which blew snow and grit into all crevices in our bulky apparel. Windproof suits, full goggles, and a neoprene face mask were definitely *de rigueur*. My moods are still swinging. I find it very difficult to get out of the precious comfort of my bag in the morning as the camp sets in motion. I am slower than the others to pack my sled and I sense some frustration on the part of Mike and John particularly. I am frustrated in turn when others fall back during the day when I've got a full head of steam going.

Yesterday, I had a feeling that this whole experience might offer nothing new — just a longer chapter in a pattern of self-denial and delayed gratification. I felt our relationships with one another were too shallow, too much rooted in stereotypically male ways, based on one-upmanship and bravado. Today there was a sense of drawing together to meet adversity. John and I spent a peaceable hour at day's end walking about near our camp. I am delighted to be "at large" in the Arctic and I am quietly optimistic about this team. I think we can probably make it.



12 April: The wind rattled the tent all night and continues furious today. Exposed skin is frosted in 30 seconds. It is difficult to walk upright at times and all excursions from the tent must be carefully planned and executed. We reinforce our windbreak of snow blocks and arrange the sleds in a tight ring around our precarious shelter. We read, circulating sections of our several books among us, and beseech our bowels to be still. A trip outside for that purpose is no picnic today.

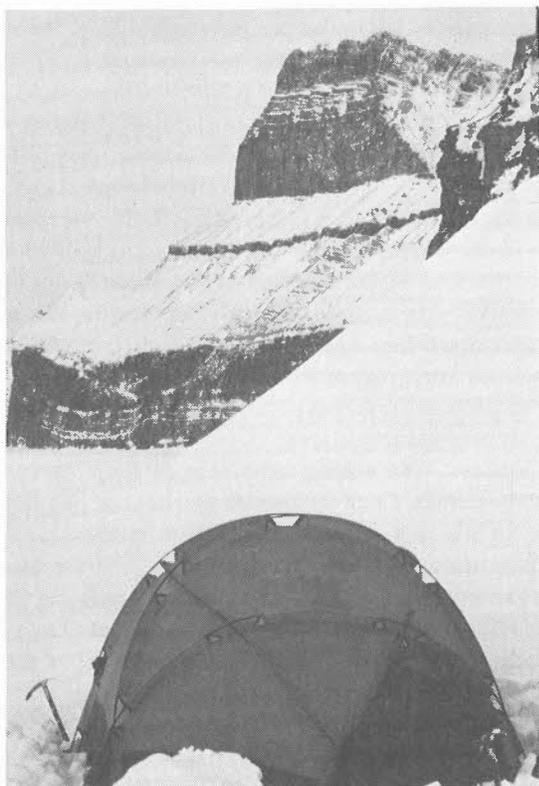
16 April:  $-23^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Since the storm abated, we have put in vigorous days crossing the glaciers. We have had to carry the sleds one by one over exposed rock on the glacial moraines to reach the ice surface. There we've exchanged our skis for crampons and have spent wild and woolly hours gaining the other side. The glacier surface is a sea of blue domes forming diminutive mountain chains separated by deep ravines. I do

my very best to get my load up to the crest of the steeper domes and I think that a recent rib fracture must surely break open again. The greatest worry — and the greatest thrill — is yet to come, however, as the sled finally tips towards the descent. It careers into a trough and rolls at will. I'm on the wrong end of a runaway roller coaster. All this is hard work and takes its toll on energy and equipment; a late night is foreseen rehabilitating boot gaiters and sled harnesses.

19 April: -25°C this morning. But the sun is above the horizon around the clock and we can feel its intensity grow day by day as it climbs higher in the southern sky during our sledging hours. I left camp last again today — by choice as I find I feel the land more on my own and stripped of competitive urges. We were able to ski clad only in long underwear and had the best lunch stop yet: boots off, down sleeping bags laid out to regain sorely missed loft, and a whole hour at leisure!

We are seeing arctic hare in greater numbers. Fully invested with thick white fur, they are large for their kind and browse in bands of up to 100. Fooled by their appearance in this land without perspective, previous explorers have sent landing parties to the tundra flush with the anticipation of a caribou hunt. Their dismay was tempered by marvel at the sight of these creatures racing away at great speed on their hind legs only.

26 April: "...a sharp turn brought in sight a scene which we shall all remember to our dying day. Before us was an immense ice-bound lake..." The American, Adolphus Greely, in April 1882, was the first white to glimpse Lake Hazen, largest lake in the world above the Arctic Circle, 78 km long and 11 km wide. We are no less impressed to be in this vast basin fringed to the north by endless high summits. Yesterday we collected the first food cache. It was -31°C while we repacked at the cabin which serves as a base for



summer tourism. It felt very cold in the deserted building with its silent heater and, far from being comforted by these signs of other humanity, I could not wait to leave. I did tarry long enough to frighten myself with a glance in a mirror. We all left letters and recorded tapes for people at home, to be retrieved later by a scientific party. It is a matter of faith, nothing very tangible, to reach out and know of the existence of home and loved ones. We have received no radio messages to date and have had difficulty transmitting our weekly position to the charter base.



One or two braver souls have had a very quick dip in the water of a small section of the major outlet, the Ruggles River, kept open by current year-round. I have to help Mike back into his clothes and pass up the dunking myself. We fish without success and are entertained by the antics of a curious arctic fox. Thus embarked on the second leg, our spirits are light even if our re-supplied sleds are anything but. We deplore only two things: garbage left here in this National Park Reserve by military personnel and the misdemeanor of one of us, identity unmentioned but never forgotten, who tracked a very personal mess back into the tent.

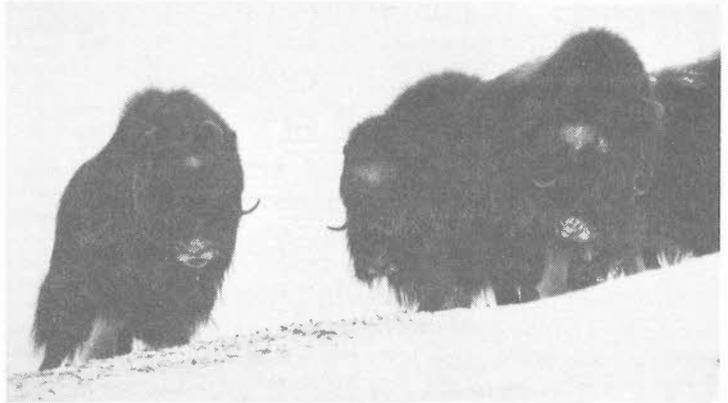
30 April: Another day into severe winds, difficult to make headway at times. The boundless Arctic shrinks to a small world inside the windsuit hood and behind the face mask. After only nine kilometres, we've had enough bashing ahead with diminishing returns and cede to nature's will, camping in a rare lee. In this fifth week, I'm suddenly hungry as never before — hungry before breakfast, hungry for lunch that can't come soon enough, and hungry at day's end. I capitulate and start eating my ration of salami at suppertime and 150 grams of margarine with lunch. Fifty-five hundred kilocalories of food daily no longer seem enough!

2 May: The new month has ushered in glorious weather. The sun shines unobstructed and reflects strongly from ice and snow. At -10°C, it is too hot in the sleeping bag at night. We cross paths at last with Lieut. Lockwood of the Greely expedition. He travelled over this same pass en route to becoming the first white to see the western side of Ellesmere Island. There is something very wonderful about retracing these steps taken so long ago in a land which has not changed — and to read the journals of those explorers written here as if it were yesterday. How undeserving of his fate was Lockwood; within a year, this robust sledger was dead, one of 19 victims to starvation in a party of 25.

We double-team the sleds over the divide onto the blue ice of Murray Lake. Travel is effortless on the near frictionless surface and we can hardly believe our backs and shoulders. Someone remarks that the experience is sensual and I think we certainly have been out here awhile!

In wanderings after supper, Mike stumbles across tent rings and wind shelters built by ancestors of the present-day Inuit. Then this was not Ellesmere but Umingmaknuna, land of the muskox. These structures have not likely been seen since the day they were abandoned many centuries ago and we feel awed and privileged to stand beside them.

5 May: Another morale booster. We have been joined by another southerner. The snow bunting is the harbinger of the arctic spring and we are lifted by its tireless song. The warm snow is quicker and it is not unusual for us to travel 15 to 17 km each day. This comes at the price of a rigid schedule and at this my mind sometimes rebels. Our self-imposed and unforgiving rhythm seems antithetical to a central appeal of this land for me — its profound timelessness. And yet I too am strongly compelled to move along, to put distance in



vard," a term explorers had for a narrow shelf of level ice between the land and the impassable pressure ice at sea. Polar bears too appreciate this convenient passage and we follow their prints much of the day, some fresh enough to discern the individual claw marks. We see where a bear has killed a seal and dragged it up to land for a meal; tracks of foxes and gulls blanket the bloodied site and all is right in the arctic world.

15 May: It has finally become too warm as we sledge past these historic headlands; my long underwear top has been a fixture for 46 straight days and nights, but must at last give way to a T-shirt.

Tensions in the group are at an all-time high. We are travelling in tight formation through polar bear territory and perhaps the company is too close. Bob is withdrawn. I bristle at John's back-seat cooking while I'm preparing supper. Tonight I miss home, easier times, and different faces. We retreat to our respective diaries.

21 May: Spirits are on the up again as we close to within a week's travel of our second food cache. We have switched to the night shift now in part for better photography and in part to avoid the heavy, wetter snow of midday. We arise at midnight, breakfast at 2 a.m., and finish sledging around noon, hoping to be in bed by 4 p.m.

Seals are sprinkled about the fjord ice, basking beside their breathing holes. Every 20 to 30 seconds, they raise their heads to scan for movement which might betray the presence of a polar bear. Crossing Dobbin Bay, John stops suddenly while in the lead and I know at once he has spotted a bear. We approach to within a kilometre and, through our binoculars, observe her nursing twin cubs. At length, she sees us and curiosity brings her to within 200 metres. At last she catches our strong scent from upwind and turns in a flash, with her cubs in bounding pursuit. All but John are relieved — he wanted better pictures.

26 May: After a long day's slog in deep snow, we've reached Norman Cockyer Island. Our tent is perched high above the sea on a natural rock platform on the island's east end. It is our most idyllic setting to date and we have less time than usual to enjoy it. I can't resist sacrificing sleep to climb 300 metres to the summit of the island. The view is astoundingly beautiful. I can see a series of capes receding to the northern horizon, marking our travel of the past week. Glaciers flow down from the mountains and spill into ice-choked fjords. Each valley and each mountain beckons; they all have their own stories and all beg to be explored. I lean



Photo by John Dunn

while the going is good, to finish what is started — and, for the most part, I am happily absorbed in the whole endeavor.

9 May: A lay-over day in white-out conditions. I find lolling about in the tent much more taxing than hauling the sled. I'd like to wax more expansive in my journal writing, but only feel stultified and sapped of creative energy. We are paradoxically more hungry than on active days; John, true to form, is fullspeed-ahead on the chocolate, a week and more beyond his rations.

13 May: Eureka! Back down to the eastern seacoast after a week's sledging along a spectacular glacial highway likely never before travelled. The frozen channel is fissured by ribbons of open water and, on the far side, we see the icecap of Greenland. Progress is excellent along the "arctic boule-

contented against a cairn built 115 years ago and still very solid. The British ships had been detained here by fast ice; below me on that 9 August "all hands turned out in the evening on the smooth floe for a game of football" played with "utter disregard for all orthodox rules." I want to run down and join in.

30 May: Some 650 km and 60 days from Cape Columbia, we have arrived on the shores of the Flagler Bay polynya, a small area in the sea kept open year-round by tidal forces. It is time at last for a two-day rest.

We explore stone structures — tent rings, fox traps, and meat caches — left by the Thule people, forebears of the Inuit. Native cultures were drawn to this oasis of maritime life; immense whale vertebrae lie bleaching amongst the rocks as they have done for centuries. Hundreds of common and king eiders fill the air with their calls as they float on the polynya. We take time to write letters and to gather strength for the final push. I take inventory of our medical status: strained backs, bruised feet, "tennis elbow" from repeated poling, hand dermatitis with drying and cracking, heel blisters, facial impetigo, the residue of earlier frost-nip to nose and earlobes. Bob had had an alarming eye infection, but we have otherwise had little cause to resort to the medical kit. Our equipment is

claimed Ellesmere for the King of Norway and its sovereignty was indeed in doubt until as late as 1930. Sverdrup had been enormously successful, despite the loss of his 32-year-old doctor, Johan Svendsen. Svendsen had died alone of a heart attack in the tent at Fort Juliana almost 91 years ago to the day. Sverdrup ruefully remarked that the doctor was the only man out of the 16-member party who had not had a physical examination prior to their departure. Fort Juliana lies some 12 km across the fjord and off our course and I decide to devote my sleeping hours to searching for the site.

I feel very alone and vulnerable during the crossing, but mounting excitement draws me forward. On the other side, I spend an hour or so with a photograph from Sverdrup's book in hand, trying to line up the profile of the backdrop ridges with the contours before me. This looks about right and there are telltale fragments of old metal in the snow. And yes, here it is — the tent perimeter outlined by gravel mounds. A rush of recognition, exaltation, a sense even of coming home, so close do I feel to this party of explorers. Artifacts are scattered on the floor of the site: a penknife, a metal file, a button — here where "we have spent so many happy hours and where for so long we have had our second



worse for wear. Bob and I have each had a boot fall apart at the toe; Mike has been cobbler on the spot with screws and strapping. They will have to last another 500 km.

3 June: We are able to make more than 20 km daily on Hayes Fjord, despite our newly replenished sleds. As we camp for the night beside a much fractured tide-water glacier, I face a difficult decision. I have longed to discover the site of Fort Juliana, inland headquarters of the Norwegian expedition of 1898 to 1902 in its first year on Ellesmere. This scientific expedition, led by Otto Sverdrup, covered much of the uncharted coastline of the island with sleds and dogs. It

home." I sit for a while at the entrance, trying to grasp the passage of time. I wonder about my fascination with this bit of history. There is magic in this — as if one were to read of Narnia or Oz and then walk through a hidden door oneself to find they actually exist. They were here and lived their very physical lives with a passion that we are experiencing for ourselves in the same land. They are gone now and that is my fate also. Yet something tangible remains of their passing and they are alive for me; perhaps the part of me that fears death finds comfort in this. I leave with regret, with gratitude, and with a sense of spiritual lightness.

12 June: We have crested the highest point of the trip at 1260 metres above sea level and have been skirting the inland icecap to the west side of the island. This is our third day of high winds and blowing snow; I think I was more comfortable in the calm cold of April. It's too cold to stop to eat much during the day. Progress is hard won. More than once, we've had to lunge for supplies blown out of the sled or torn from our hands. We've not been exactly sure where we are and today we made a serious mistake. The spindrift had settled with a lull in the wind, visibility was good, and we began to take our bearings. As we neared a ridge, we had allowed ourselves to become separated. The wind hit and we had lost Mike. I could just make out John's huddled form at 50 metres and struggled towards him, taking care not to lose Bob behind me. It was a very long 10 minutes before Mike appeared from out of the uniform white. We had been lucky — survival must be earned in such circumstances.

We helped each other into warmer clothing and proceeded on foot, as it was impossible to stay erect in the skis. The windsuit hood beat in my ear like a loose sail. The figure in front of me fell on his side and for a moment when I thought the will to go on hung in the balance, he didn't move. Now in the tent everything is damp. It is difficult to bring myself to leave our shelter to take the ultraviolet measurements we are performing for Environment Canada. In the morning, snow will be halfway up the tent door; our boots will have to be shovelled out of the snow and then emptied of drift. We look forward to a calm when at last we can burn the toilet paper we've been collecting in plastic bags for several days now.

18 June: 10°C and the storm is put behind us. We are camped by a small polynya in Makinson Inlet. Spring is turning to summer and arctic life is in a growth spurt. Seals are plentiful. Bird life is bewilderingly rich. We have seen snowy owls, gyrfalcons, jaegers, and geese. We share this islet with innumerable arctic terns recently arrived from the Antarctic and just beginning their courtship rituals and selecting nest sites on the tundra. Purple saxifrage and arctic poppy flourish beside the tent.

Sledging is a wet affair. We have been up to our knees in melt pools on the fjord surface while our sleds float merrily behind. We reflect that underwater skiing might not catch on elsewhere.

On dry land and in this fair weather it seems as good a time as any to use our biodegradable soap for the first occasion in 81 days; I'm afraid, however, my tangled hair is beyond the help of all but scissors.

25 June: Elation! We have crested the southernmost icecap and before us unfolds the panorama of Jones Sound and the south Ellesmere coast. We have one more glacier to descend, and two or three days' travel across fast-melting sea ice will bring us to the abandoned RCMP post at Craig Harbor. Thence it is but one further outing to southernmost Ellesmere at King Edward Point. We sleep in the open on the glacial ice, our long-coveted destination before us.

29 June: King Edward Point. Our 92nd day from Cape Columbia with 1160 km behind us. There is an eroding remnant of ice clinging to the bedrock cliffs and sharply undercut by the waves. The glittering blue sea stretches before us; we have made it here none too early.

Kittiwakes and murrens dive for food. Occasionally, one or two walrus swim by and the calm is punctuated by their explosive breathing. We send a radio message of our success to the south and take the obligatory photographs at what we have studiously determined to be the most southerly bit of rock.

I don't feel a profound sense of accomplishment, but I do feel satisfied and light-hearted. I have some regret that we are not closer together at the completion of our journey. I think all would agree that living and working so close together over this length of time has posed a greater challenge than the terrain or weather we have faced.

I sense our journeys have been in some ways separate; we have been drawn to the experience for very personal reasons. I love the sheer length and breadth of this land, its ruggedness and its diversity — a place not defined by potential usefulness to humanity, but which simply continues to exist for itself.

It is a land where both doing and being may be indulged to the fullest. It demands a vigorous will, but can accommodate a contemplative spirit. Often I have felt an inner conflict between wanting to do everything, to climb each peak and to see all possible views, and wanting just to sit and admire the rhythms of life here. There are the few precious times when the doing and the being are fused, both desires satisfied in the moment. Those times are why I'll come back to Ellesmere.



Graeme Magor is a 36-year-old occupational health physician who lives on the Rocky Saugeen River near Owen Sound. He owes his love of wilderness to his father who took him canoeing in early years in Algonquin and de la Verendrye parks. He is a member of the Canadian triathlon team and is active year-round in the outdoors but knows no greater joy than to be "in harness" over arctic terrain. A particular interest is the study of sites related to Caucasian exploration of the Canadian High Arctic; he has made five trips to Ellesmere Island with a focus on the Sverdrup expedition of 1898-1902.



## BOARD ACTIVITIES

(This column is intended to keep WCA members up to date on the activities and decisions of their Board of Directors occurring prior to the *Nastawgan* deadline.)

After a summer of activities more directly related to canoeing, the Board reconvened on the rainy Sunday morning of the Fall Meeting, 27 September. With the good turnout for the Algonquin Park meeting, the success of the "outdoor" format for the Fall Meetings seems established. Many thanks to Herb Pohl for organizing this one. The venue was excellent, the weather, at least on Saturday, co-operative, and Dan and Reg McGuire, our featured speakers, left us with a number of thoughts to ponder on the subject of preparedness for disaster in the wilderness.

Whether or not the Board was idle over the summer, the membership seems to have been active. Since the time of the last report our numbers have swelled to 636, a tribute to sound financial management by our committees and the *Nastawgan* editor. Our treasurer reports that the WCA finances are in good shape. Plans are proceeding for the coming Winter Meeting / AGM at Mansfield Outdoor Centre in February, and Bob Shortill (phone (705) 277-3538) has undertaken to research sites for next year's Fall Meeting. He would welcome calls from anyone willing to help organize it. Pat Buttigieg (phone (416) 831-3554) is organizing our participation in the '93 Outdoor Canada Show and Canoe Expo — again, volunteer help would be welcome.

A major preoccupation of the Board at this time is to determine whether or not the WCA will participate as a "major intervener" at the class environmental assessment of small hydro projects in Ontario. The damming of rivers and streams is clearly an issue of fundamental importance to the WCA but involvement at this level of magnitude is not a step to be underestimated. Under the co-ordination of John Hackert, Richard Culpeper, and Dale Miner, it would require the formation of a coalition of like-minded groups such as ORCA, Canoe Ontario, etc., and a major commitment of time, energy, and funds. As the dollars involved to take the process through an environmental hearing would probably reach six figures, our participation at this level would only be practical with "intervener funds" allocated to worthy and proven-interest groups. Stay tuned for future developments.

The present membership structure of single and family-unit classes will be continued, and fees will remain at \$25 and \$35 respectively. It was found that last year's Board resolution to adopt one class of membership is null and void owing to the failure to follow the prescribed procedure for amending the Constitution. (Another Charlottetown Agreement bites the dust). Recognizing that some members had expressed a preference for the existing structure, the Board felt no desire to change it.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy holiday season. See you at the WCA Symposium and the Winter Meeting / AGM.

Bill King

## CANDIDATES FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*The following are the platforms for candidates for the 1993 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 1993.*

### CATHY GRIM

As a member of the WCA for the last 10 years, I have gained valuable experience and met many new friends. In the past I have organized trips, participated in workshops, and arranged the WCA booth at the Sportsmen's Show. Now I would like to contribute as a member of the Board. I believe the club should present a forum for like-minded people with common interests to participate in canoeing and outdoor activities while sharing accumulated knowledge and interests. As well as being an integral part of this process, I think that *Nastawgan* is, in itself, a very good publication, and therefore I support any necessary investments that will ensure the standard of quality that has been achieved.

### PAUL HAMILTON

I wish to run for the Board of Directors to contribute to the managing of this great association of ours. I have belonged to the WCA for a number of years and wish to return some of the benefits I have received over the years. I believe the club should be involved, either individually or as a group, in environmental issues as they affect the wilderness and canoeing. The trend towards small Hydro projects is particularly worrisome and the club should be involved.

### DUNCAN TAYLOR

I've enjoyed my two years on the Board and would like your support for another term. I like the way the club has been run and would continue with:

- a lively outings program with high standards of safety and a balance of trips of different kinds and difficulty;
- encouragement for members to provide instructional workshops and learning opportunities on trips;
- ensuring the editor has the support and funds needed to continue putting out a top-quality journal;
- ensure the WCA is active in environmental issues important to wilderness canoeing, particularly the preservation of canoe routes from development of small hydro waterpower sources in Ontario.

## WATERWAY PROVINCIAL PARKS

Would you like to see your favorite river designated as a waterway provincial park? Now is your chance. Only 45% of the MNR quota for waterway provincial parks has been met. The ministry is presently preparing a list of candidate park sites and wants input from WCA members. This is a golden opportunity to do something concrete to preserve our rivers. Call or write Bryan Buttigieg (1904 Spruce Hill Road, Pickering, Ontario, L1V 1S7; (416) 831-3554) with the name(s) of the river(s) on your list. We are trying to get a preliminary response to the MNR by late January, so make contact soon.

## THE LILIES AND THE LILY-EATERS

Long-time readers of *The Raven* will know that we have a special interest in the orchids of Algonquin. This interest stems not only from their extreme beauty, but also from the fact that most of our orchids are rather rare. This adds a special challenge to orchid hunting and makes us much more inclined to stop and admire them when we are lucky enough to find one.

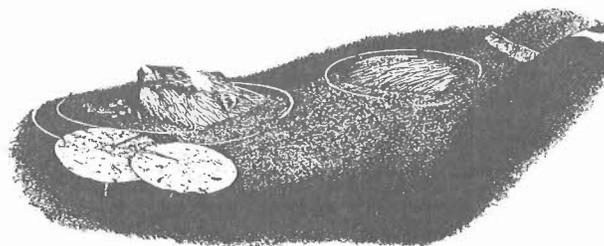
It also means that orchids have what is perhaps an unfair advantage in the popularity contest with other, much more common flowers that we tend to take for granted. The fact is that many flowers we see each day are every bit as beautiful as our orchids, are just as fascinating in the ways they are adapted to live in the Park environment, and — simply because they are so common — are far more important to wildlife than all of our 35 species of orchids put together.

You don't have far to look to see a perfect example of what we mean. In fact, all you have to do is go for a short paddle in a sheltered bay or a meandering stream, and the chances are excellent that you will soon see dozens, if not hundreds, of water-lilies. Basically, we have two kinds — those with white blossoms, and those with yellow. The white ones are at their peak late July (although you should keep in mind that the flowers are closed up by mid-afternoon), and the yellow ones will be coming into full bloom a bit later on. In either case, the flowers are, if anything, even more spectacular than our Park orchids, and for this reason alone are well worth a close look.

But water-lilies have much more than their blossoms to attract our interest. To begin with, they have evolved unique features which enable them to prosper in what, to most plants, are totally formidable conditions. Since water-lilies grow in moderately deep water they don't have to contend with shade from overhead trees. However, the waters they grow in are often so heavily stained that little sunlight reaches the bottom and there is usually so little oxygen that life would be difficult in any case. The obvious solution to both problems is to send leaves up into the air from the bottom of the pond, but this would mean investing a lot of energy in the growth of strong supporting stems. Water-lilies have achieved the most economical possible way of getting their leaves to the bright sunlight and rich oxygen of the air by having leaves that float on the surface. This sounds simpler than it is because the leaves of most plants breathe through pores on their lower surfaces. Perhaps not surprisingly, the pores of water-lily leaves are found exclusively on the upper surface — so they can get oxygen directly from the air after all. Water-lilies do have other, rather special problems like getting air down to their roots (solved by special tubes in the leaf stems), and having to store enough energy in their rootstocks every summer so they will be able to send new leaves all the way up to the surface the following spring to replace the ones destroyed by winter ice. In spite of all these obstacles, and as anyone who has done any canoe-tripping in the Park can tell you, water-lilies are spectacularly successful — being found just about everywhere.

As a consequence of their abundance and obvious prosperity, it is only normal that water-lilies are important to wildlife. Of course, it is almost a cliché that frogs use lily pads as hunting platforms and every fisherman knows that bass like to lurk under their protective cover, but even more important is the use of water-lilies by a whole host of lily-eaters. The fact that lily pads almost always show signs of being chewed on by small insects gives us a hint of the high nutritional value of water-lilies. This suspicion is confirmed by the fact that Indians used the seeds and rootstocks as food, and by the fact that moose spend much of the summer browsing on lily pads, their flowers, and stems. Also, they have even been reported to dive as deep as 18 feet to get at the rootstocks.

The most interesting of all the lily-eaters, however, is the beaver. Now, as everyone knows, the popular image of a beaver is one of an animal that cuts down trees and eats bark. Well, this picture is accurate in the fall, but throughout the summer generally, beavers in Algonquin hardly ever go near trees, let alone cut them down. Instead, they stay in their ponds and live almost entirely on aquatic vegetation — of which by far the most important item is water-lilies (flowers and all). The relationship between the beaver and water-lilies is particularly interesting because in many cases it is the beaver which creates suitable habitat for water-lilies in the first place (by damming up a pond for itself). It is almost as if the beaver were an unintentional farmer.



What is more, beavers often spread water-lilies in their ponds by accidentally dropping or discarding pieces of rootstock they have dug up elsewhere in the pond. All this has considerable, if unintended, importance to the beaver because it means the beaver can spend the entire summer eating nutritious, easily obtainable food right within the safe confines of its pond, and it does not have to risk the danger of wolves by going out on land to cut down trees. Also, we have never yet heard of a beaver that was squashed by a falling lily pad.

We humans may not benefit from water-lilies as much as beavers do but this is no reason to take them for granted. They may be common, and they may happen not to be orchids, but they have to be among Algonquin's most fascinating flowers all the same.

Reprinted from *The Raven*, courtesy of Ministry of Natural Resources.

## CANOE WINTERLUDE IN FLORIDA

David Beard

So you're sitting home, freezing through another Canadian winter and dreaming about the ever-so-distant canoe season. Well, fear not! Great canoeing is not as far away as you think. You can escape to the sunny south to satisfy that paddling urge. Canadians retreat to Florida every winter en masse. This does not mean you will be cramped, rather the contrary is true. At this time of year all the tourists flock to the coastal beaches and Disneyland. The locals avoid the woods in droves (it's winter for god's sake, too cold!). You will probably have the wilder areas to enjoy in solitude.

Florida not only boasts open water 12 months of the year, it also contains one of the highest concentrations of freshwater springs in the world. This makes for cool, clear, clean water and reliable water levels all year long. There is also enough water and space available to insure seclusion. Most of the rivers are fairly short, easy, and swift flowing, lending themselves well to family trips. Longer duration trips are possible but overnight and day trips are more numerous. During a recent holiday I canoed seven rivers in five days and squeezed in the Okefenokee Swamp on the sixth.

Our trip began on *COLDWATER CREEK* in northwestern Florida. After driving straight through from Milton, Ontario, we arrived in Milton, Florida, about noon local time. Despite the jet-lag we were eager to get started and our outfitter had us on the water within thirty minutes.

Coldwater Creek is a fast-flowing, spring-fed creek that flows through the Blackwater State Forest before joining up with the Blackwater River. Because it flows through a state forest it is undeveloped along its length, with only the occasional forest-access road crossing it. The creek is quite typical of the area, flowing swiftly through mature pine forest. It is very curvy with huge white-sand sandbars lining almost every wide bend. These are ideal picnicking and sunbathing spots and would also make great campsites on a longer trip. The river bottom is almost pure gravel and wading is easy and refreshing. Because of the swift current (4-6 km/h) this can be accomplished as a leisurely float trip. We finished our trip by six o'clock and camped in the outfitter's campground, deserted except for some dedicated fishermen from Texas.

For our second day we selected the more remote *SWIFTWATER/JUNIPER CREEK* combination. We first had to convince our disbelieving outfitter that we didn't mind the occasional "lift-over" or "stobs" (that's blowdown and stumps) that we were likely to encounter and were thus probably the first people to canoe the creek that year. The Sweetwater/Juniper flows through a more diverse ecosystem than the pine forest of the previous day with a much more overgrown, jungle-type feeling to it. The creeks themselves were quite similar though, swift, spring-fed rivers with beautiful wide sandbars and many curves. An interesting feature of this creek is its high, steep banks ("cliffs" according to

locals) of colorful clay. The scenery is very distracting but the river demands your attention because of its deceptively fast current and endless curves. The canoe gods smiled and we were lucky enough to experience all this under a clear sky and a warm sun.

Our third destination was the even more remote *ECONFINA CREEK*. The creek has a well-deserved reputation as one of the most attractive streams in Florida. It contains numerous springs and wildlife abounds. Our real adventure on this particular excursion proved to be getting there. I turned off the main highway (always a questionable tactic) and discovered that the Baja desert had been relocated to north-central Florida, probably on vacation such as ourselves. Past the endless expanse of pine trees we had been driving through was an equally endless expanse of sand (we're talking major Sahara action here, folks). Our beleaguered station wagon was successfully straddling some 25-cm ruts in the "road" when we came upon a skidder attempting to free a fully loaded logging truck. Of course any sane human being would have taken this as a bad sign. I reasoned that since the truck didn't get stuck until this point the road beyond must be navigable. Besides, my confidence was bolstered by the proximity of a rescue vehicle.



The two men working to free the logging truck advised that I could make it through if I simply kept to the right. I then proceeded to bury the car up to both axles in silicon. Luckily there was a skidder handy. He evacuated us for the price of a laugh ('I didn't mean *that* far right') and we returned to the safety of the main highway, tail between our legs. Borrowing the use of a phone from a (somewhat) nearby house I contacted the outfitter and he agreed to pick us up at the main road. Expecting another skidder or a monster 4x4 at least, the outfitter arrived in a four-colored, 15-year-old station wagon. From hell. 'The secret is to drive real fast', our driver confided as the trees turned into a blur of green past my window. I pried my hands from the dashboard and we were able to begin our trip.

After rediscovering religion on the ride in, the tranquility of the Econfina was even more soothing. The exposed rock of the riverside revealed strange geological formations

that resembled giant Swiss cheese, or an ant farm with interconnecting tunnels. These formations are visible along most of the river, especially where the banks are steep. A strong current allowed for another leisurely paddle. The water here was somewhat darker than the previous creeks but still cold and very clear. The Econfina has a couple of very large and spectacular springs that dump aquamarine water far out into the main river flow. We stopped and enjoyed one of these springs for lunch and a swim. The warm afternoon sun allowed for perfect bird-watching for the rest of our trip.

Our outfitter met us at the take-out with, true to form, a 20-year-old pick-up truck whose bed had been converted into an open bus. This provided us with yet another opportunity to savor the sweetness of life and reflect upon the importance of religion. We were dropped off at our car intact, but shaking.



A couple of more hours in the car through one of the least densely populated areas of the state brought us to our fourth destination, Wakulla Springs State Park south of Tallahassee. The springs themselves are believed to be the world's largest freshwater spring and are definitely worth seeing. It has been the subject of National Geographic expeditions and has also served as a movie location for 'Creature From the Black Lagoon' and many of the Tarzan films. A veritable paradise of wildlife, the area is teeming with turtles, ducks, coots, osprey, alligators, and rare birds like the limpkin and the anhinga. Canoeing is not permitted inside the park itself, but it is possible, and very worthwhile, to canoe up the *WAKULLA RIVER* to the park's boundary. If you time this properly it is even possible to take advantage of the incoming and outgoing tides. It was here that we canoed past our first alligators. We saw about a dozen ranging from 1-3 metres. Most were busy sunning themselves on the banks and we could cruise by silently without them moving. Some were floating at the surface. These ones would usually just sink down into the water as we approached.

The river is also frequented by manatees and if the water is warm enough you may see one of these friendly giants dwarf your canoe as it swims over to meet you.

The birding offered was incredible. We passed eight active osprey nests and enjoyed more of the rare limpkins and the strange-looking anhingas.

The river is bounded by swampy terrain of predominantly bald cypress trees but magnolia and palm trees are common as well.

The *ICHETUCKNEE RIVER* flows into the Santa Fe

River from Ichetucknee Springs State Park east of Gainesville. It is a must-see on any trip to the area. Its stunning primordial beauty and numerous springs contribute to make it perhaps the most spectacular river in the South. It is a short trip but can be extended by including the *SANTA FE*. The springs are a constant 23°C all year and are gin-clear. Three metres and three centimetres appear equal as you watch fish swim along the bottom of the riverbed. This park is crowded during the summer season but again we had the park to ourselves and encountered no one. The Santa Fe is a big, wide river and windy conditions are the norm. Winter rains usually swell the Suwanee downstream and even cause the water to pile up on the Santa Fe. Strong winds here can make for some tough sledding .

Swinging northwards home we decided to include a stopover at the *OKEEFENOKEE SWAMP*. "Swamp" is a bit deceiving as the water is anything but standing or stagnant. The water, colored like dark tea due to the tannins from the cypress trees that predominate the swamp, flows steadily into the Suwanee and St. Mary's rivers. The Okeefenokee presents a truly unique ecosystem on an enormous scale. Huge prairies of sawgrass, reeds, and seemingly endless cypress trees support the native population of alligators, snakes, turtles, birds, and other abundant wildlife. One could easily spend a week's holiday here but we had to settle for an afternoon.

Alligators are common here and we saw a dozen in only four hours. Visitors during mid-March (alligator's mating season) will also have the opportunity to hear the bulls serenade the females. This occurs at night while you are safely bunked on your designated sleeping platforms. It is one of those sounds you must experience to fully appreciate. This park is very popular and if you intend to camp here you must plan it and make reservations. The visitor's centre at the Folkston, Georgia, entrance (east side) is also worth seeing if you have either the time or the inclination. It contains numerous displays and exhibits about the park's geology, history, and its plant and wildlife.



A trip this far afield of course requires some planning. Fortunately the Florida Department of Tourism is excellent. A request for a listing of canoe outfitters and liveries providing shuttle service is quickly answered. They are quite affordable and not very busy in winter, their off-season. Unfortunately, travellers are advised against leaving cars unattended in rural Florida so a livery service is a good idea.

A sub-tropical canoe trek may be the perfect cure for those midwinter blues. Instead of your usual Caribbean vacation consider a paddling holiday. It's a great way to await ice-out in Canada.

The following letter concerns a serious issue regarding the future of Algonquin Park:

Ad Hoc Committee to  
**SAVE ALGONQUIN PARK**

R.R. #1, Dwight, Ontario P0A 1H0  
 (705) 635-2330

October 5, 1992

Mr. Howard Goldblatt  
 20 Dundas St. W.  
 Suite 1130  
 Toronto, Ontario  
 M5G 2G8

Dear Howard,

Thank you for asking us to comment on your 1992 draft agreement concerning recreational hunting by the Golden Lake band in Algonquin Park and the rest of their land claim area.

We make the following fundamental points:

**1. There is no need for a hunting agreement at all.**

Ontario is not obliged to accede to the Golden Lake demands for special privileges anywhere in its land claim area because:

- (a) the band does not have valid title to the lands in question (refer to the federal government and our Information Bulletin No. 4), and
- (b) the band does not have valid aboriginal hunting (or fishing) rights in Algonquin Park or the rest of its claim area. In our forthcoming Bulletin No. 5, we will apply the reasoning used by the Supreme Court of Canada in its Sparrow Decision to show that the Golden Lake Band would fail all three of the Court's "tests" for establishing that it had existing aboriginal rights in 1982. As you know, the Supreme Court explicitly pointed out that Section 35 of the 1982 Constitution recognizes and affirms only rights that existed in 1982 and that it "*does not revive extinguished rights*".

**2. There is no need to involve Algonquin Park.**

Even if the points made above were not true and the Golden Lake band really did have a valid aboriginal right to hunt and fish for "*food or ceremonial purposes*", there would still be no reason to agree to their demands to hunt in Algonquin Park. It is obvious that band members could have got all 175 deer they wanted (not to mention the smaller number they actually took in 1991) from that part of their claim area that lies outside the Park. (As you know, the deer hunt on these lands last year took over 13,000 animals and 175 more would not be noticed.) The same argument also applies to moose, albeit to a lesser extent given that animal's more restricted range.

**3. There is no need for the Algonquin Park hunting area to be so large.**

Finally, even if one were to completely ignore the reasoning under points 1 and 2 above, there is no way to justify opening up fully 43% of Algonquin Park to hunting by the Golden Lake band as last year's agreement did (and this year's agreement apparently will as well). As you know, hunting, by both aboriginals and non-aboriginals, continued in Clyde and Bruton townships (5% of Algonquin's area) after they were added to the Park in 1961. Although hunting will be phased out there by the year 2010 (in response to a process of true public consultation), for the moment almost 800 people hunt there every year on a sustained yield basis. This raises an important question. If 800 aboriginal and non-aboriginal hunters can supply their food needs on a conservationally sound basis in 5% of the Park, why do 40-50 hunters from Golden Lake need their own, separate area covering almost half of Algonquin?

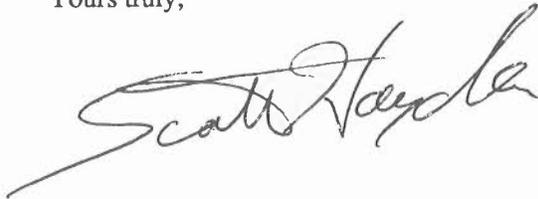
The answer, of course, is that they do not need it. Our sad conclusion is that the band's real reason for wanting so much of the "Park" to hunt in is that it is one more step towards the realization of their self-declared aim (to use the words of Greg Sarazin, their chief negotiator) *"to take over control and administration of Algonquin Park for their economic benefit"*.

In conclusion, we are very pessimistic that you will be able to negotiate an agreement that could reconcile the Golden Lake agenda for Algonquin Park with the lack of historical and legal justifications for what they are demanding, not to mention with the implacable public opposition to these plans. We realize that litigation was not the government's first option but we see no other realistic way of reaching some sort of settlement that might be accepted by both sides. We therefore urge you and the Government to pursue an appropriate court case using the historical and legal information we have been making available to you.

We will not comment on the details of your proposed hunting agreement because they are of such little consequence compared to the fundamental questions we have raised here.

Thank you again for soliciting our opinion and please accept our wishes for good luck in your work.

Yours truly,



Scott Hayden  
Chairman

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## ALGONQUIN PARK NEWS

### LINDA LAKE SNOWSHOE ROUTE

As part of Algonquin Park's Centennial Celebrations for 1993, an eight-kilometre snowshoe route to Linda Lake has been opened for interior winter campers. The route starts from the parking lot of the Minnesing Trail which has been expanded to accommodate both skiers and overnight snowshoers. Linda Lake is reached via Canisbay Lake and a series of open muskogs and beaver meadows interconnected by nine trails cut through a scenic evergreen forest.

This new direct route allows snowshoers to reach Canisbay and Linda lakes without travelling on the ski trails or following a circuitous and hilly course through the Canisbay Campground. The entrance is located just to the right of the Minnesing Ski Trail adjacent to the parking lot vault privies. The trail joins the Canisbay Day Use road after 444 metres and turns left following the road and reaches the lake at 1345 metres north of Canisbay Lake; all woodland trails on this route are marked in both directions by bright orange rectangular tags.

Linda Lake provides the most direct access to Burnt Island Lake and to the central interior wilderness zone of Algonquin Park. It is also possible to travel west via Owl, Raven, Bruce, and Source lakes to the old Park Museum parking lot on Highway 60. This parking lot is ploughed

during the winter and is located 3.5 km west of the Minnesing Trail parking lot.

Permits are required for interior use. These may be obtained along with the new snowshoe route map at the East and West Gate Park Offices and at the Minnesing Trail entrance.

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### TRANS-ALGONQUIN SNOWSHOE EXPEDITION

As part of Algonquin Park's 1993 Centennial, a winter snowshoe expedition using heated tents has been planned to traverse the park from Brent to the new Park Museum on Hwy 60. Several historic ranger winter patrol routes will be followed. The trip will start the last week in January or the first week in February and will take two weeks. Anyone interested in participating in this trip and who is in good physical shape to undertake hard work should contact Craig Macdonald, (613) 637-2780 (bus.) or (705) 635-3416 (home).

# SOMETHING DIFFERENT, A Hudson Bay Adventure

George Small

The summer before, we had completed a canoe trip down the Aqutuk River which flows into the Sutton and on down into Hudson Bay, west of Cape Henrietta Maria in northern Ontario. That was a fishing expedition, going after speckled trout, with no challenge from the river or mild rapids. One of the participants expressed regret at a lack of any real excitement.

As the person who knew the area and had been there several times, I suggested an encore: go down the Sutton to enjoy its fabulous fishing, then follow the coast west on the Bay, and end up at the then village of Winisk, several miles upriver, where there was also a landing strip. A weekly plane brought supplies and mail to the Native band. Paddling along the coast would be different.

So it was that six of us gathered mid-August 1982 to fly into the headwaters of the Sutton. As is typical of my summer vacation trips, we had a diversity of experience, meaning that by necessity there were varied capabilities, though everyone was superbly compatible. There would be six of us: a couple, their son, two other boys, and myself, middle-aged. Our group had enjoyed one trip together, and all welcomed the challenge of coursing through the brooding, restless waters of the Hudson Bay.

As guide, I was fulfilling an insatiable ambition to go ever further back into the beyond, trying new horizons. The prospects of sighting caribou, walrus, whales, and even polar bear indulged our fantasies. At that point in time I'd spent over a year of my life on canoe trips in northern Ontario, from Temagami north through the James Bay watershed and areas west of Cape Henrietta Maria. Our pace would be moderate, and all presumed risks avoided. And yes, I had even spent several days travelling the coastline two years before. I thought we were prepared; as it turned out, it was another world from the one I'd experienced previously.

On the five-hour flight north, the Native pilot covered in depth the problems we might encounter. The previous fall, a Cree and his family became windbound on the coast for thirty days, and the Canadian government finally helicoptered them out. We were taking extra supplies, a shotgun and shells for geese, and a gill net. We discussed the moods of the Bay, the danger of sudden off-shore winds, the variable tides, and the need to find fresh water. But the main concern of our pilot was the prevalence of polar bears which congregate along the coastline in the warm summer months to forage for food. We were cautioned about walking too far from our campsite, as these magnificent animals tend to rest and sleep in shallow depressions, making them difficult to spot from afar, even though the land, flat and devoid of trees and brush, appears empty.

Our trip down the Sutton followed a happy and relaxed pace. Up at the first hint of light, we would put on the pots to boil, then eat a hearty breakfast topped off with quantities of delicately-tasting, pink-fleshed trout fillets. Packing up

and breaking camp, we then idled away hours drift fishing, interrupted only by a relaxing cold shore lunch on a sunny grassy knoll, often splashed by a colorful spectrum of wild flowers.

Weather conditions remained favorable as the days drifted by. Imperceptibly the river widened, and the depth increased. Schools of fish, startled by the shadows of our canoes, were often visible, darting off to safety. We soon learned that the small tributary streams gushing into the river were prime spots for our lures, inevitably inviting a sudden and explosive response. One day we lost count after landing more than one hundred twenty trout, with only a very few weighing less than two pounds.

Remarkably, the swift current continued to prod us on at an ever-faster pace, and as the miles slipped by, we began to think ahead to the imponderables of the Bay.



Approaching the delta area, there was a subtle change in scenery. The forest gradually thinned out and then the first patches of open land appeared. Soon we hit a maze of low, treeless islands and a myriad of channels that demanded the utmost care in following the main current, otherwise drawing us into impenetrable sand-clogged byways. Ahead, broad vistas of sweeping green meadows gave way to an endless horizon of blue water. Huge flocks of Canadian and Snow geese wheeled and traded across their feeding grounds. The vast and lonely barrens finally were upon us, foreboding in their openness. Before us lay the Bay.

A strong tailwind sprang up, propelling us boldly out into a wide inlet flanked by two capes, points of land jutting seaward about eight miles apart. Since dawn, we had pushed hard to cover a good thirty miles, interrupted by a brief interlude at the mouth of a creek where we glided to shore for one last fling at the speckled trout.

It was a superb last hour of fishing. With a ridge of spruce etched against an azure sky, a broad stream came tumbling and brawling down through the forest, cascading over a series of boulders, then racing on until the foaming white waters spilled into a large, sun-drenched pool alive

with fish. Casting across the current, we watched the surface erupt in a frenzy of action. After an hour of pure enjoyment, we reluctantly called a halt, having stocked up on sufficient trout to appease our appetites for the foreseeable future.

My hope was to reach the western cape by nightfall, taking advantage of a strong wind in the back. Steering out into the broadening main channel to avoid rocky underwater shoals, we watched the waves kick up. We were soon riding the crests, tobogganing forward in spurts of frantic speed. But one canoe began shipping some water and the crew were obviously apprehensive. We faced a dilemma. The temptation was to keep blasting ahead in an all-out effort to make the cape, less than an hour away, where the tidal flats were narrow, and the protective lee of the coast would allow us to travel the next day, barring a sudden change in the wind. The alternative was to head to shore at once, requiring a long portage far across wide tidal flats which were broadening by the minute, due to the ebbing tide. Reluctantly, I decided the risk of swamping was too great. We would have to portage.

Two hours later, tired and famished, we straggled up on shore, having relayed our loads inland. Carrying a canoe alone turned out to be almost comical. Throwing it up, I adjusted the tump over my head, swung my arms over the paddles lashed to the thwarts, and leaned my upper body into the racing wind, only to find myself spinning wildly like a giant weather vane. It was decidedly impossible, so we dragged the canoes to the campsite.

Our first evening on the barrens was a stark contrast to the previous sanctuary of protective forest and comfortable river banks. From the beach we climbed up over a ten-foot seawall, a sandy abutment that plateaued out onto a small, dry grassy plain. Inland, for miles, there was a melange of wet marsh, ponds, and small fresh water rivulets, crystal clear, draining toward the Bay. No trees were in sight, but driftwood lay scattered in the grass and along the beach. Devoid of protection, we realized this was the land of the winds, a bleak, cold, and savage country. The blue waters of the sea edged over the horizon where banks of gathering cumulus clouds caught the last rays of the setting sun. Our hopes lay in waiting for favorable weather to brave the icy sea, whose waters measured a cool 40°F in the shallows.

My intent in traversing the coast was to ride the tide out, canoeing until the waters returned. Otherwise we would be portaging incredible distances to reach sea or shore. Unfortunately, the first high tide occurred at two o'clock the next morning, and a shift of wind brought pounding seas, making travel dangerous. Low cloud cover obscured the moon, and the darkness was impenetrable. While the tidal flats were inconsequential around the cape, the several hundred miles of unbroken expanse from the Bay churned the ocean into a maelstrom. We had realized weather, especially the winds, would dictate our coastal headway. Time was secondary to safety.

Three days passed, and our progress was agonizing and slow, measured in hundreds of yards. We were unable to cope with the sea, taking in far too much of the chill water when we paddled, the canoes riding uneasily over the crests of the waves, then plunging into the troughs. Our conversations seldom strayed from our predicament. We were convinced

we had ample food and all the time in the world; I felt completely confident in waiting out the weather, however long that might be. But I also found that the impact of braving even moderately heavy waters was taking its toll on some of our group who found the experience frightening, draining their confidence.

Finally, late one night, conditions moderated. We rushed to pack up and launch our canoes. A bright moon burnished the waters a silver sheen, lighting our way as we paddled out with the tide. Galaxies of stars, glittering brilliantly, arched overhead. The land, bathed in soft moonlight, exuded a wild, primitive charm. We were so alone, so infinitesimal in the immensity around us. The Bay, in its own way, had finally touched us with a beauty all its own.

Putting the miles steadily behind, we grew weary as the stars faded and dawn tinged the eastern sky with streaks of gold. A brief encounter with seals, eyeing us with alarm, had lightened our mood. Approaching a rocky reef that formed a causeway to shore, we beached the canoes, sprawling on the rocks to stretch our tiring muscles. Glancing inland, I was suddenly surprised to find two polar bears staring ominously in our direction. Three years before on the Bay I had watched several of these animals dash off on sighting our canoe. But these showed no fear, and after passing my binoculars around for a quick look, I decided that discretion was called for as we beat an apprehensive retreat seaward.

Although armed with both a shotgun and a pistol, we were relying for safety on high-powered rocket flares that could be fired several hundred feet in the direction of an intruder, a practice found to be effective in the Russian Arctic.

Rounding the next point, we faced a wide, curved bay. While my first choice was to paddle in depths where bottom was visible and within easy reach of the long spruce poles we carried, I chose to strike out for the opposite shore, passing over deep water but cutting the mileage in half. The gentle breeze was in our favor. Halfway to our destination, the wind shifted, and a series of violent off-shore squalls raced and skipped across the ocean, darkening the surface, and hitting us broadside. Turning immediately into the wind and toward land, I shortened the stroke to maintain our momentum. Leaning hard into our paddles, we dug in as time and the canoes seemed to stand still. Inching forward tensely in bottomless waters, we battled the dreaded danger of being blown to sea. It was a harrowing struggle, and I chided myself for gambling with our safety. Finally, a tongue of sand was visible underwater, and we jumped overboard to feel the reassuring safety of bottom as we towed the canoes in. Standing knee-deep in the surf, I gazed out over the implacable expanse and realized how deceptive and foreboding these coastal waters could be.

It was only then that I discovered that my small musette bag, containing binoculars, flares, and lunch food had been left behind on the rocky reef. Reluctant to spend several hours doubling back, and fearful the two polar bears might have moved in to investigate, I decided to risk the loss and keep going.

Chastened by the close call, we resumed our journey, hugging the tidelands. But a series of barely submerged

sandbars, as much as half a mile wide and extending far out into the sea, blocked our passage. Rather than detour endlessly out of our way, we tied tumps to the bows of our canoes, climbed into the chill water and plodded through the surf, splashing forward in water that had turned cold, the temperature hovering in the thirties. In places where the sea shallowed up, we were compelled to lift and drag the canoes forward. It was cold, back-breaking work as we strung out in single file, snaking our way back and forth, silhouetted against the unbroken expanse.

Eventually reaching open seas again, I concluded that the long day's work, starting well before dawn, had exacted its price. Riding the incoming tide, we swung toward land. Even with my binoculars, I had found it impossible to distinguish the shore from the tidal flats. Numerous bays, visible at ebb tide, would completely disappear with high waters. The few small rivers that emptied into this stretch of the Bay were never visible, making it impossible to pinpoint our progress on the map. Ahead of us the shore was wet and inhospitable, a matrix of pools of blue water mingled with patches of damp green grass. Glacial rocks lay strewn about in utter profusion. By any standards, it was a poor place for a campsite. Even driftwood was scarce. Nevertheless, I was reluctant to push on, as the shoreline strung far ahead in one vast sweep of wetness.

Dragging our canoes inland, we slowly unloaded, then sought out rather miserable sites for our tents as we prepared for the evening's camp. All six of us were thus preoccupied, and I was unrolling my sleeping bag when one of our group shouted with a note of urgency,

"Watch out, there's a polar bear coming!"

Stunned I scrambled to look out, visualizing a charging bear. But the bear had halted some hundred yards away, inquisitively pausing to survey our surroundings. Jumping back inside the tent, I grabbed the gun, soaked by salt water, and hastily loaded up, filling my pockets with extra ammunition.

Outside once more, I cautioned everyone to move slowly and remain silent. Glancing around, I groped instinct-

ively for a means of defense if the bear became aggressive. I decided against firing the gun to frighten the bear off. That might simply provoke him.

Better, perhaps, to build a barricade — which we did, piling up rocks over three feet high and equally thick, hopefully giving us seconds more to fire additional shots if the bear attacked.

But the bear was playing a waiting game. He decided to sit down and watch. Then he lay down, still eyeing us. Then he sat up again. The suspense was unnerving.

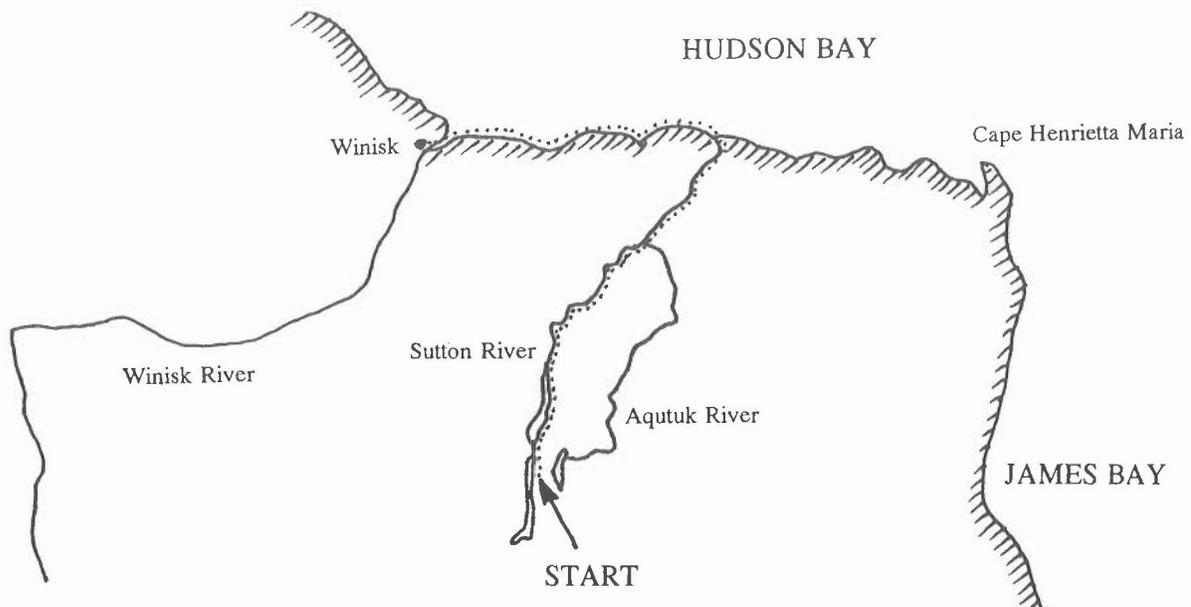
The bear, limping slightly, seemed to have an injured paw. This was cause for concern as a wounded animal tends to be more vindictive. The wind, now switching back and forth in eddies, did nothing to allay my fears, as I suddenly realized our bag of fish might prove especially enticing.

Polar bear, weighing up to twelve hundred pounds or more, can be vicious and deadly. Memories flashed through my mind. In 1977, a camper in Norway, investigating a noise at the entrance to his tent, was grabbed, carried off fifty yards, and eaten in full view of his friends. The Japanese Uemura, on his solo dash to the North Pole in 1978, had survived the invasion of his camp by a bear which ate his food supply, then sought Uemura in the tent, grunting and clawing at the tent. Finally giving up, he departed, only to return the next day.

Visions of a tragedy haunted me. The supply of driftwood was insufficient to keep a bonfire burning very long. I would never attempt to go to sleep with a bear prowling and roaming around outside, an appalling thought. My decision was to break camp as quickly as possible, trusting that the polar bear would disregard us.

Packing up quietly and hurriedly, we moved toward the ocean in silence. The tide was receding far into the distance. While we were moving our canoes and packs seaward, the bear remained immobile but watchful. Not a minute passed without someone glancing back. Time dragged agonizingly.

We were unable to keep up with the ebbing waters. Out on the exposed flats with our group tired and emotionally drained, I suggested we wait for the incoming tide. We



flopped into the loaded canoes that lay beached on the sand. The fish were carried off and plunked down some distance away, hopefully for the bear's first course. Trying to rest, we must have looked, unfortunately, like a bunch of seals, as our heads would keep popping up to see whether the bear had moved.

We saw the sea approaching slowly. Exhausted, we drifted off half-asleep, only to be awakened by a sudden rush of water, a tidal surge sweeping in. I was unable to retrieve the fish, as they disappeared into the swirling depths.

Paddling briskly to get warm, we were thankful for the swish of the paddles, the gurgle of the bows knifing through the deep. We could even laugh at the thought that one of us, on reaching our wet campsite, had wandered afield for some privacy, inadvertently awakening the polar bear, sleeping only a few yards away.

Pushing on along the coast, we were constantly scanning the horizon and frequently mistaking white rocks for polar bear, although at times we could not be sure.

Travel conditions remained difficult, and the wind shifted to an ever-increasing northerly. Stacks of dark purple clouds were building up, shutting off the sun. Coming to a point that had substantial banks and an acre of triangular land jutting seaward, we were glad to find an extensive supply of driftwood and a small fresh-water pond. There were no indications of bear, as I examined the beach for fresh footprints. After pitching our tents in the lee of some rising ground, we relaxed in front of a warming blaze until our first hot food in twenty-four hours was hastily devoured.

Shortly thereafter, the wind rose in increasing bursts. We were in for a real blow. Rocks were piled on the side of the tents as rain squalls moved in. Retiring to our sleeping bags, we anticipated a good night's rest.

During supper, one of us had broached the idea of walking the coastline to our destination if the weather continued to confine us. The shoreline seemed firm and adaptable to walking, but obviously we would have to take a canoe to ford the rivers and streams. The thought did not appeal to me, although some were finding the rough Bay waters intimidating. I was not yet ready to make a decision that would involve such drastic measures.

As the wind increased, I felt vaguely uneasy and rose to check the canoes. Going down to the shoreline, I noticed that the waves were enormous, and the sea rising, obviously the result of a storm tide. I started to move the canoes to a more sheltered area. Suddenly, one remaining canoe, resting on its side, was caught by an eddy of wind, and swirled up into the air some thirty feet, sailing wildly over my head to come smacking down on some boulders fifty yards away, then hurtled skyward again for another dozen yards. Running frantically in pursuit, I envisioned the canoe soaring off into the sea. Reaching the canoe's stern and holding on for dear life, I flipped it over, tying it down to a stake, then secured the other canoes as well.

Hunched over against the pelting rain, I retraced my steps, surveying our site to ensure that all gear was under cover. The winds were still rising, whistling over us in gusts that exceeded seventy-five miles an hour. The tents so far had withstood the gauntlet, but abruptly the aluminum poles

of one tent collapsed. Soon another tent went down. Using our spruce poles, we struggled to repitch them, finally succeeding. My tent eventually tore loose as the guy ropes and grommets were ripped apart. This was jerry-rigged so that we could at least sleep adequately protected from the down-pour. The roar of the wind and the wild flapping of nylon was awesome. The wide open expanse of this coastal area offered nothing to break or temper the Arctic blasts that raged on and on.

Shortly after I assumed we were all safely settled for the night, someone called me out. Obviously disturbed, he simply asked, "Do you see what I see?"

Looking around, I suddenly realized what had happened. The water was continuing to rise, and our triangular piece of high land was now not only an island but was also gradually shrinking in size. A good mile of water had moved in behind our camp, cutting us off from the mainland. His next words were ominous.

"I think we're going to be washed away."

Looking inland, I noticed the waters were being whipped up into substantial whitecaps. If worse came to worse, we would have to load our canoes and attempt to battle the heavy waters shoreward. Could we make it?

I knew there had to be a limit to high tides, however unusual. The difference in tidal waters in this general area was about fifteen feet, perhaps rising considerably more under severe storm conditions. Prospects for surviving the rough pounding surf would depend on our individual skills and experience. But paddling at night under cloudy, rainy conditions with a seventy-five-mile-per-hour tail wind, is a risky gamble. It would be easy to swamp in the surging waves.

My quick judgement was intended to be reassuring. I answered: "We're going to be all right. I can't believe the water will come up much higher."

Obviously skeptical, my friend was gentleman enough not to argue, returning to his tent where he and his wife spent the remaining hours of darkness patiently waiting for the water to roll in over them. What a night for these people; showing real faith in my judgement, they never disturbed me again, although sleep never seemed to catch up with them.

The possibility of being flooded out never entered my mind. Settling restlessly into the sleeping bag, I listened as the drumming of the wind beat its ceaseless tattoo, often building up to a crescendo that seemed ready to overwhelm us. My concerns rose and fell with these blasts. Uneasily, I tried to relax, constantly checking the dark, rising waters still creeping toward us. It was going to be a close call. When I went outside, the spectacle of the night was fearsome. The spray from the breaking waves whipped over our site in sheets. Eventually the rising water held fast, then slowly started to recede. We would be safe. I slipped into my sleeping bag, pondering our future.

Events of the last day convinced me to find a way to make faster, safer progress. I rejected completely the idea of walking the coast. This storm would probably bring in more polar bears from the reefs. I could under no stretch of the imagination tolerate the thought of walking the shore, where we might unexpectedly surprise a bear. Somehow I felt safer



on water, in spite of the waves and icy cold that lay beneath. Finally I came to the conclusion that we would shift to two canoes, lighten our loads, and cache all excess gear. The oldest boy would take the stern in one canoe, and I the other.

Toward morning, I woke up to find the waters still receding. The wind had lessened, but off-shore reefs in the area were breaking the giant rollers that could be seen far out to sea. We would move today, staying in shallow water, and push hard, however slowly, toward our destination.

Cooking a substantial breakfast, we also prepared a pot of stew for lunch that would be eaten cold. The rain and storm of the previous night had prevented us from baking bannock. After tying down the canoe that would be left behind, we carried our gear down onto the tidal flats. Harnessing up a tump, I found it relatively easy to pull my canoe, loaded with a pack, across the rocky, wet and sandy ground.

A hundred yards from our campsite, we looked back. There, silhouetted against the skyline, was a truly enormous male polar bear, standing majestically next to our gear. I was incredulous. On arising at dawn, I had scanned our barren site for bear. There had been none. You could see miles inland; no polar bear. Where had he been while we were getting up? Had he been with us all night?

The question would continue to haunt me for days afterward. For the present, after the nightmares of the storm, I could barely accept the realities of the situation.

With the bear's sudden appearance, the trip took on an increasingly ominous dimension. The bear showed no fear and a complete disdain for the smell of humans. He had walked right up to our cached gear, then stood alertly watching us with obvious interest. The tension was electric. I turned my back and pulled harder on the tump. I wanted to get away quickly. Each step forward did nothing to allay my concern. I was shaken, and for hours afterward we would keep revisualizing our campsite, trying to piece together the whereabouts of that animal.

To this day, I can find no ready explanation. His sudden appearance meant he was close by. With six of us, we would certainly have seen him coming in from a distance. It is possible he was below the seaward bank to the northeast of our tents, about seventy-five yards away. That was the only area — stretching a hundred yards along the shore — where

we could not see every inch of ground. A true nightmare, in retrospect. If we had seen him the night before, with all the other problems we had, I hate to think what our reaction would have been. Impossible to comprehend, in fact. I can only assume the bear spent the night with us, a terrifying thought.

Creeping along the coast, we traversed the shallow waters, which crested often into a series of short-interval whitecaps, pushing in from the reefs by the big rollers that broke far off-shore. The reefs were really our guardians, at least diminishing the turbulence considerably. Quartering these waves where possible, I would roll the canoe to leeward, offering a higher gunwale to the seas, preventing the green waters from pouring in. I also found it helpful to throw my weight in the stern against the biggest whitecaps as the canoe's side would splash the water away. The fourteen-year-old boy was positioned in the bottom of the canoe, behind the middle thwart; his sole function was to keep bailing as every so often the sea would slice over the rear gunwale. My bow paddler received a steady flow of advice, being told to stop paddling when an unusually large crest appeared ready to hammer us. Bracing my paddle in the water for stability, I would balance the rolling canoe. In spite of all effort, we continued to ship water, but our bailer kept us relatively dry. Using only two paddlers slowed our progress, but I did not want the extra speed that will cause a canoe to cut into the waves instead of rolling over them.

After paddling several miles, we realized one canoe had apparently sprung a couple of leaks, the result of its wind-borne flight the previous night. Periodically, that crew put to shore to empty the canoe.

At this point on our journey, we had completed many miles of coastal travel, and our destination had to be drawing near, although we still could not identify our exact location. The heavy tide of the previous night had inundated our last fresh water pond, and our water supply was now perilously low.

As twilight deepened, we found an old Native campsite, but no streams or ponds. A roaring fire helped in the brisk forty-degree weather, and a big pot full of thickened soup warmed us up.

Reduced to one tent, we crowded in. Shunted to the rear (as far from the door as possible, fortunately) I slept fitfully,

waking up around three in the morning to find everyone cold, damp, and amenable to early departure.

Using the last of our fresh water at an early breakfast, we waited for the first faint brightening of the sky before riding out on the ebbing tide.

As the sun broke brilliantly over the horizon, the sparkling blue waters were dotted with whitecaps. The contours of the shallows stretched gently seaward, allowing our canoes to remain inside the reefs several hundred yards offshore. We bounced in the short, billowing waves that occasionally splashed over us, but progress was steady. More and more geese were trading back and forth, a sure sign we were nearing a delta region. In the distance we could once more see thickets of spruce.

Working our way around a rather high rocky point, we were confronted with a seemingly endless, fast-drying tidal reach that extended miles ahead of us as well as far inland. We had arrived at the inlet that would lead upriver to the Native village. The weekly mail plane was due this morning, with departure set for one o'clock. It was frustrating to be so close, yet viewing the flats it seemed impossible to paddle or tow our canoes upstream. After a brief conference, I decided to walk in with the youngest boy, hoping to reach the plane before it flew south. The rest of our group would remain, waiting for the tide. I would try to find a freight canoe, and come back to haul our party upriver if the plane could wait.

Our journey across the flats and the narrowing barrens covered eight miles and consumed three hours. We forded streams, wading through deep and shallow waters, fortu-

nately never over our heads. The conditions on land were difficult: marsh, sodden muskeg, and sink holes made progress slow and tiring even without packs. The possibility of surprising a polar bear was ignored.

Our trek was completed minutes before the plane departed, but the pilot was unable to delay his flight. Thanks to a co-operative Native, we retrieved our group who were already working their way upriver. Through the use of a radio, we were able to charter an aircraft to arrive the next morning, which turned out to be the most perfect day of all, with barely a ripple on the Bay's broad expanse.

As our plane circled away from the village, I looked back across the dazzling, sunlit sea, and the endless stretching barrens. A feeling of loneliness brushed through me as we left the primitive beauty of that wild, untamed country. Somehow I knew this land would remain a part of me forever.



## KEEPING IT CLEAN: ALTERNATIVE

In most areas I have always considered hauling toilet paper over portages a ridiculous practice. Such items should be left in our bathrooms or occasionally taken to hockey rinks in case the referee makes a bad call.

I have done most of my canoe camping in Shield country where vast carpets of the broad-leaved aster grace the forest floor. Its leaf is of suitable size and each leaf sports a fine and a rough side. If such an option poses a dilemma for indecisive canoeists, tell them to stick to flatwater canoeing!

Bob Goulding



## BACKCOUNTRY

Solitude. Follow a wolf pack as it tracks deer. Climb a ridge and see forever. Descend steep slopes and gullies through powder-filled pine forests. Absolute freedom combined with unrelenting self-reliance. Experience the backcountry: explore your soul.

Backcountry skiing places you in an uncontrolled environment. You must become one with your surroundings. Your senses come alive as you grow accustomed to perceiving your surroundings as vital and mutable. You are restricted only by your own judgement and experience. You must be both analytical and accepting. Active decisions and passive observations are simply part of the same continuum.

A backwoods trip offers depth, introspection, and community. Backwoods skiing takes physical effort, mental discipline, and emotional commitment, but it rewards you with tremendously intense and profound appreciation of yourself, your companions, and the world in which you live.

Richard Culpeper

## REVIEWS

**ARCTIC ADVENTURES, Exploring Canada's North by Canoe and Dog Team**, by Ian and Sally Wilson, published by Gordon Soules, West Vancouver, 1992, 246 pages, softcover, \$14.95.

Reviewed by Bryan Buttigieg.

This book recounts the authors' year of travelling by canoe and dogsled in the Eastern arctic. They describe their canoe trip from the headwaters of the Thelon River to Chesterfield Inlet followed by their winter travels along the coast of Hudson Bay and their spring paddle down the coast to Rankin Inlet.

Combining a humorous, unaffected style with excellent photographs and sketches of their journey, the Wilsons describe their adventures and mishaps during that year. One has to admire their successfully spending a winter with seven Huskies when neither had ever handled a dog team before, and Sally admitted to being afraid of dogs.

Most enjoyable is the description of the time the couple spent at Baker Lake preparing for winter under the tutelage of an Inuit matriarch who taught them the Inuit way of surviving the Arctic winters. A genuine bond of friendship was formed between them despite the language barrier and vastly different cultural backgrounds.

This is not a detailed tripping book but rather an account of a couple's year together in what to most people is an extremely inhospitable environment. Any tripper will recognize the curious mix of intense friendship and occasional friction that accompanies those on a long trip. The Wilsons convey with ease what is perhaps one of the most satisfying aspects of tripping: that in removing oneself from other distractions one becomes closer not just to the natural surroundings but also to one's companions.

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**FREE-HEELSKIING: The Secrets of Telemark and Parallel Techniques in All Conditions** by Paul Parker, foreword by Yvon Chouinard, published by Chelsea Green Publishing Company, Chelsea, Vermont, 1988, 174 alkali pages, US\$19.95.

Reviewed by Richard Culpeper.

Some books look nice on the coffee table. Some books have information worth digesting. Some books even offer enjoyable reading. And a few, a very few, are classics. Paul Parker's *Free-Heel Skiing* captures your imagination.

Parker leads you through telemark skiing, both on and off piste, using clear instruction mixed with interesting anecdotes. The progression is logical, the explanations are understandable, and the illustrations are masterly, which is rare in outdoor adventure instructional books of such depth.

Parker's brief anecdotes and dramatic photos bring life to the curriculum, for they take you out of the lift line and into the mountains: Denali's Muldrow Glacier, Colorado's Mount Sopris, and California's Upper Kern Basin.

*Free-Heel Skiing* is so well crafted that there is no preaching of personal preferences, needless lists of equipment, or misplaced emphasis. Parker assumes you are intelligent, and keeps this in mind as he writes. The result? You want to ski with this fellow.

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**MAP OF FRENCH RIVER PROVINCIAL PARK**, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Publication # MNR 4658, 1992. Published by Friends of the French River Heritage Park, PO BOX 142, Copper Cliff, Ontario P0M 1N0. Price \$10 including tax.

Reviewed by Chris Riddle.

This annotated guide-map of the French River Provincial Park is set at a scale of 1:50,000, the same as the most popular topographic series used by canoeists, and good for exploration of the many channels which abound on the French River, especially the lower part.

The map is printed in two sections. The WCA's favorite run, down the rapids which commence at Commanda Island, are nicely centred on the east section. The west section starts upstream of Hwy. 69 and runs all the way to Georgian Bay.

The MNR map has some significant advantages over the familiar topo map format. It clearly marks the presence of Native reserves, fish camps, and private cottages in a way that the topo map does not do. The advantage of this information is that you can avoid these areas if you wish, or seek them out in case of emergency.

Campsites are marked with small red triangles. The number of designated campsites is, however, inadequate in this first edition of the map; missing are many "traditional" spots — including those given on other MNR publications such as the Pickerel River canoe route.

The choice of recycled paper may seem environmentally friendly but it makes poor sense in a map for use on a waterway. The paper absorbs moisture and becomes blotting paper in rain or even damp weather (a consideration in 1992). A better choice would have been to use olefin paper — the sort used for "indestructible" envelopes. You can drop them in the river, eat dinner off them — no matter.

The most striking difference between the MNR and topo maps is that the MNR map is based on a higher water level. Now, the summer of '92 was not known as an especially dry season, yet some rapids marked on the topo map were dry as a bone. The MNR map does not even mark rapids at these points, but shows clear water channels with no indication of rocks near the surface.

Despite its faults, production of the map was a great idea and with improvement it could be an outstanding resource. Comments and suggestions are welcome and should be sent to Robert O'Hara, c/o Friends of the French River Heritage Park, at the above address.

The map is available in French or English. It is sold by stores and outfitters in the French River area and is available

at the MNR Information Office in the Macdonald Block on Bay Street in Toronto. WCA members may also contact Toni Harting (see Products and Services section on page 35) who has a supply for sale.

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**MUSKEG, MOSQUITOES AND MOOSE**, by Joyce Allen Stone, published by Wilderness Adventure Books, Fowlerville, Michigan, 1992, softcover, 184 pages, \$US10.95.

Reviewed by Toni Harting.

I think "charming" is the word that comes to mind when reading this story of Joyce and Fred Stone's 38-day canoe trip from Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan River to York Factory on Hudson Bay. It is a nice, well-told and above all very personal account of this 'vacation adventure of a lifetime' and it gives much useful information on travelling the Saskatchewan, Summerberry, Minago, Echimanish, and Hayes rivers. The black-and-white photographs and pen-and-ink sketches are quite amateurish, but the author's poems that follow each chapter are often witty and well crafted.

This lady may not be the world's greatest wilderness canoeist, but she sure is a good observer. Pity that she has the annoying tendency to emphasize her shortcomings as a tripper so much, at the same time putting her partner/husband a bit too high on a pedestal by adoring practically every

move he makes. But nobody is perfect, and she succeeds admirably in letting the reader become part of the party's joys and sorrows. Indeed, a charming book and well worth reading.

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**WILDERNESS WATERWAYS, The Whole Water Reference for Paddlers** by Ronald Ziegler, published by Canoe America Associates, Kirkland, Washington, 1991, softcover, 177 pages, US\$19.95; distributed by University of Washington Press, Seattle, Washington.

Reviewed by Toni Harting.

This book compiles all the available and up-to-date references on the sport and recreation of paddling, including 28 on history and biographies, 520 guide books and articles in print, 87 state and provincial canoe club listings, 500 map sources, 250 government and provincial agencies, 72 on technique and instruction, 118 video recordings, and seven complete indexes and computerized sources; more than 1500 reference headings in all. The massive collection of sources is a valuable aid for the paddler, historian, biographer, conservationist, or adventurer who wants to know where to go and how to get there. Because this publication is by now about two years old, there are bound to be some inaccuracies in names and addresses. However, future revisions should take care of that inconvenience.

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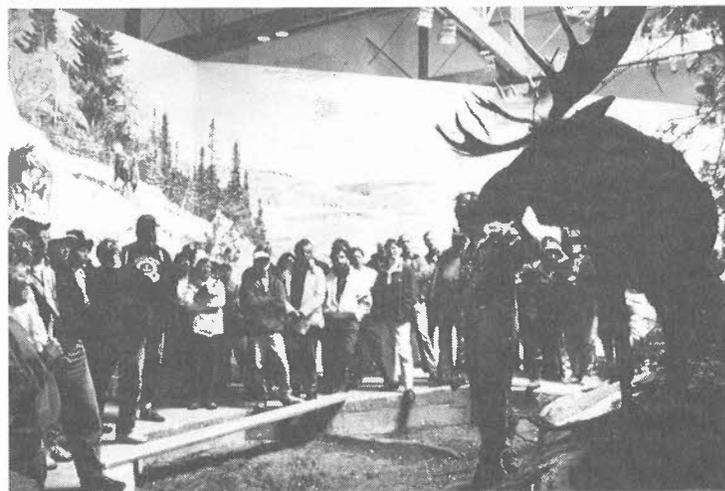
## FALL MEETING 1992

A record (I think) turnout of a bit more than 100 WCAers and friends attended the Fall Meeting that took place in and near Algonquin Park on 25 to 27 September. As expected, Herb Pohl had done a superb job organizing everything and not a dissenting word was heard (if one chooses not to pay attention to the paddlers who got lost or something and were late in arriving at the take-out Saturday afternoon), so he will no doubt be pressured in trying his luck again another year.

The camping in Whitefish Lake Group Campground just south of Hwy. 60 was pleasant, the visit to the Park's fascinating still-being-finished new Visitor's Centre a sheer delight thanks to Michael Runtz's enthusiastic guided tour, the morning and afternoon activities were well organized, the dinner in Whitney's Catholic Church Hall was satisfying, and the slide-and-talk show by Reg and Dan McGuire on their Thelon River mishap was an astounding testimony of courage and inventiveness under most trying circumstances. The weather was good to incredible to rainy, and the clear Friday night sky gave many of us the unexpected eye-opening opportunity to have a look at stars and galaxies, using the telescopes erected on nearby campsites by a group of amateur astronomers.

This outdoors Fall Meeting was obviously appreciated by all of us and we look forward to more of the same.

Toni Harting



## KAZAN REVISITED

Peter Verbeek

In the summer-1991 issue of *Nastawgan* there is an excellent article by Anne B. Spragins-Harmuth on her and her husband's trip down the Kazan River in 1989. When in the spring of 1992 I decided to do a trip on the Kazan, I used this article as my main reference.

As my solo trip progressed, I was more and more impressed with the accuracy of the information that the Harmuths provided. Because the water level on the Kazan was very high in the summer of 1992, there were of course minor differences, but nothing major in this respect.



There was one matter, however, which was dramatically different in 1992. The spring and summer of 1989 had been very warm up north. Anne several times mentions the unseasonably warm weather. The spring of 1992, however, had been exceptionally cold. This caused the larger lakes to remain ice covered much longer than usual. On Ennadai, Angikuni, and Yathkyed lakes, I was slowed down or stopped by the ice and had to wait days for the ice to melt or for the wind to push it away. This caused me to be much delayed in my schedule.

I started out from the sand beach on Kasba Lake at the entrance to the Kazan River. Here follows some telling information on the circumstances I encountered.

<i>date</i>	<i>distance</i>	<i>comments</i>
3 July	45 km	
4 July	40 km	
5 July	20 km *	slowed down by ice on Ennadai
6 July	10 km *	slowed down by ice on Ennadai
7 July	10 km *	slowed down by ice on Ennadai
8 July	58 km	fast current
9 July	2 km	wind
10 July	30 km *	slowed down by wind
11 July	8 km *	wind
12 July	87 km	fast current
13 July	20 km	stopped by ice on Angikuni
14 July	0 km	stopped by ice on Angikuni
15 July	0 km	stopped by ice on Angikuni
16 July	4 km	stopped by ice on Angikuni
17 July	0 km	stopped by ice on Angikuni
18 July	0 km	stopped by ice on Angikuni

19 July	13 km	slowed by ice and wind
20 July	23 km	wind - reached end of Angikuni
21 July	55 km	fast current
22 July	60 km	fast current
23 July	35 km	wind - stopped by ice on Yathkyed
24 July	0 km	stopped by ice on Yathkyed
25 July	0 km	stopped by ice on Yathkyed
26 July	2 km	stopped by ice on Yathkyed
27 July	0 km	stopped by ice on Yathkyed
28 July	0 km	stopped by ice on Yathkyed

\* Actual distance paddled was more than indicated due to detours, closely hugging the shore, or searching for openings.

In the evening of the 28th, a strong north wind came up which continued that night and made a wide ice-free channel along the north shore of Yathkyed Lake. The following day, when the wind subsided a bit, I did not rest until I had reached the river; I was afraid the wind might change again and stop me.

After that I had no more trouble with ice.

Ironically, that same wind drove large masses of ice into the bay where the Kazan enters Yathkyed Lake, so that anyone following me would have been stopped until the wind changed again.

I will now report some observations on the river as I experienced it.

I was able to run the exit rapid from Kasha Lake (FT5718) on the left, because of the higher water levels.

The Harmuth's description of the rapids past the Cascades is very accurate; in high water, the rapids are even more fierce. I was grateful for my decks and my covers.

At the last rapid before Yathkyed Lake (NE3827) I scouted from the right shore. I decided to portage about 200 metres. However from the right shore it appears that this rapid can be run on the extreme left. Being on the right shore, I could not go to the left shore as I was too close to the rapid. I would suggest future trippers scout this rapid on the left shore. But then you would miss the beautiful spot to put your tent overlooking the rapid.





A shelf (NF8544) required me to portage 100 metres on the right but I could see that had I been on the left, I would have been able to run this rapid.

The rapid at the east end of Thirty Mile Lake (PF4359) can be run most of the way on the extreme right, with a short carry over a gravel bar at the end.

As I was travelling alone, I did not want to take any risks with travel over ice. There would have been no one to rescue me if I had gone through the ice. I waited for the ice to melt or be blown away by the wind. I met a group from a boys



camp near Minden, who used their canoes as ice breakers and sleds.

They would charge the ice until they were stopped by solid ice, then they would haul their canoes onto the ice and drag them to the next open water, which in some cases was many kilometres away. At Yathkyed Lake they made a bee-line right across the lake through and over the ice, till they came to the river again. There is an advantage in being with a group that can help and support you if you get into trouble.



## ELDERHOSTEL TRIP TO NWT INUIT CULTURE

article: Tom Boardman  
photos: Isabel Boardman

My wife and I arrived in Rankin Inlet about 5:00 p.m. on 7 June 1992. The weather for the most part was clear to overcast, the visibility seemed unlimited. At this time of year, the daylight is about twenty-four hours.

Linda Pemik, who was the co-ordinator for our Elderhostel tour, met us at the airport. She took us over to Arctic College where we would be staying. We found our accommodations to be comfortable and the meals that were provided were also excellent. Arctic College is adjoined with Kivalliq Hall, a residence where young students from communities come to stay to further their secondary education. The students were still writing examinations but this was no problem for us.

The evening of our arrival there was a dinner at the Siniktarvik Hotel with a slide show presentation by Bill Belsey, who has been teaching for ten years, and works at Maani Ulujuk Secondary School.



Monday, after a restful night with all the daylight and a good breakfast, we registered for the course "Igloo to Microchips." After introductions were done we received a tour of Rankin Inlet. We stopped at the "Matchbox Gallery" owned and operated by Jim Shirley and his wife Ann. We felt fortunate to see his watercolors of the Inuit, landscapes, and wildlife. The afternoon was spent with Lizzie Ittinuar who discussed and demonstrated traditional fur clothing.

After dinner, Jose Kusugak discussed the culture and language of the Inuit in the past. This was one of the main reasons that the people in the Elderhostel had come from around Canada and the United States. Jose helped establish a writing system for the Inuit language in 1975. In 1977 the Roman Catholic and the Anglican churches approved the system and added 12 extra symbols. There was a lot of history of Marble Island and the early whalers who lived on the island a few years ago but did not survive. The lecture taught us that the Inuit society is pushing headlong into the 21st century. With their education, hard work, and perseverance they are bound to have great success.

Wednesday was the day we would be going to one of the communities that we had chosen, either Arviat or Baker Lake.

My wife and I would be going to Arviat. When we arrived there for our visit our hostess and host were an Inuit woman named Melanie and her son Jeff. Both were bilingual and he was in grade eleven at Arviat High School. Melanie told us that she had a daughter who was a nurse in Winnipeg. Jeff was telling us of his life in the school and showed us some fishing and hunting equipment. When he went out hunting that day he got a snow goose. In the afternoon he took my wife and me to the school there so we could see how things were. While we were visiting we met the vice-principal.

In the afternoon we went in a small bus to see the tundra. We had a chance to see some caribou meat dried. Certainly Jeff has an easier lifestyle, with his four-wheel ATV and fine weapons, than his ancestors.

One 80-year old we listened to, through an interpreter, had suffered severe hardship, even an attack by a polar bear and near starvation. Sometimes they couldn't catch animals in winter darkness and storms, with ice seven feet thick. In summer it is much easier to get fish and mammals and birds and cache them. Woman would make clothing. Fish were dried and so was the meat of mammals. Fat was rendered for oil for the lamps and warmth. Clothing was waterproofed. Tanning was done in the spring sunlight.

The old-time Inuit did not give up easily in adversity. Some died of starvation when caribou, whales, and fish were scarce. They were nomads but sometimes couldn't get over the snow and high ridges. According to one, sleds were probably designed before they used dogs. They fastened sod to the runners, then doused them with water to make them smooth. Dogs were trained to pull. Sometimes they built rafts of caribou skin to get across the wide rivers on the mainland. One old man told us that in his younger days he walked to Churchill, 250 miles away, and got along well with the Indians.



One elderly lady said the Indians lent her father fishnets. They used only caribou skins for clothing. There was lots of mineral wealth; they knew about it but ignored it.

Storytelling and singing is a big activity with these people. Drumming is mainly done by the men, while dancing in a circle. Today they still practise these old customs, even

though they live in nice homes with modern conveniences. They still go to their fishing or hunting cabins to get away from the bustle of modern life. The Inuit are obviously taking advantage of modern education, prospecting techniques, engineering, and modern inventions. With this philosophy their

nation can only move forward.

(Tom (80) and Isabel (73) Boardman are active members of the WCA and make interesting trips with the Elderhostel organization that provides, at cost, many informative, educational, and adventurous holidays for anyone over 60.)

## SOME THOUGHTS ON CAMPERS

Wayne Sindall

The dictionary defines a camper as someone who camps out or lives in a camp. A camper can also be a vehicle affording shelter and usually sleeping accommodation. Let us expand on this definition by categorizing campers from simple observations made during many camping trips.

First there is the "Winnebago with TV" camper. This is the person who should have stayed in the city. They roll in to their campsite for the night with their house on wheels containing all the trappings of the city. The units come with hot and cold running water, fridge, stove, and shower facilities. Now some even include a microwave for that "meal on the go!" Awnings bedeck the sides and roofs are littered with tv antennas and air conditioning units. If there is no source of electricity close at hand, the generator is started up to provide power for all the appliances, including VCR and stereo for entertainment and floodlights to lighten the night.

The second type of camper is the "Case of Beer" type. This type drives up to the campsite loaded down with beer. Except for a large "ghetto blaster," very little in the way of equipment is brought. A tent for protection from the elements is not a necessity for enjoying the outdoors in an alcoholic haze. They head for home when either the beer runs out or the weather turns nasty. Jeans, cutoffs, and tank tops afford little protection from the environment. These campers are the ones who pass out, and then wake up atop an ant hill in the morning.

One common element between the "Winnebago with TV" and the "Case of Beer" camper is that they both go to experience the fresh air and open spaces, but as you look around, each and every one of them is smoking a cigarette. Cigarettes dangle from their lips and fingers grip these little cancer sticks like daggers that cut the air with the movement of the hands. They all puff away like a smoking chimney.

The third type comes equipped with all of the so-called essential gear. They have brought food, clothing, stove, cooking utensils, sleeping bags, and tents. The tents are less than adequate, being bulky and leaking even in the lightest of rainfalls. The food is mostly frivolous: items such as steaks, hard-to-carry chips, popcorn packed in metal foil. And then the coolers, full of beer. Staples consist mainly of cartons of juice for mix, cans of soup, and the not-to-be-forgotten large cans of brown beans to liven the night with the passing of wind. They use axes and large bow saws to cut firewood. Left to their own devices each campsite would ring

out with the roar of chainsaws cutting down live trees. So I name these campers "Chainsaw Campers." Large fires are built to burn all night and the air is filled with grey, ground-hugging smoke, and the sound of coughing from the burning of green wood is heard. Large dining tents lit with Coleman lanterns dot the camps. A lot of them use air mattresses and camp cots. With all of this gear, requiring packing and unpacking for each move, they usually stay in one site for the maximum amount of time. Nails are hammered into trees to string clotheslines for hanging gear and equipment.

Sometimes these campers leave in a hurry, before their camping permit for the allotted period has expired. They have undergone a harrowing experience: the one that no one wants: a visit from a bear. Upon their leaving, the area is strewn with aluminum foil, broken beer bottles, bottle caps and non-returnables. Anything to lighten the load. One can find beer cans wedged in the crook of trees and stuffed down holes in tree stumps. Out of sight, out of mind. It's a long way back carrying these used-up items when you're nursing a hang-over, and feeling less than enthused with the bright sun that bakes the brain.

On the other hand, the lightweight, "High-Tech" camper moves from camp to camp every night. He, or she, is trying to cover the maximum amount of distance in the least amount of time. So, their headlamps guide them along rivers, long after the sun has set, as they paddle their lightweight kevlar canoes. Everything they carry fits into one pack: dehydrated food, high-tech, pressurized stoves that look cannibalized; small, nesting cooksets, lightweight nylon tents, with fiberglass poles, and very little extra clothing, all stuffed into the one pack. During portages around rapids and waterfalls, only one trip need be made because both pack and canoe are carried together.

Then there are the Daniel Boones of camping. These are the ones that I call the "Survivalist" or living-off-the-land types. Dressed in kakhi-colored, long-sleeved shirt and pants to blend into the surroundings, they strut around in high, brown leather boots with deep Vibram soles. Only the hob nails are missing. A large, imposing survival knife is fastened at the hip, and bound to the leg with a leather thong. You know the ones with a hefty eight-inch blade. The front edge is so finely sharpened that a piece of paper, tossed into the air, could be surgically sliced through in one swoop. The back edge, with its two styles of saw teeth, can cut wood,

ice, and metal along with rope, either dry or wet.

An axe is carried so that evergreen boughs can be cut for bedding. The boughs are also used in the construction of a lean-to for shelter. Birch bark is ripped from living trees, to build fires for warmth and for cooking purposes. Fishing line and hook are used to provide for sustenance. Some do carry fishing poles. Edible wild plants compliment the catch of the day. These plants and grubs are, more often than not, the only bill of fare.

The most realistic type of camper is the last one - the "Balanced Camper." More and more, sensible people are becoming aware of the damage that can be done to the land, as they escape the city to enjoy the splendor and tranquility of the outdoors. They practice low-impact camping.

Provisions, carried in, are packed in containers, such as ziplock bags and Nalgene bottles, that can be packed out and reused. Anything packaged, not of a burnable nature or in non-returnable containers, is repacked into one of these containers. Returnable bottles or glass containers are not used. This prevents broken glass and slowly decomposing plastics from littering the area. Fires are built from deadfalls; outmoded practices, such as disfiguring trees by tearing birch bark off living trees for a fire starter and cutting evergreen boughs for bedding, is frowned upon. Provisions are slung high in trees to protect them from hungry bears. Food scraps and dishwater are disposed of down the privies. They police their campsites, and try to leave it the way they found it so that others may enjoy the same place. Firewood and birch bark, shed from trees and found on the ground, are

left under improvised protection for others who may be caught out in the rain.

Usually they carry two packs, a large one and a small day pack, plus a canoe. Portaging gear is a bitch; but, on the return walk back for the large pack, they can enjoy sights missed while lugging the canoe — a Lady's-slipper growing a few feet off the path, or the frog sunning itself in the open during the midday sun. A few books on insects, plants, and birds are taken so that the many new and rewarding sights, unfolding in front of their eyes, may be identified. They enjoy the chirping of birds and the undulating sound of wind through trees. Dressed warmly, the best time to canoe on a day trip is during a rainstorm. The sound of rain cascading off leaves onto the ground, the drumming patter on the water, and the invigorating smell of cleansed air awakens all their senses. Even the night sky takes on a new perspective, lit by an abundance of twinkling stars. Moon beams paint a path across the water. The peaceful stillness is broken only by the heartwarming sound of a loon, calling out to another one across the water.

Theses are just some of the unlimited wonders that can be experienced by all types of campers: Winnebago, Chainsaw, High Tech, Case of Beer, Survivalist, and Balanced. By having every camper practising some of the Balanced Camper techniques which encourage further growth in the understanding and appreciation of nature on it's own terms, just maybe we can leave an irreplaceable inheritance for the next generation.



*French River: Big Pine Rapid*

Photo by Toni Harting

## IN PRAISE OF THE DUTCH OVEN

My wife always does the right thing. An example is the gift of a twelve-inch aluminum dutch oven given a few Christmases ago. She had heard me lament frying pan-bannocks of inconsistent texture and quality, condemn the cords of wood required to produce ash-bedecked and unevenly burnt offerings from a reflector oven (the recipient of that oven "gift" has not spoken to us since), and curse the time spent tending the fire while others went for a swim. She also acknowledged a stubborn streak that would persist in doing things the hard way unless an excuse presented itself to make improvements. The excuse was the dutch oven.

My companions looked askance at its bulk, openly questioned its weight, but tolerated its presence. If it failed to live up to advance billing, they could slip it into the Winters' personal pack and no harm would be done. Imagine their surprise when the first bannock emerged from the pot light as a cloud and with a golden brown crust found only in the best European bakeries. Imagine their further surprise when everything we cooked in this marvellous pot was of equal quality. Baked macaroni and cheese that made one weep, stews that simmered long and refused to burn, and pancakes (done on the inverted lid) that emerged delicate, golden brown, and delectable. All this without constant fire tending, less wood, and less risk of burning. The dutch oven had earned its place in the pack and its seven pounds (the ten-inch model weighs four pounds) were no longer cursed on the trail.

Of course, we should have known it would. The dutch oven was the treasured pot of wilderness cooks. It crossed the American prairies, fed loggers in the north, and the families of settlers until they could afford a cast-iron stove. Why did it lose favor among campers? Because of its weight. Early dutch ovens were cast-iron and did not fit the twentieth century obsession with light weight travel. But it never died and when a U.S. company created an aluminum version, it received renewed interest. First by rafters who never portaged, and then by a few paddlers who considered the weight a small price for culinary excellence.

Using a dutch oven is ridiculously simple. Rake out a thin

layer of coals from the fire pit, set the oven on the coals, allow it to heat a bit and put the food inside. Now put on the lid and build a small fire on top of lid (there is a lip around the lid to hold the fire on top and keeps ashes out of the food when you remove the lid). The larger the fire, the faster the baking. Most things bake in 20 to 30 minutes. Initially you won't be able to resist a peek inside to see what's happening but there is no need to watch the pot. Since the fire is on top, burning food requires genuine effort and your confidence will rise with each success. While dinner is cooking you can do other things like a quick dip in the lake. How do you know when dinner is done? Practice and your sense of smell. When the saliva runs, it's done.

To fine-tune your technique, set the pot about a foot away from the main fire; but if you can't, rotate it once in a while to avoid burning on the side. Also, one layer of coals under the pot is plenty. More won't speed up cooking but it might cause burning.

Aluminum holds heat for a long time so be careful in handling the pot. Also, let it cool before washing. Dropping a hot pot into water might warp it or the lid and ruin the snug fit that holds in the heat.

As mentioned, the lid can be used as a frying pan and the pot for other cooking so you won't need the usual range of pots and pans.

When cleaning the dutch oven, do not use soap. Cast aluminum naturally resists sticking but a little seasoning never hurt.

You can cook just about anything in it that you would bake at home including cakes, cookies, pies, beans, pizzas, etc. We haven't tried Baked Alaska yet, but who knows?

I have not found one in Canadian stores but they are available from L.L. Bean in both 12" and 10" sizes. The ten is adequate for up to six people and the twelve will serve for church picnics and family gatherings.

Happy baking.

John Winters

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## TELEMARK EVOLUTION

Telemarking is one of the oldest forms of skiing. For thousands of years, people tied their toes to boards and shuffled along. In the early 19th century, ski racing became popular in Scandinavia. Various descending techniques were developed regionally, including the Christiania and Telemark turns, which have progressed into the modern stem christie/parallel and telemark turns. Later in the 19th century, equipment design and further descending techniques were pursued in central European alpine regions. Skiing gradually split into two camps: nordic cross-country and central European alpine.

Early downhill races were run on free-heel equipment until the early 1930s, when the Kandahar heel clip binding was introduced. For thirty years, this type of cable binding allowed skiers to free-heel on the flats and clip their heels down on descents. As lift areas gained popularity, the need for free-heels decreased, and the need for safety release bindings increased, so by the 1960s cable bindings began to fall by the wayside. The gap between nordic and

alpine became absolute. Alpine equipment became too heavy and inflexible for flatlanding, and nordic equipment became too light and laterally sloppy for difficult descents.

All this time there were telemarkers who wandered about the backcountry in whatever equipment they could put together. Their gear developed into durable but flexible free-heel systems. Now a typical telemarker skis on cross-country touring skis with metal edges and alpine side-cut. Telemark boots are comfortable winter hiking boots with very stiff sides and soles that keep the foot centred over the ski during turns. Bindings are three-pin cross-country style, but they are extremely durable. Telemark gear incorporates the best innovations of both nordic and alpine equipment. The versatility of telemark equipment is unsurpassed.

Richard Culpeper

# LA RIVIÈRE NOIRE

article: Graham McCallum

photos: Dave Robinson and Jack Doherty

Drifting along on a gentle current of the river, during a break, we had a chance to take in our surroundings. The brilliant sunshine was welcome with its early morning warmth chasing the last wisps of mist from the rippling water. The river twisted and turned over its course, carving through yellow sand and creating sloping banks fifteen metres high dotted with tiny pine trees leaning at various angles.

The map, covering eight pages, showed four pages of meanders. In the planning stages this point caused some concern among our group, because it was felt that there would be too much flatwater paddling and too little action. We kept postponing canoeing this river for years while we did others in the area but finally we began to run out of new rivers. However, the deciding factor was a Hull Canoe Club guide we met on the Coulonge who held the Noire to be his favorite river. That was the clincher. Finally we agreed to suffer through the meanders and paddle the Noire.

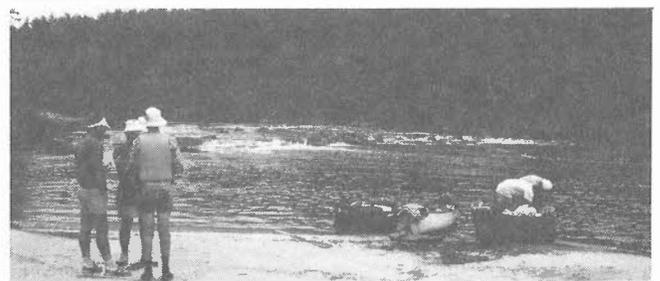
There was no suffering! We thought the meanders would be through marsh-like terrain similar to Peterbell on the upper Missinaibi, but not so. Every turn was a Tom Thomson painting with all the beauty an unspoiled northern river can present to a paddler. It was just a beautiful, relaxing paddle sheltered from the wind on a narrow river.

The other four pages of the map were heads-up paddling. The river has the trick of throwing in a small ledge across the middle of a number of sets of rapids. These were marked on the map but were not always easy to spot. A couple of them, if they were missed, would cause you to forget about getting the deposit back on your canoe.

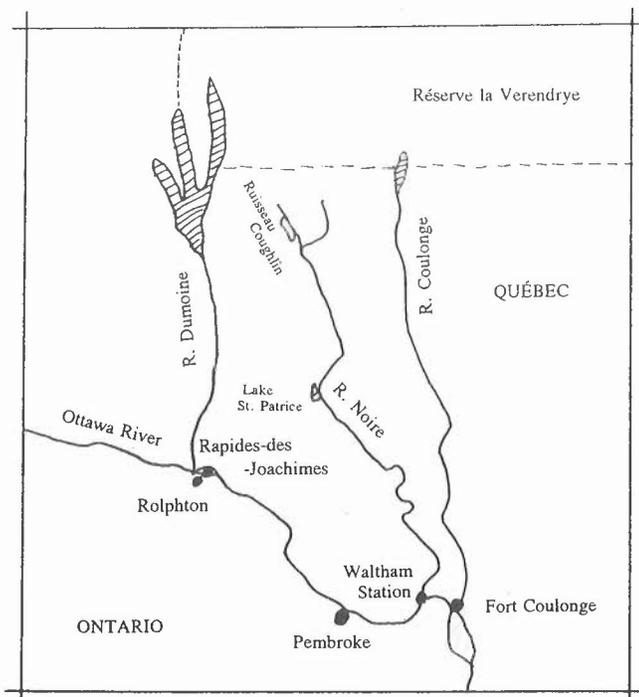
The whole river can be run or lined with the exception of the canyon at 85 km on the map. Here there is a choice of either taking the one-kilometre-plus portage from start to finish, or bumping down the left shore to the head of the chute and taking a 200-metre portage which ends in a virtual rock slab cliff. Either portage requires the canoe to be let down on a rope.



We are all floatplane junkies. Starting a trip with a little hop in a Beaver just adds that bit of spice to the trip and gives you the feeling that "if we're here this must be wilderness." Even for a nervous flyer, flying with Ron Bowes of Bradley Air Services out of Rapides-des-Joachims has got to be pure relaxation. Ron has been flying the same Beaver from the same base for 27 years. Both look in excellent shape. With Ron, untying and loading the canoe after landing in the middle of the lake takes less than five minutes and is a wonder to behold. His secret is that the second paddler is relegated to sit in the cabin out of the way during this manoeuvre.

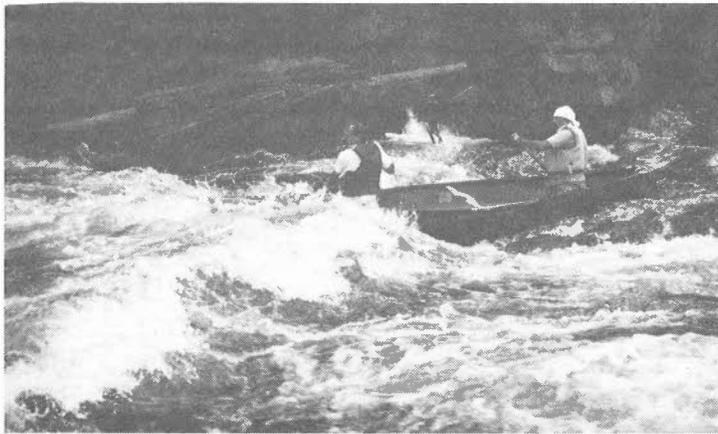


We know that in August La Rivière Noire is small with not a lot of water. With our paddles in Ontario growing moss over the summer from all the rain, we thought all systems were go for a run from Ruisseau Coughlin to the Ottawa, as Quebec would be the same. We were in for a surprise. Ron said that Quebec did not get a lot of rain, it was just an average summer, therefore he recommended we shorten our trip from 195 km to 125 km and put in at a lake further down called St. Patrice. This was a good decision, although we still don't really know about the water level in the upper section as the part we did was at a good level. The average distance per day was now down to 22 km and allowed time for two-hour lunches with jacuzzis, late starts, early camps, and



long, involved, sober discussions on the line least likely to wreck your canoe. But isn't that what its all about? One day we got as far as six kilometres and some days we had to do some serious paddling and pass up a few of those glorious sandy beaches.

The Quebec river guide was right. It's easy to see why La Rivière Noire is his favorite river.



*Length of trip:* 5 1/2 river days.

*Take-out:* The dam at Waltham Station; a car can be left there or at the Black River Inn, 23 km upriver.

*Flight:* Bradley Air Services, (613) 586-2374.

*Canoes:* Rockwood Outfitters, Guelph, (519) 824-1415.

*Maps:* Federation Quebecoise du Canot-Camping Inc.; 4545 av. Pierre-de-Coubertin, C.P. 1000, Succursale M, Montreal, Quebec, H1V 3R2.

*Note:* Road transport to put-in, shuttles, canoes, etc. are available through Valley Ventures Canoe Outfitting in Deep River, (613) 584-2577.

## CANADIAN HERITAGE RIVERS SYSTEM, update October 1992

Twenty-three rivers, totalling 4858 kilometres in length, have now been nominated to the CHRS. Fifteen of these rivers, totalling 2965 kilometres, have been formally designated.

### DESIGNATED RIVERS and their protected lengths:

French (Ontario)	110 km
Alsek (Yukon)	90
Clearwater (Saskatchewan)	187
South Nahanni (NWT)	300
Bloodvein (Manitoba)	200
Mattawa (Ontario)	33
Athabasca (Alberta)	168
North Saskatchewan (Alberta)	49
Kicking Horse (British Columbia)	67
Kazan (Northwest Territories)	615
Thelon (Northwest Territories)	545
St. Croix (New Brunswick)	135
Yukon (Thirty Mile) (Yukon)	48
Seal (Manitoba)	260
Soper (Northwest Territories)	108

### NOMINATED RIVERS and their protected lengths:

Jacques-Cartier (Quebec)	128
Missinaibi (Ontario)	426
Main (Newfoundland)	57
Arctic Red (NWT)	450
Bloodvein (Ontario)	106
Grand (Ontario)	290
Bay du Nord (Newfoundland)	75
Boundary Waters (Ontario)	250

For more information on what the CHRS is and how it operates, write to: The Secretary, Canadian Heritage Rivers Board, c/o Canadian Parks Service, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H3.

# CONSERVATION

## HYDRO TRANSMISSION LINES NEWS UPDATE

Ontario Hydro is now in the 'Corridor and Zone Identification' stage of the Sudbury to Toronto Area Transmission Reinforcement Study. There is some hope that from Sudbury to south of the Magnetawan River, Hydro is getting the message: "if you have to run more lines, run them in the same easement." Witness the two newly identified cut-off corridors from the existing easement to the route Hydro really wants to take.

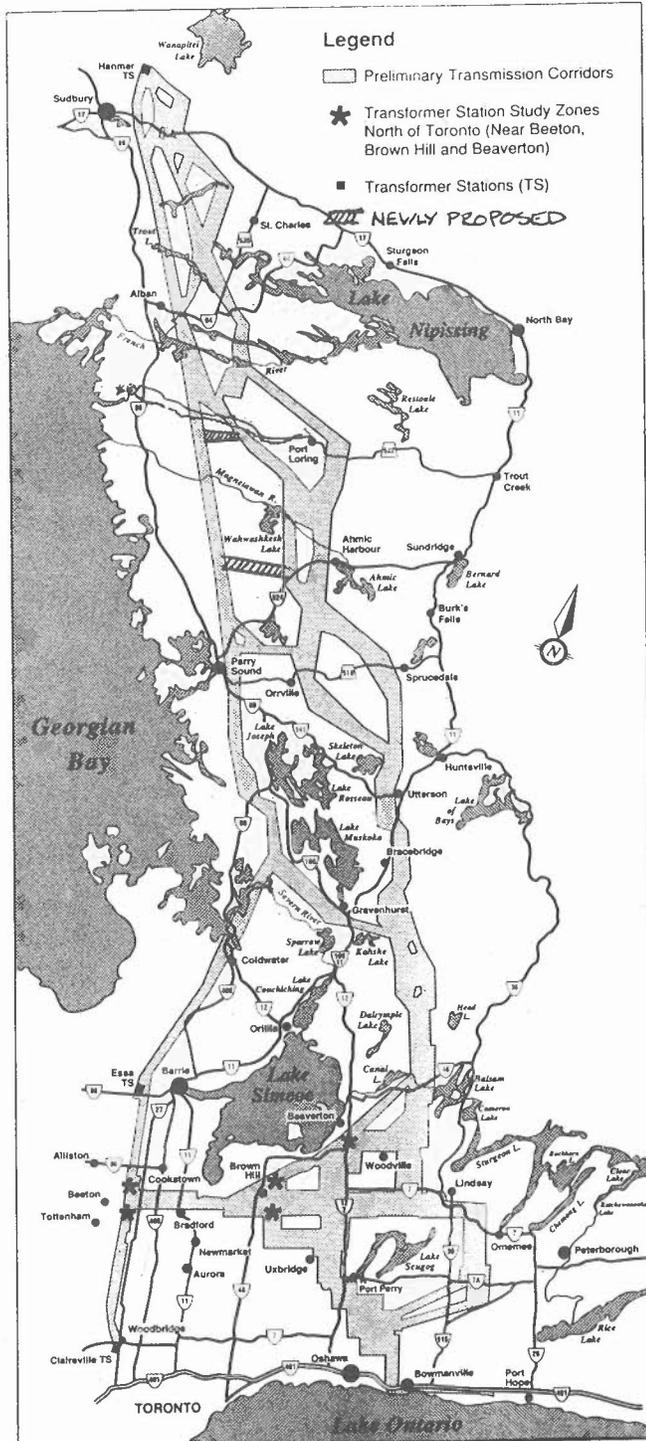
The 280 people who signed the petition at last year's WCA Symposium take heart it mattered. To answer the question you asked me then and I couldn't answer:

Q: If Hydro wants a separate corridor because of the danger of losing transmission due to natural disasters such as tornadoes, how often have they lost transmission on all lines in the corridor to date?

A: Once in the past twenty-two years all lines have been lost in the corridor. (Although Hydro isn't saying for the moment, my money is that it was at Barrie or London, not in the northern part of the line.)

Hydro still has to be carefully watched and I am trying to figure out how the WCA can, with our limited funding and my limited time, be represented at the Environmental Assessment Review to be held in 1994. More on that later. Of grave concern right now is that nobody has specifically championed any river south of the Magnetawan. If anybody out there paddles those waters, and every single body counts at this point, phone or write: Jim Shewchuk, Senior Community Relations Officer, Ontario Hydro, 700 University Avenue, 8th. Floor, Toronto, Ontario M5G 1X6; (416) 592-4092.

Jane Burgess



## FRENCH RIVER HYDRO CROSSING

Not content with having disfigured one of the most magnificent areas on the French River, Ontario Hydro is now poised to commit another assault on the historic wilderness waterway.

Despite the opposition of local people and organizations, the utility plans to string three sets of transmission lines across still another section of the middle French. Ontario Hydro has singled out a small stretch of the French River Heritage Park as a corridor for its Sudbury-Toronto lines — two 500 kv and one 350 kv lines.

The alternate sites it has chosen are the Five Mile Rapids and a passage between the Haystack Islands and Owl's Head Rock, well-known to canoeists, campers, and fishermen.

The decision was made in the face of specific action by the Friends of the French River Heritage Park, which voted to have the utility use the existing corridor along the river, petitions asking the same site be used and signed by dozens of area residents and visitors, and similar protests at every meeting that Ontario Hydro has sponsored in the area.

Two sets of lines now cross the middle French in a section known as the Palisades because of the sheer cliffs that overlook the river. The organizations want the new lines placed under the water at this location. But the utility claims it is acting after it discussed its plans with area residents. The claim has bewildered people in the area. They know of no single person or organization that endorses Ontario Hydro's planned sites for its new lines.

Those who use the river consider it one of the few easily-accessible unspoiled areas in the province. Its pre-Cambrian rocks, pine and juniper forests, many lakes, and good whitewater have attracted thousands of visitors. Its historic value was recognized in 1986 when it was designated as a Canadian Heritage River, and again in 1989 when a major part of the river was made a Provincial Waterway Park.

Asked last year at a public meeting whether the river's status as a provincial park and its historical value meant anything to the utility, an Ontario Hydro spokesman said that it did not.

The area that Hydro plans to invade with its towers and lines has been graded by the Ministry of Natural Resources in its lengthy study of the French River ("French River, Canadian Heritage Waterway Pilot Study") as among the most beautiful on the river that guidebooks describe as the 'river of history.' The river has been used as a waterway for centuries, first by Natives trading with each other, then by the French explorers who thought it just might be the passage they sought to the Orient. It is best known, of course, as the route of the Voyageurs, those steel-sinewed French-Canadians who used it as a major artery in the fur trade.

Its history and the tales associated with the river are still being passed on. Many Ontario camps send youngsters on canoe trips around Eighteen Mile Island. They learn about how the Voyageurs would make the 100 kilometres of waterway from Lake Nipissing to Georgian Bay in one day, often paddling 18 hours. Divers have come up with their muskets, cooking equipment, and tools.

But if Ontario Hydro is allowed to wreak still more havoc on this fragile river, the campers will have another story to follow the ones about the Catholic friars martyred at Cross Island and the feats of the Voyageurs.

This will be the story of an insensitive monopoly, riding over citizen opposition, history and the environment. The transmission lines will be a monument to people who sit in offices drawing diagrams on paper, adding up numbers — executives, engineers and planners to whom the French River is simply a corridor for high-voltage lines.

Fortunately, the plan must pass provincial review. It's possible to halt the utility before it reaches out again.

The Ministry of Natural Resources, whose Sudbury office has received numerous complaints about the proposal, must approve, as must the Ministry of the Environment. Immediate opposition to Ontario Hydro's plans might force the utility to look at less sensitive areas.

To express your opinion, write: 1) The Hon. Ruth Grier, Minister of the Environment, 135 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario M4V 1P5; 2) The Hon. Bob Rae, The Premier of Ontario, Legislative Building, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1; 3) Environmental Assessment Board, 12th Floor, P.O. Box 2382, 2300 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario M4P 1E4; and send copies to: John A. G. Bell, Vice-Chairman, Ontario Hydro, 700 University Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5G 1X8.

Melvin Mencher



Photo by Richard Culpeper

### SMALL HYDRO CLASS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Small hydro developments in Ontario are exempt from the Environmental Assessment Act. The Waterpower Association of Ontario (WAO), which represents the developers, is proposing a set of regulations that will make it even easier to build new small hydro dams. The WCA wants the heart of the Environmental Assessment Act to apply to small hydro so that good environmental planning principles will be used in deciding if and how such developments should be approved. Consequently, the WCA is trying to have the WAO's proposal brought into hearings before the Environmental Assessment Board. This class environmental assessment is of huge importance to the WCA because many wilderness rivers will be affected by small hydro developments. Already, there are developments underway on 74 of our favorite wilderness rivers including the Aux Sables, Groundhog, Kagiano, Temagami, University/Dog, and White.

The WCA is reserving most of its Conservation Committee budget for this fight, and is approaching other organizations to see if they will join our effort in a Coalition. If we are able to form a Coalition, we will apply for Intervenor Funding to help finance our case. A professional case team is being put together by former WCA Director Dale Miner.

The WCA Board has adopted a draft position on the small hydro Class EA. To summarize, the position states that in many projects impacts are dramatic and not easily mitigated, and that the small hydro industry must be included in the EA Act. The WCA submits that small hydro impacts are greater than the WAO implies; that need must be established for a project; that public input must be improved; that the screening process must use the Act's broad definition of the environment; that analytic decisions must be traceable and conducted by objective, accountable professionals; that alternatives to development and alternative methods of development must be considered; and that projects of significant impact (e.g. new dams) must go through full EAs.

Richard Culpeper

## WCA TRIPS

*Remember that WCA trips may have an element of danger and that the ultimate responsibility for your safety is your own.*

### 28 Dec. - 2 Jan. **WARM WATER**

Wayne Syndall, (416) 234-9154, book immediately.

Come celebrate the new year with a leisurely paddle in the warm waters of one of North America's outstanding wildlife preserves, the Okeefeenoque Swamp. The length of the trip depends on the reservation. Limit 10 canoes.

### 28 Dec. - 3 Jan. **WINTER CAMPING IN ALGONQUIN PARK**

Howard Sayles, (416) 921-5321, book before 21 December.

Winter camping in a warm tent with a wood-burning stove. Long red underwear and winter sleeping bag a must. Precise location and snowshoeing routes to be determined by consensus. Limit four tenters.

### 9-10 January **CAMPING IN ALGONQUIN**

Howard Sayles, (416) 921-5321, book before 2 January.

More fun in the snow, with a warm tent to come home to and a back lot without parallel. Winter camping gear essential, bring peanuts for the Whiskeyjacks.

### 23 January **SKI ALGONQUIN**

Karl Schimek, (705) 487-0172, book before 16 January.

Cross country ski on the groomed trails, as little as 10 km or as much as 50 km. Warming huts are available on the trails for those who cool down. If the weather is poor the trip will be postponed one week. Limit six intermediate skiers.

### 6-7 February **WINTER CAMPING IN ALGONQUIN**

Howard Sayles, (416) 921-5321, book before 28 January.

Winter camping in organizer's warm tent with a wood-burning stove. Winter sleeping bag a must. Precise location and snowshoeing routes to be determined by consensus. Limit four tenters. Long red underwear optional. Bring whiskey for Jack, peanuts optional.

### 6-7 February **SKI WEEKEND**

Pat and Bryan Buttigieg, (416) 831-3554, book before 28 January.

We will spend the weekend skiing the groomed trails along the Hwy. 60 corridor. Participants should arrange their own accommodation. There are many cottages and motels in the area; book early to avoid disappointment. Hearty souls can camp at the Mew Lake campground. Limit eight skiers.

### 13-14 February **PARRY SOUND WINTER CAMPING**

Michael Herman, (416) 857-3311, book before 4 February.

We will meet at Michael's cottage, near Parry Sound, on Friday evening. On Saturday we will set out on a snowshoe or ski trip. Interested participants may construct snow shelters; those not so inclined should bring tents. Limit six campers.

### 25-28 February **ALGONQUIN PARK SKI CAMPING**

Herb Pohl, (416) 637-7632, book before 10 February.

The first day of this four-day outing will be spent travelling to a secluded location and setting up a base camp. The rest of the time will be spent exploring the adjacent countryside on skis or snowshoes before returning to our starting point via a different route. A

heated prospector tent will be available to thaw out frozen body parts, dry wet garments, and provide a comfortable setting for meals. Sleeping space in the tent is limited, first-come-first-served, so participants must be prepared to sleep in their own shelter. Limit six reasonably fit campers.

### 27-28 February **OVERNIGHT SKI CAMPING**

Karl Schimek, (705) 487-0172, book before 12 February.

Overnight ski camping in the Hwy. 60 area. Exact route depends on condition of weather and group. We will ski approximately 30 km with overnight gear. Limit four fit skiers.

### 7 March **LOWER CREDIT SEASON OPENER**

Steve Lukasko, (416) 276-8285, book before 1 March.

Experienced cold-weather paddlers will welcome the opportunity to paddle the thaw. Intermediate to advanced paddlers prepared for the season. Limit five boats.

### 13 March **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**

Steve Burnett, (519) 837-8774, book before 4 March.

The Credit from Streetsville down is normally running high in this season. The water is cold and can be unexpectedly tricky. Experienced cold-water paddlers able to manoeuvre in fast water and who have properly outfitted boats are welcome. Limit five canoes.

### 21 March **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**

Duncan Taylor, (416) 368-9748(H), (416) 327-1400(W), book before 14 March.

Our traditional Lower Credit run, from Streetsville to the golf course. Cold, fast-moving water. Experienced paddlers in properly equipped boats. Wet suits required. Limit six canoes.

### 11 April **GRAND RIVER**

Dave Sharp, (519) 621-5599, book before 4 April.

A gentle flatwater trip starting at Cambridge and, depending on water levels, ending at Paris or Brantford. An excellent trip for novice moving water paddlers. Limit six canoes.

# THE OUTDOOR CANADA SHOW

EXHIBITION PLACE  
TORONTO

12-21 MARCH 1993

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SPORTSMEN'S SHOW

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

## PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

*This PRODUCTS AND SERVICES section is available, free of charge and on a first-come, first-served 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.*

**DISCOUNTS ON TRIPPING SUPPLIES** WCA members who present a membership card will receive a 10 percent discount on many non-sale times at:

ABC Sports, 552 Yonge Street, Toronto,  
 Algonquin Outfitters, RR#1, Oxtongue Lake, Dwight, Ontario,  
 Rockwood Outfitters, 669 Speedvale Ave. West, Guelph, Ontario,  
 Suntrail Outfitters, 100 Spence Str. (Hwy. 70), Hepworth, Ontario.  
 Members should check at each store to find out what items are discounted.

**CANOE FOR SALE** Sixteen-foot cedar canvas Huron canoe, recently restored, \$1200. Call Robert Cressatti at (416) 472-4951.

**CANOE FOR SALE** Bad River ME solo whitewater boat, including air bags, asking \$500; Del Dako (416) 421-2108.

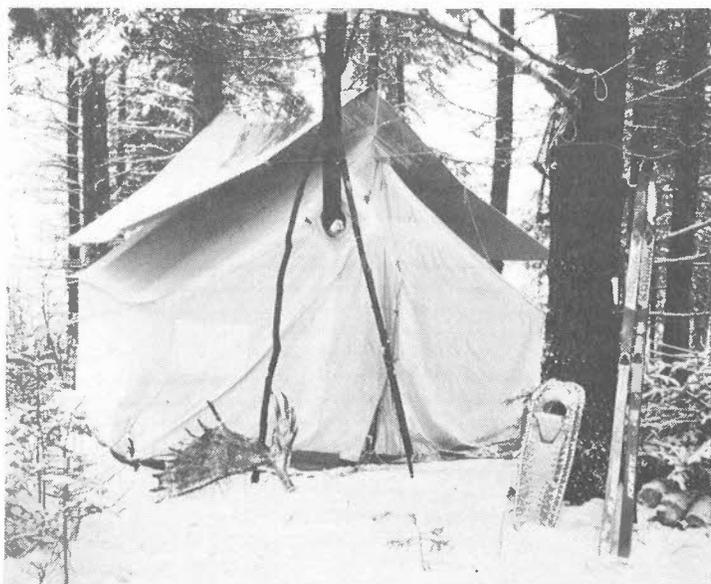


Photo by Jay Neilson

**HOME FOR CANOEING** The Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association (CRCA) is continuing its "Home for Canoeing" campaign (Oct.91 - Oct.94) to build/purchase an Outdoor Education/Environmental Learning Centre at which the Association's office would be located. It would also serve as a centre for outdoor and environmental education, slide shows / seminars / guest speakers on canoeing/kayaking and the outdoors, a "Wall of Fame" area to pay tribute to great Canadians who have made outstanding contributions to canoeing and kayaking, a place to find information about paddling in Canada, and much more. Donations sent to the CRCA - designated for the "Home for Canoeing" campaign - will receive a charitable donations tax receipt and will be recognized in perpetuity at the new "Home for Canoeing" as well as in Kanawa Magazine. Contact: CRCA, 1029 Hyde Park Road, Suite 5, Hyde Park, Ontario N0M 1Z0; tel. (519) 473-2109; fax (519) 473-6560.

**FRENCH RIVER PROVINCIAL PARK MAP** is now available. This 1:50,000-scale full-color map, recently produced by the Ministry of Natural Resources, is an indispensable guide to canoeists and boaters who want to visit any part of the French River system, from Lake Nipissing to Georgian Bay, and provides much useful information such as campsites, portages, and access points. Sales of the map — which costs \$10.00 plus postage and handling — are primarily made through The Friends of the French River Heritage Park, P.O. Box 142, Copper Cliff, Ontario P0M 1N0. (I have a number of maps available in Toronto for direct sale at \$10.00; Toni Harting, (416) 964-2495.)

**1993 CANOEING CALENDARS** are again available from the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association. The Canadian Heritage Rivers calendar costs \$9.95 and presents a number of fine color photographs of several heritage rivers in Canada. The Canoeoon calendar made by Paul Mason gives you thirteen of the zaniest canoe/kayak cartoons ever and costs \$6.95. For more information on how to order these unique calendars, contact the CRCA, 1029 Hyde Park Rd., Suite 5, Hyde Park, Ontario, N0M 1Z0, phone (519) 473-2109.

**CELEBRATION OF THE WILDERNESS** During the weekend of 6-7 March 1993, Valley Ventures will be hosting the second annual "Celebration of the Wilderness" in Deep River, Ontario. Saturday's events will take place in the Mackenzie High School Auditorium and will present topics such as (tentatively) ice climbing in the Lake Superior region, sea kayaking around the Queen Charlotte Islands, canoeing in and around North Bay, establishing the height of Mount Logan, and Algonquin Park Centennial Year. The evening will be optional and will consist of a buffet dinner and refreshments at the Eddy Inn. Sunday will consist of ski tours on some of the 60 km of trails through the Petawawa Research Forest. A campsite will be set up at the Shanty with refreshments, campfire, and live entertainment. Guides are available as well as tours of various lengths. Deep River is located on the Ottawa River and Hwy. 17 between North Bay and Ottawa. For information regarding accommodation and costs contact Don Smith, Box 1115, Deep River, ON, K0J 1P0; phone (613) 584-2577; or Sharon Girdwood, RR.1, Braeside, ON, K0A 1G0, phone (613) 623-7166.



**CANOEETOOONS**  
 PAUL MASON

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Bob Shortill Bethany, Ont. (705) 277-3538	Peter Verbeek Scarborough, Ont. (416) 757-3814				

## Wilderness Canoe Association membership application

I enclose a cheque for \$25 (single) or \$35 (family) for membership in the *Wilderness Canoe Association*. I understand that this gives me/us the opportunity to participate in WCA trips and activities, and entitles me/us to receive *Nastawgan* and to vote at meetings of the Association. I also understand that WCA trips may have an element of danger and that the ultimate responsibility for the member's safety is his/her own.

**PRINT CLEARLY!**                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov. \_\_\_\_\_

New member      Member # if renewal: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Single                       Family  
 Phone Number(s):  
 (        ) \_\_\_\_\_ (h)  
 (        ) \_\_\_\_\_ (w)

\* This membership is valid for one year.                      Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_                      Ext. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \* Send completed form and cheque, payable to the WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION, to the membership secretary at the WCA postal address.