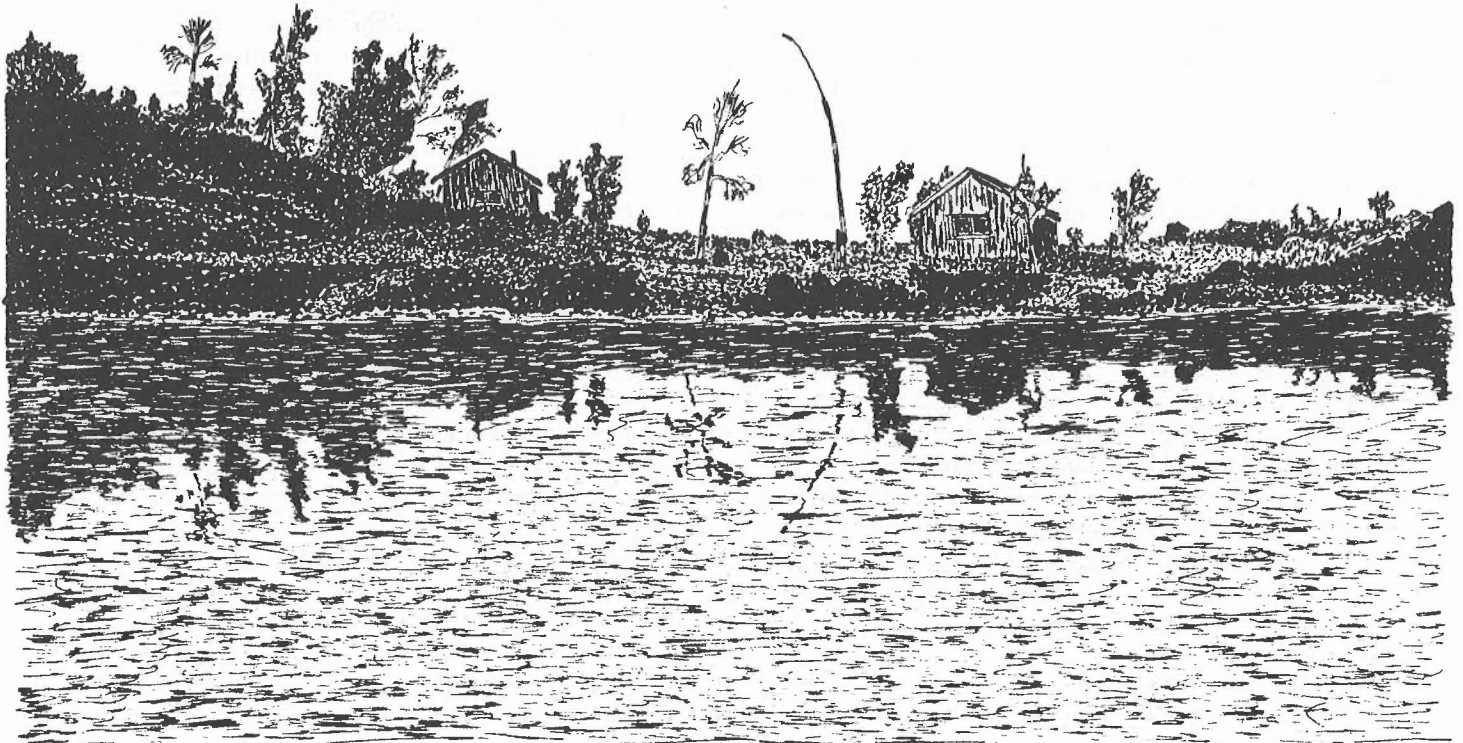




nastawgan

Summer 1993 Vol. 20 No. 2

Quarterly Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association



Bompas Lake, Sask. '92 ME

NORTH OF BLACK LAKE

Journeys from "The-Mouths-of-Three-Rivers Lake"

Article and drawings by Michael Kerwin

For much of my adult life, I have dreamed of dense primeval forests and of vast spaces, and I have longed for broad expanses of water and wild tumbling cataracts. So it is not surprising that, in the summer of 1991, I jumped at the opportunity to work as an elementary school teacher in Black Lake, Saskatchewan — Athabasca country just north of the 59th parallel.

The land there is imposing; seemingly wild and desolate, it has been left largely unscathed by the depredations of large-scale resource extraction and land development. It is a complex array of interconnected waterways, of hills weathered by elemental forces, and of boreal forests extending in all directions as far as one can see. Yet there is something which transcends the mere physical topography, for this land possesses a magic, one compounded of vastness, solitude, and mystery. It is a land of mythic proportions inhabited by

spirits and bogeymen; a land where adventurers such as David Thompson, J.B. Tyrrell, and Erik Munsterhjelm travelled; a land occupied by countless generations of Native Peoples who, long before any whiteman came to their country, journeyed on their seasonal migrations through the forests and the barren lands.

Of all the bodies of water in the vicinity, Black Lake is one of the largest with an area of about 520 square kilometres. The lake extends some 66 km in a northeasterly direction, widening at its most northerly extent to an open expanse of water 15 km across. It was given its present name by David Thompson in 1796, apparently because of the dark hills of norite that dominate the northwestern shore. Yet to the Chipewyan People, the Dene, it was always *Dess-dara-tua*, "The-Mouths-of-Three-Rivers Lake," into which the Cree, Fond du Lac, and Chipman rivers flow.

When Thompson travelled through this area nearly two hundred years ago, he was attempting to find an alternative to the Churchill River - Methye Portage route to Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca. However, due to the lateness of the annual spring break-up on both Reindeer and Wollaston lakes, the two largest bodies of water on the proposed route, this shortcut to Athabasca country failed to become an established trade route. Black Lake never became part of a venue for the fur trade and no permanent settlements were ever established.

The area remained largely unpopulated save for small, transient hunting groups whose movements were determined by the seasonal cycle of the Barren Ground caribou. With the arrival of increasing numbers of whites to the area surrounding eastern Lake Athabasca, however, communities such as Fond du Lac and Stony Rapids were established and with them, ancillary native settlements. One of these settlements was just to the east of Stony Rapids at Stony Lake, but in the early 1950s the Dene decided to abandon it in favor of a site more accessible to hunting and fishing. The site they chose was Black Lake.

Situated on a sandy ridge where the lake narrows to three or four kilometres, the town of Black Lake is a disarray of small, mostly ramshackle houses interspersed with a few public buildings, a church, a nursing station, and a school. Down by the water's edge is the store, a focal point for social interaction, where groups comprised largely of men often collect to smoke and talk or play a game of penny toss. All about town, in all but the most inclement weather, there is a constant hubbub of children laughing and playing, dogs barking and ravens cawing. In the distance, there is the roar of chain-saws cutting firewood, or the creaking of a truck lurching over a rutted dirt road.

On the whole, I found the community a pleasant one; but, whenever I tired of the hurly-burly of town life, I took to the back trails of the surrounding countryside. At first, I limited my wanderings to well-worn paths just outside town; then, gradually, I began to range further afield as I developed a better knowledge of the lay of the land. More significantly, I was befriended by people like Edwin Alphonse and Germain Dadzene and so, whether on foot or by boat, by snowshoe, dog sled, or skidoo, we ventured forth to picnic and camp, hunt and fish, and check nets and set traps.

Then, one clear, cold day in February, four elders (Moise Yooya, Alfred Toutsaint, Joe Cheba, and Charley Throassie) led six teenage boys and myself "up north" toward the Territories to hunt caribou. That first night, we all slept in a cabin 7 by 7 metres - along with about a half dozen or so other men and boys from town. The following day, our real work began. We had to establish a camp and set up tents (their canvas scorched by once-flying embers from long forgotten fires) and, daily thereafter, to chop firewood, tend wood stoves, and collect snow to be melted for water (carefully gathering only the hardened crystalline layers below the surface). There was a true sense of sharing, of communality, as well as a profound experience of the wilderness and of an almost forgotten freedom.

Finally, there was the hunt. In the dull, gray light of early afternoons, the boys and I scrambled aboard the back of

toboggans pulled by roaring snowmachines. Clutching almost desperately, we skidded across windswept, frozen lakes and lurched over meandering game trails. Then, it was on to another lake and, there, off in the distance — *ett'hén* — bou! We stalked our prey; suddenly, there was the crack of rifle fire. We butchered the caribou and, afterwards, stopped for a "shore lunch" comprising roast caribou head and kidneys, black tea, bannock, and whatever else one happened to have along in a kit bag. It was six days of living on the land at -35°C and a grand adventure.

Gradually, my perceptions of the North began to change. Appearing less like a strange and hostile wilderness, it seemed rich and full, possessing an immensity and an austere grandeur, at once familiar yet unknowable. Prior to my arrival in Black Lake, with my rather limited understanding of the North, I could only vaguely sense this; my experiences in northern Saskatchewan, then, became often as much journeys of the mind and spirit as physical journeys.

As winter wore on, I began to look forward to spring break-up and the start of a new season of paddling. Increasingly, I began to consider the possibility of travelling alone by canoe. A route had to be decided upon and the possibilities seemed almost limitless.

From friends in town I learned that the Chipman River (named by J.B. Tyrrell after C.C. Chipman, a Hudson's Bay commissioner) provided the major access route to the north. Although now used almost exclusively as a winter trail to caribou hunting grounds, the route had been used, as recently as the early 1970s, for the annual trek to northern trapping areas. In those days, beginning in the late summer or early fall, everything which was needed to live in the bush for four months was packed up. Fathers, mothers, and children of all ages, accompanied by packs of yelping dogs, set off in heavily laden, motorized canoes on a leisurely trip to winter cabins, which might be as distant as Selwyn, Wholdaia, Snowbird, or Kasba lakes. The more I learned of this route, the more fascinated I became with it: perhaps retracing the path that so many people had spent the better part of a lifetime travelling would provide an interesting challenge.

Then too, I had read Munsterhjelm's account of ascending the Porcupine River during the mid 1930s and how, during that trip, he had heard of an alternate route along a string of small lakes and rivers to Selwyn Lake. I was able to confirm this route by checking a 1941 Geological Survey of Canada map. Although a feasible alternative to the Chipman River route, at least in former times, it was a much more rugged one and it is clear why the route up the Chipman River, despite one portage of five kilometres and several others of varying lesser distances, was the preferred route.

During the long evenings of late winter and early spring, I gazed intently at my maps, dreaming of the lakes, rivers, and portages which I might pass. As well, I began asking around town if anyone had any first-hand information about my proposed route and especially about what I might expect, if I decided to come down from the east side of Selwyn Lake to connect with the Porcupine and Fond du Lac rivers. Obtaining information about the first leg of the trip was relatively easy; both Philip Sayazie and Pierre Catholic, having travelled extensively in that area, proved to be valu-

able sources of information. No one that I spoke with, however, seemed to have any real first-hand knowledge of the country east of the Chipman River. Nevertheless, I began to consider the possibility of travelling along a loop up to Selwyn Lake and back, but one question kept troubling me. Would those portages on the prospective return part of the trip, so clearly marked on the 1941 map, still be in existence?

In the meantime, I began other trip preparations: drying food, ordering 1:50,000 topographical maps, planning details of my itinerary, etc. Yet, even though this was to be my first extended solo canoe trip (and I was somewhat apprehensive about that), preparations were generally much less involved than those for other canoe trips which I had done in the past. There were, after all, no transportation arrangements to be made and, as for food, I simply filled a canoe pack with a good variety of ample supplies. On the advice of friends, however, I did pack along an axe and a rifle which John Throassie lent me. Although I had never travelled with either of these two items on any of my previous canoe trips, in the far north at any rate, no sensible person ever went anywhere without them.

Even though I had worked out an itinerary that might permit me to loop back down from Selwyn Lake, my plans remained flexible. Apart from reaching a fishing camp on Selwyn Lake, I had no set destination. Once at the camp, I could decide whether or not to continue with the more rugged (and perhaps now impassable) route to the Porcupine and Fond du Lac rivers. What I wanted above all was to spend some time in the bush, up north, by myself. What I did or where I went was of secondary importance. When I had had enough, I would simply return.

On 15 June, about a week after the ice left the north end of the lake, I carried my canoe and gear down to the water, said my good-byes and set off. Just outside town, at an abandoned winter camp, I stopped briefly to make a small offering of tobacco. According to traditional belief, a small gift, made as one sets out on the water, will ensure favorable weather. It was indeed a glorious day, sunny and clear, with light winds from the west and an unseasonably high temperature of -1°C.

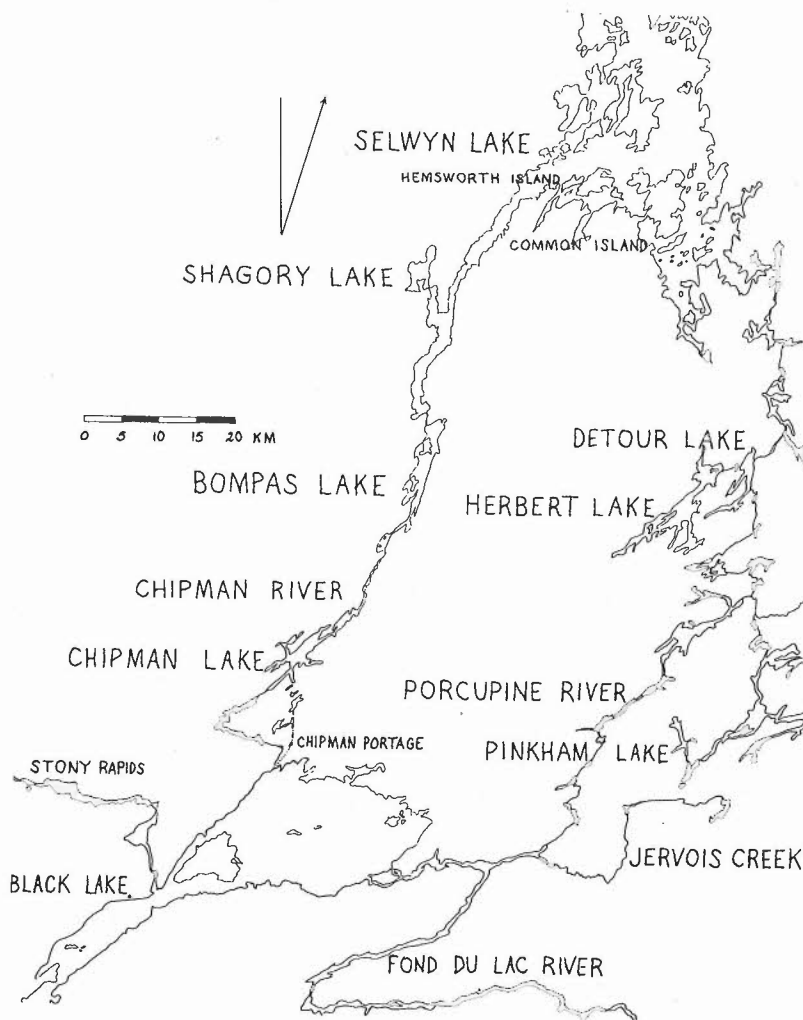
I paddled leisurely up toward the north end of the lake, past those same high dark hills that David Thompson had seen almost two hundred years before. In a few shaded hollows, remnants of snow and ice could still be seen. Except for the occasional boat carrying a guide and one or two fishermen, I was alone. At one point, one of the motor boats began to veer over towards my canoe. It turned out to be my friend Philip Sayazie, guiding for a fisherman. As his boat neared, Philip shouted out a greeting and then admonished me for straying too far from shore. Weather could change rapidly and no matter how experienced one was, a big northern lake wasn't a place to be when the winds began to pick up.

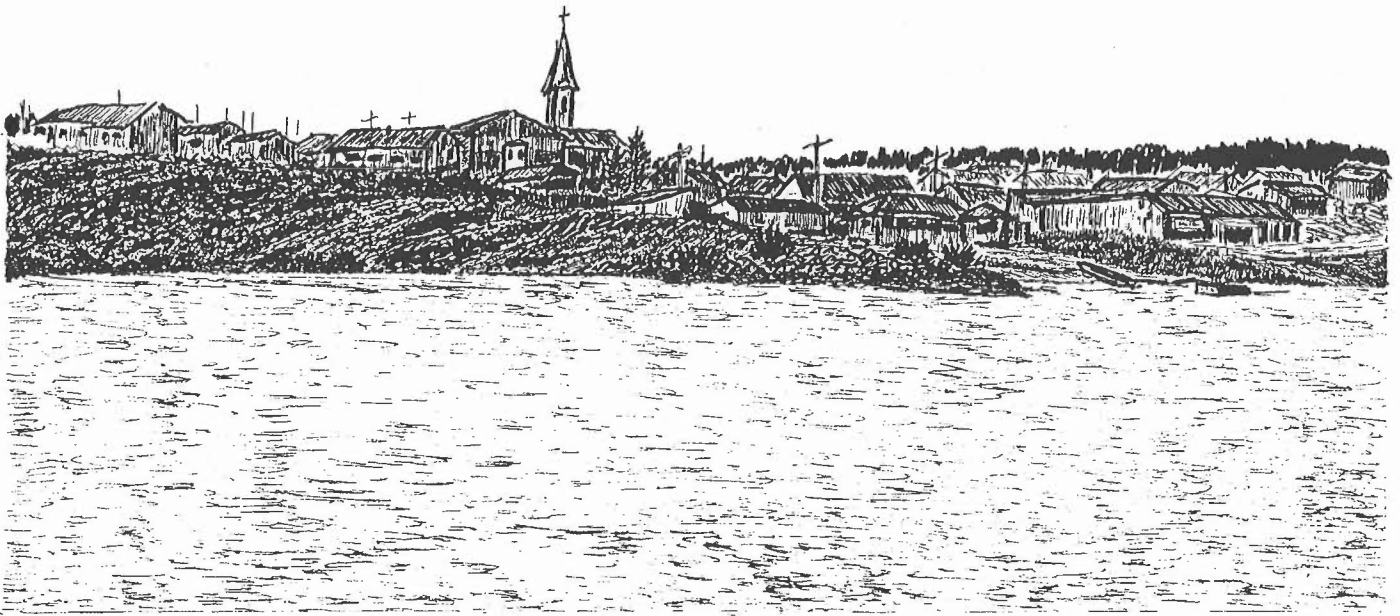
Camp, that first evening, was in a grassy meadow at the mouth of the Chipman River. It was a pleasant spot about half a kilometre from the beginning of the Chipman Portage and one that had obviously been used by visiting fishermen for shore lunches. Just off a ways, by the edge of the woods, was a small winter cabin: log walls banked with sand, a narrow plywood door tied shut with a piece of rope, two small windows, and a plank roof covered with an insulating layer of sand and moss. The refuse outside indicated that the cabin had been well used during the previous winter.

Early the next morning, by a small grave enclosed by a weathered picket fence, I began the first of three carries across the Chipman Portage. Bypassing a steep

section of the Chipman River as it tumbles through a canyon in a series of unnavigable cataracts, the portage rises approximately 63 m over its five-kilometre length. (A number of years ago, a new section of trail from Black Lake was cut about three or four kilometres to the west of the one indicated on the map. The new trail joins up with the old one about a kilometre from the end, and although making the portage slightly longer, the newer section is, supposedly, easier travelling.) Ten hours and two portages later, I set up camp at Cross Lake, the second of six small lakes before one reaches Chipman Lake. I had paddled 4.5 kilometres and walked 25.

That evening, showers began, accompanied by strong





Black Lake, Sask. '92 MK

gusty winds. By the next morning, the showers had given way to the occasional snow flurry, but the winds had increased. I waited a couple of hours, then, not wanting to delay further, decided to head up the lee shore as best I could. My progress was slow but eventually I made it to the next portage. From here on, the going became somewhat easier and by late afternoon I finally made the last carry-over into Chipman Lake. As the wind abated, the waves began to decrease in size and I made good progress paddling on into the early evening.

Midway along the length of Chipman Lake, in a small bay just past a narrows, I came to a small crescent-shaped beach. There was an old and well-used campsite here that I had been told about and one could see why it had been used for generations. Sheltered, to the north by a small island in the bay and by bush to the east, south, and west, the site was picturesque and accessible to what seemed to be reasonably

good hunting and fishing. Here, by the forest's edge, was evidence of an old tent site. As well, there were one or two pits, an old hearth, and scattered about the beach, various fish bones — the remains of some long-ago meal. It was a lovely spot and the perfect place to end a long day of paddling and portaging.

The next day dawned sunny and warm with a light trailing wind and, after a leisurely start to the day, I set off northward toward Bompas Lake. The land alternated between sections of low-lying spruce forest and shallow, reed-filled bays and areas where more rugged outcrops of Shield dropped steeply into the water.

I made three portages that day and it became evident that I was no longer on the well-used winter trails to northern hunting areas: the paths were often rugged and overgrown and, in several spots, quite impassable because of deadfalls. Then too, there were none of the usual indications of winter use - no broken-off bits and pieces of snowmobile or toboggan, no worn nylon cordage. Feeling increasingly vulnerable in this remote land, I was glad when I at last completed my final carry to Bompas Lake.

Named after William Bompas, first Anglican Bishop of Athabasca, Bompas Lake is a scenic body of water somewhat narrow in its southerly reaches but widening towards the north. Its eastern shore is quite hilly with numerous rocky outcrops but the west side, especially at the north end, is considerably flatter. There, along the northwest shore, is a large peninsula with numerous sandy beaches and a handful of small wooded islands offering many well-protected campsites.

On one of these islands, after having travelled for just over ten hours, I chose to camp. There were two cabins here, the one older and derelict, the other neat, well maintained — and padlocked. With its easy access to Selwyn Lake and an



Selwyn Lake, Sask. '92 MK

open view of Bompas Lake, this was likely a favored year-round camp.

The newer cabin was painted red, its logs chinked with fiberglass insulation and covered with wood battens. Through a window I could see religious icons and a pair of homemade snowshoes hanging from the walls and, over to one side, a stove, table, chair, and two beds. Outside lay the usual signs of winter habitation, a makeshift radio antenna of poles, and to the north, on the far side of the island, a small dock listing into the clear, frigid waters of the lake.

Although far from pristine, the site was quite homey and somehow the fact that it belonged to and was used by people in town made me feel less lonely and the land less empty. I retired for the evening and listened as songbirds winged overhead and mosquitoes began their incessant droning and pattering against the walls of my tent.

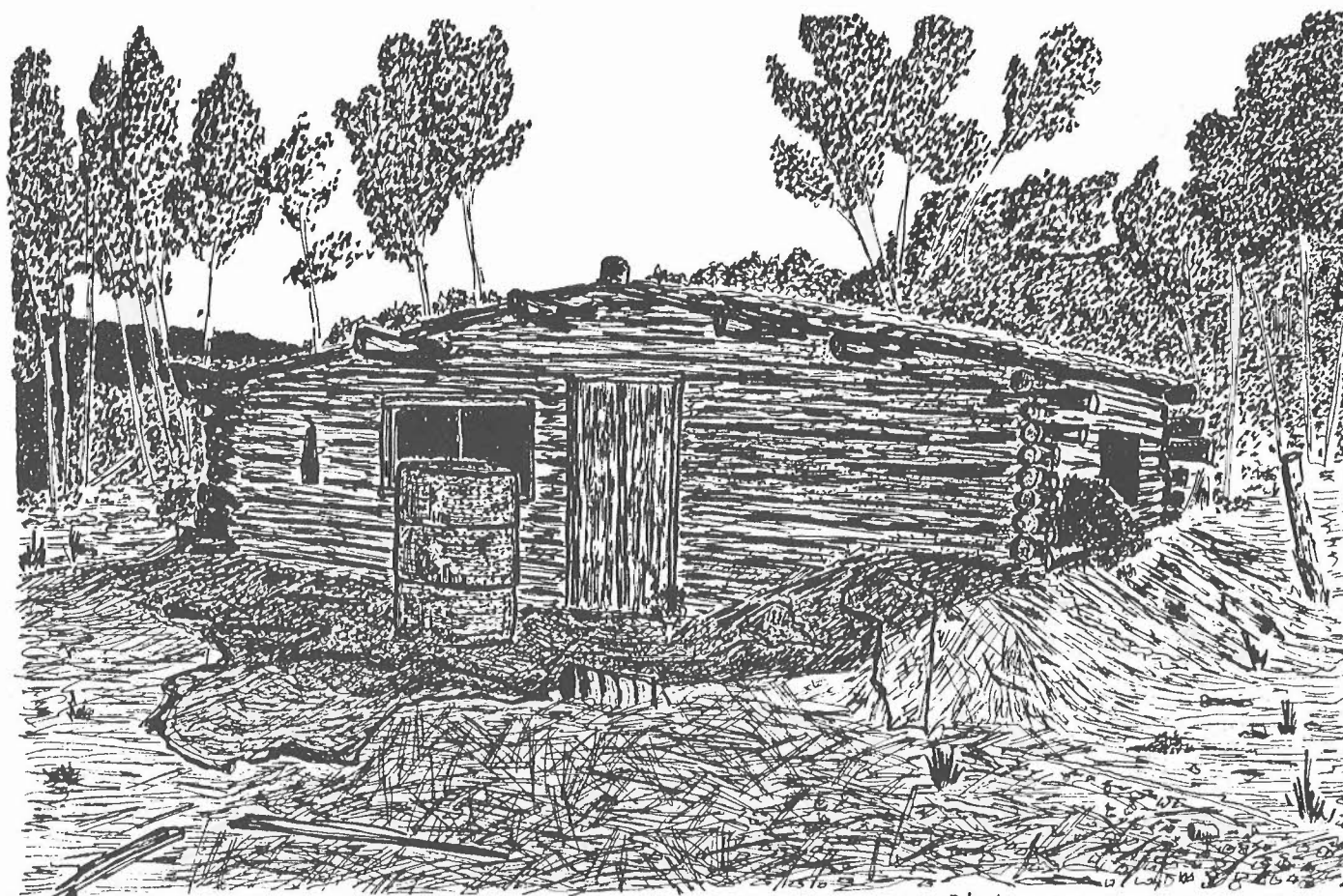
Shortly after 8 a.m. the following day, I set out, paddling the five remaining kilometres to the north end of Bompas Lake. The portage into Selwyn Lake was about 500 m to the east of where the Chipman River enters Bompas Lake — not the 270 m I had been led to believe from written reports. The trail traversed some low ground before reaching a small pond, then continued, rising to a pleasant wooded ridge. The path was well used; I picked up my pace and in a short while reached Selwyn Lake.

The south end of the lake is a long, relatively narrow arm filled with numerous islands and small bays. This arm extends about 30 km before opening up into a vast body of

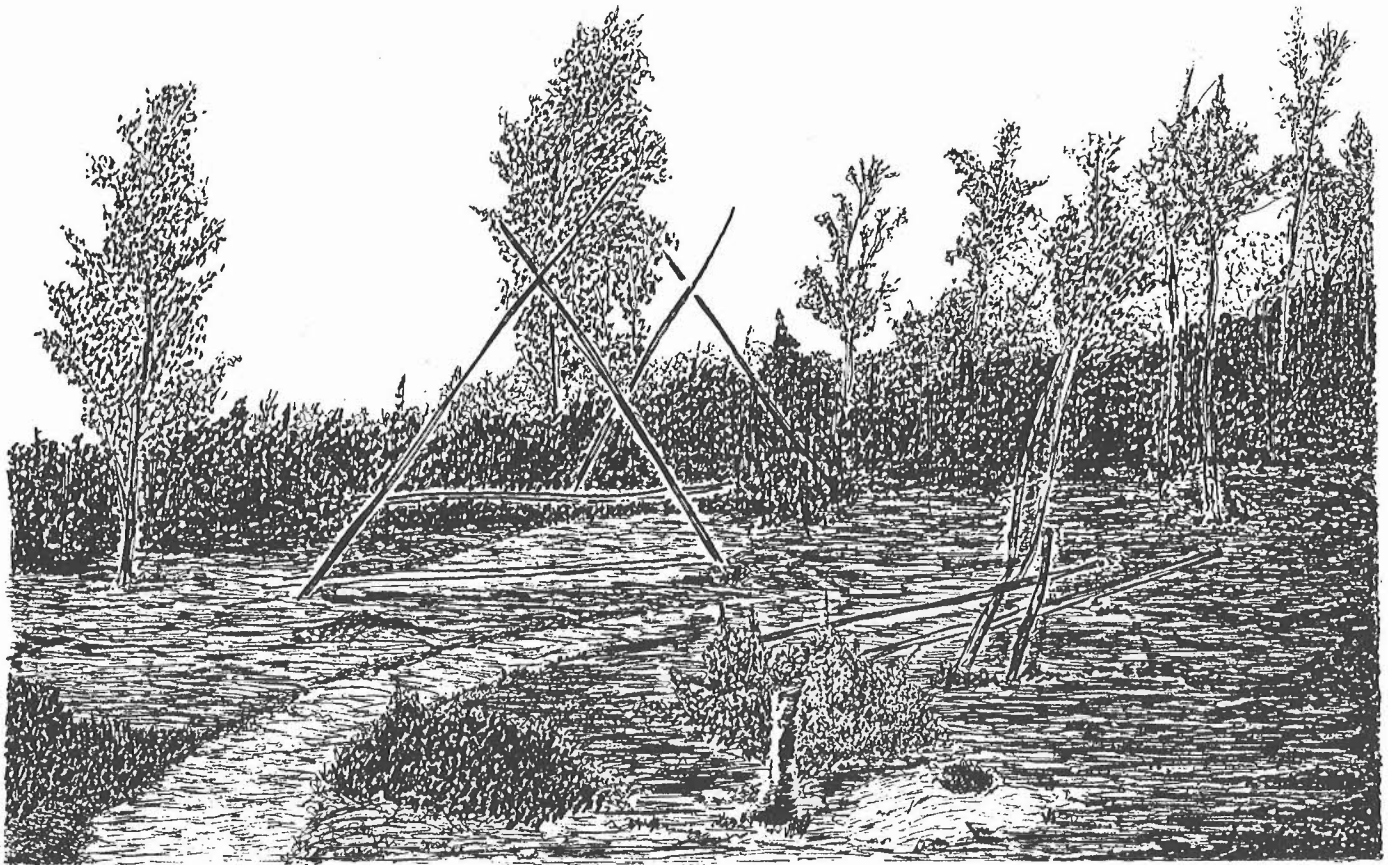
water just north of the 60th parallel. On this day, for all its warmth and sunshine, the lake was whipped by strong winds. Paddling from island to island and from bay to bay, I worked my way slowly northward. I passed another lovely old campsite on the north shore, east of the inlet to Shagory Lake. Yet, wanting to make the most of my day and more easily traverse Selwyn Lake the following travel day, unencumbered by wind and waves, I resisted the temptation to stay but kept going on. By early evening, I decided to stop at a small island where I found the remains of an old fly-in fishing camp.

That night, light, scattered showers began and continued on throughout the next day. With the weather unpleasant and becoming fatigued after five days of travel, I decided to stay over a day. I could sleep, eat, read, try a bit of fishing, and — still wondering about those portages to Jervois Creek — mull over which route I should take.

The following day, summer solstice, the winds and rain persisted. Nonetheless, I set out, eager to arrive at the fishing camp situated on the southeast corner of Hemsworth Island where Philip Sayazie was supposed to be guiding for a few days. Although not long, the day proved to be frustrating and disheartening. Cold and wet, I arrived at a camp, not bustling with friendly and welcoming fisherman, but abandoned and in shambles. Each of the two cabins had at least one gaping hole in the walls; there were liquor bottles and garbage everywhere. Several foam mattresses lay shredded and strewn about the cabin floors, probably the work of a mischievous bear.



Toutsaint's cabin. Black Lake, Sask. '92 MK.



Abandoned winter camp, Black Lake, June 92. MK

It had not been an enjoyable day and I repeatedly asked myself, "Where is Philip?" and "Does the portage exist?" I was thoroughly dispirited but at least I was safe. I set up camp, unpacked, and hung things up to dry, then had supper and turned in for the night.

Over the course of the next two days, I was able to transform a section of the main cabin into a semblance of order and I enjoyed the extra space, no longer being confined to my small tent. I helped myself to materials which had obviously been abandoned - a bit of laundry detergent, books (including *The Bobbsey Twins Camping Out*), bucket, sink, table, chairs, etc. A rusting old wood stove which I was able to fire up was especially welcome. My stay in the cabin was a relaxing time to attend to household chores, reading, and bathing, and to gaze out across the small bay.

Finally, with a break in the weather, I decided to push on. There was another fishing camp, located on Common Island less than a half day's travel away, where I thought that I might be able to connect with Philip or someone else. If nothing else, I could at least leave word of my intended change of route, for I had decided that the most prudent course of action would be to return along the route I had come. The last thing I wanted was to find myself at a dead end 300 km from my starting point. After travelling for four hours, I arrived at the second camp only to discover that it too was abandoned — something that I had almost half-expected. By this time, the wind had picked up so I decided to make camp and settle in; the next day, weather permitting, I

would retrace my steps and head back toward Black Lake.

As luck would have it, the weather improved. By 9:30 the following morning, I had regained the first camp only to find that during the 24 hours that I had been absent, a float plane had been by and dropped off some new equipment and supplies. The camp had not been abandoned after all and it was most likely an unforeseen delay that had prevented Philip from meeting me. Nevertheless, I decided to continue on my way home. With the weather holding, I was able to make excellent progress, often covering in a single day ground which had previously taken two days. Although eager to get back, I did enjoy the now familiar sights and the sunny, calm days of paddling and portaging. Finally, on day 14, I re-crossed Chipman Portage.



Chipman Portage overlooking Black Lake, Sept. 92. MK

Late in the afternoon, as I neared the put-in at Black Lake, singing in full voice, I was very surprised to see a khaki-clad figure standing in the clearing by the water's edge. The stranger, who was perhaps more surprised than I (for he was beginning to think that he was hearing voices), turned out to be another solo paddler heading up toward Baker Lake. Neither of us had seen or spoken to anyone else for at least two weeks and we were both eager for conversation. After chatting for a half hour or so, I suggested that we might carry on our 'social' and set up camp. We trundled off to fetch the rest of my gear, loaded up the canoes and then paddled the 500 or so metres to the meadow by the mouth of the Chipman River where I had spent my first night.

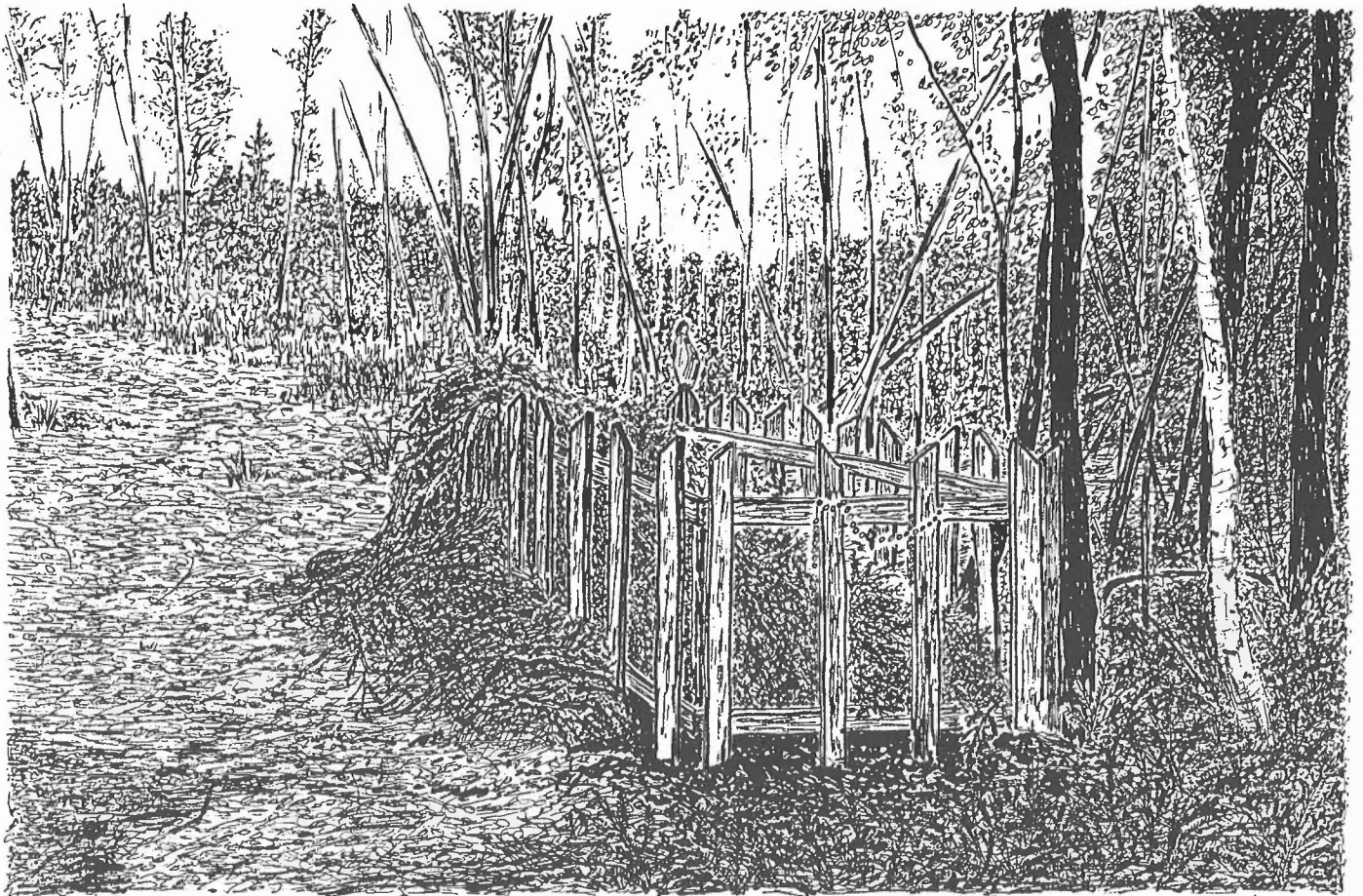
In no time at all we had set up tents and unpacked gear, started a fire, and put on some bannock to bake. We then ambled down to the foot of the small rapid, where the river joins the lake, to catch some dinner. It was a grand evening full of country food and talk that lasted on into the midnight twilight.

Early the next morning, we awoke to find a large black bear in the midst of our camp — one which seemed in no hurry to leave. This, of course, provided us with some considerable and unexpected excitement. But then, how we dealt with our predicament is another story — the stuff of tall tales told around a campfire. Suffice to say that, after resolving our dilemma, we decided to layover an extra day, so that we might continue to enjoy the pleasant weather and

each other's company before heading off on our separate ways.

It soon came time to take our leave of each other and so, early the following day, I set out on the last leg of my trip. The 23 km passed by pleasantly and in a few hours I found myself back in town in the midst of Canada Day celebrations surrounded by friends and curious on-lookers. There were handshakes, greetings, and questions all round: Had I seen any moose? Where had I travelled? Was I returning to teach next year? It was a glorious day and a splendid welcome back home.

The trip had been a culmination of sorts and the last trip which I was to do during my stay in Black Lake. Being my first solo trip it was, naturally, of some personal significance, yet it lacked that quality characteristic of my other travels in northern Saskatchewan: the sharing of experience with the peoples for whom the land was most significant: the Dene. Nevertheless, I had been fortunate to have sensed physically, in every way, that land and, through a year of experiences in Black Lake, I had been enabled to place that trip into cultural and historical contexts. I had shared, "a marvellous, real, familiar and, at the same time, mystical landscape of the imagination." (C.E.S. Franks, "Towards a landscape of the imagination" in *Canexus: the Canoe in Canadian Culture*, edited by James Raffan and Bert Horwood. Toronto, Betelgeuse Books, 1988, p. 201.)



Grave . Chipman Portage, Sask. June '92 MK



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 Nastawgan is an Anishinabi word meaning 'the way or route'

The WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization made up of individuals interested in wilderness travel, mainly by canoe and kayak, but also including backpacking and winter trips on both skis and snowshoes. The club publishes a quarterly journal,

Nastawgan, to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas of interest to wilderness travellers, organizes an extensive program of trips for members, runs a few basic workshops, and is involved in environmental issues relevant to wilderness canoeing.

NEWS BRIEFS

NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE Articles, trip reports, book reviews, photographs, sketches, technical tips, or anything else that you think might be of interest to other readers, are needed for future issues. Submit your contributions preferably on floppy computer disks (WordPerfect preferred, but any format is welcome) or in typewritten form; contact the editor for more information. Contributor's Guidelines are available upon request; please follow these guidelines as much as possible to increase the efficiency of the production of our journal. The deadline dates for the next two issues are:

issue: Autumn 1993 deadline date: 8 Aug. 1993
 Winter 1993 24 Oct. 1993

WCA MEMBERSHIP LISTS are available to any members who wish one for personal, non-commercial use. Send a five dollar bill (no cheque, please!) to Cash Belden at the WCA postal address (see WCA Contacts on the back page).

WCA ADDRESS Please note the correct WCA postal address in the list on the back page.

CRCA PHOTO COMPETITION The Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association presents *The Nikon Canadian Canoe Photograph Contest*. Entries should be submitted to the CRCA before 15 September 1993, 5:00 p.m. The contest is open to anyone, and many prizes are made available to the winners. For more information contact the CRCA in Hyde Park, Ontario, tel./fax (519) 473-2109.

persuaded to serve another term as your Chairman. Bryan Buttigieg was unanimously elected Vice Chairman. After some initial uncertainty, a site for the Fall Meeting has been finalized — the Mary Lake Scout Camp. The preliminary plans for the program look interesting. There should be a flyer with more details enclosed with your newsletter. See you there.

Our participation at the Sportsmen's Show and the Canoe Expo was very successful, largely due to the superb organizing of Pat Buttigieg. In a fit of generosity, the Board has decided to increase the perks for members representing the WCA at public events by ordering Official WCA Name Tags. Those of you who were holding back, waiting for the "offer to be sweetened," need wait no longer!

Membership, as of 15 April, stands at 521 and our finances are at their usual spring "highwater mark," swollen with unspent membership fees. An excellent outings program is in full swing. All's right with the world!

The Class Environmental Assessment for Small Hydro seems to be dormant at the present time with little push either from the Waterpower Association or government. Our trusted representatives continue to keep a close eye on the scoundrels.

Please have a happy summer, filled with adventures (the safe kind) and then come home and write them up for *Nastawgan*. Toni would love to hear from you!

Bill King

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 highly successful AGM at Mansfield Outdoor Centre, the Board met briefly to conduct essential business, such as the election of officers, before heading for the trails. Duncan Taylor, amply justifying his reputation as "a slow learner with masochistic tendencies" was



A TALE OF TWO TRIPS

Murray Brown

April 1991 saw my wife Linda and myself on our way to California on a trip that we felt we couldn't afford. But an airline seat sale convinced us that at such low prices we couldn't afford not to go either. We were hosted by my cousin Kevin and his wife Marlene. The main event of our one-week trip was a four-day stay in Yosemite National Park which is in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Yosemite is one of the premier hiking parks in the U.S. The main tourist area is the Yosemite Valley from which there are a number of hiking trails of varying distances and degrees of difficulty. The four of us spent two of the three nights in a cabin, and Kevin and I spent the third night in the confines of a nylon shelter. Our wives opted for the warmer, more domesticated form of accommodation and tackled the shorter day hikes.

The valley floor is at roughly 4000 ft. elevation. The temperature was slightly above freezing and there were only patches of snow left in areas that were shaded.

Our hike was only five miles long but in that distance the trail contains 105 switchbacks and climbs 2700 ft. The trail had seen little use by this time of the year and as we climbed higher the snow deepened, making our progress continually more strenuous. It took us five hours to reach our destination although my companion thought I could have done it in four hours if I had been by myself. The thinning air, a result of increasing elevation, seemed to have affected him much more than me, and his pace grew slower the higher we went.

We camped on a small plateau at 6700 ft in 2 ½ ft of snow beside a small creek that was coming alive with spring melt-water. From our campsite we could look up behind us at a peak 900 ft above, down to the valley floor over half a mile below, or up and across the valley at a peak called Half Dome which rose another 1800 ft above us.

I was overcome by several different feelings ranging from insignificance at being such a tiny speck in a world of

such mammoth rock formations, to that of triumph at having ascended this difficult trail with a "house on my back." As we sat and drank in the wonders of a world I had never witnessed before we saw at least a dozen avalanches across the valley on the north-facing slopes, as the warming temperatures were causing the snow to slide off the rock ridges and slopes. Some of them we saw only the tail-end of because by the time the sound reached us the event was nearly over.

Yosemite is a wilderness in its own way but the multitudes of people that pass through the valley during the summer season give an off flavor to its majestic beauty. The back-country trails of the High Sierra are less travelled and if you can go in the off season the less comfortable weather is more than compensated for by a truly uncrowded remoteness. Hiking is more strenuous than canoeing for the distance travelled but at least you can do the portage in one pass.

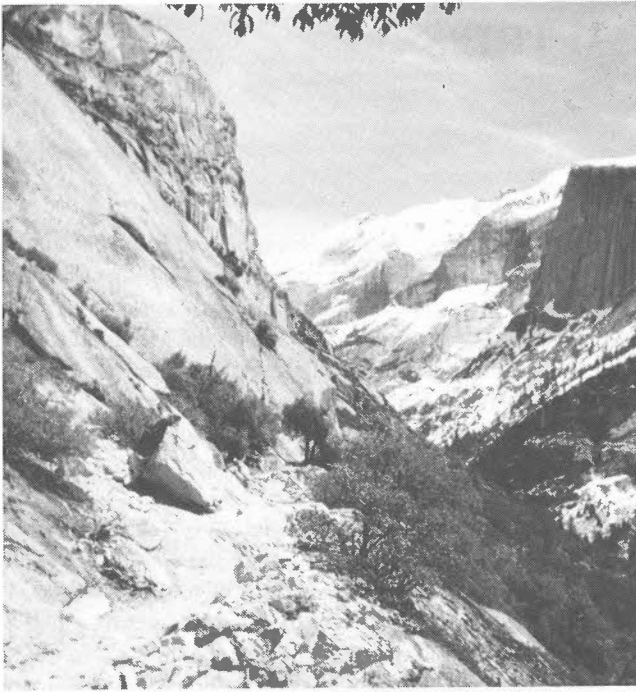
In August of that year it was our turn to play host and hostess. A behind-schedule flight saw us heading north from Toronto late in the afternoon, canoes in tow, destined for Algonquin Park. At 9:30 p.m. we put out from the Magnetawan Lake access point for a five-minute paddle to our first campsite which thankfully was unoccupied. It was pitch black and the rain was pouring. Our guests had spent Friday night in a hotel in Los Angeles and were now spending Saturday night in a soggy campsite in Algonquin Park. We feared we might have to treat them for culture shock but they adapted extremely well.

The next day we pushed into Misty Lake, made camp, and had a late supper. The plan was to relax on Monday and split the trip between Tuesday and Wednesday. Late Monday morning we decided to paddle across the lake. A couple of hundred yards from shore I realized I had not put the strap on my glasses which I wear so I won't lose them should we ever happen to tip. As I pulled it out of my pocket my car keys also came out, went over the side of the canoe, and disappeared. INSTANT NAUSEA!!!

There was nothing we could do but pack up and head out early to get help. That night while the loons provided the music of the North I took my customary moonlight paddle on a lake that was as smooth as glass. Linda, Kevin, and Marlene cooked clams we had picked from above a beaver dam earlier in the day. Despite our dilemma we each still tried to salvage treasures from our trip.

By noon the next day Kevin and I were back at the access point and started the eight-mile hike out to the park office which was closed when we got there. Luckily we were able to hitch a ride in the back of a pick-up truck out to a resort where we ended up enlisting the help of the yellow pages to find the nearest locksmith (my spare keys were at home five





hours away). A call to Huntsville taught us the real meaning of twenty-four hour service — the locksmith was away until the next day. Finally we had to call on two people who have never let me down — Mom and Dad. Thank goodness they are retired; we arranged to meet them at the access point the next morning at eleven. Despite so many schedule interruptions and unplanned activities we still finished our trip right on time, with another experience that memories are made of.

Each trip is a learning experience, and we came away from it being better prepared for future trips. We now have a floating key chain kindly supplied by another cousin (who is still laughing about our experience). We also carry an extra set of keys. Ironically this past summer on our last portage out of Algonquin Park, a member of our party found a key. We informed people going into the park that we had found the key and that we would leave it taped to the map at the access point. As we were finishing packing up and getting ready to leave, an extremely relieved gentleman showed up to claim his key. He had been looking for it on the next portage when the first people we had met going in informed him it had been found. All's well that ends well.

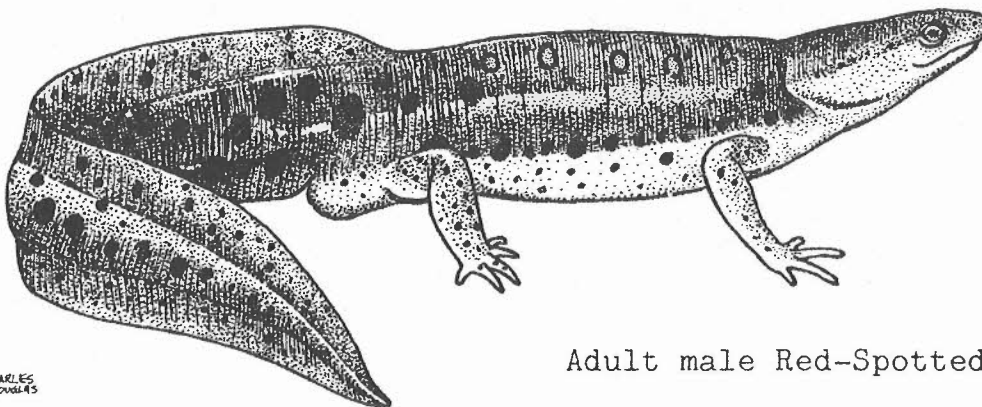
REAL MAGIC

It is a common childhood fantasy to imagine oneself endowed with magical powers. Who among us did not dream in younger days of being able to become invisible or sprout wings so as to escape the clutches of some unsavory monster? As adults, of course, we realize that such flights of fancy have no reality beyond the fairy tales and dreams that spawn them but, then again, perhaps we should not be so hasty.

After all, any young polliwog or caterpillar collector can tell you that there really are creatures in this world that are capable of astonishing transformations, and who are we adults to say that the birth of a butterfly or a toad is not in the realm of magic? We think the younger set deserve full marks for the wonder they feel before natural phenomena and we would like now to relate the story of another truly "magical" creature they and their perhaps skeptical elders may be unaware of. We have in mind one of Algonquin

Park's five salamanders, the Red-spotted Newt, an animal that has a life history any sorcerer's apprentice could be proud of. To appreciate why the newt is so special the best course is to follow the successive stages it undergoes through life. Newts are amphibians and in the beginning things happen more or less as you would expect for one of these animals. Eggs are laid in the water and hatch out into small larvae or "tadpoles." Like frog tadpoles they have tiny mouths with which they eat microscopic plant matter in their shallow pond habitat. These larval newts have an appearance which is considerably different from regular tadpoles, however, because, instead of internal gills, they have exotic-looking many branched external gills sticking out from the back of the head on each side.

The life of a newt tadpole is as brief as it is bizarre, because after three months the larva transforms into a completely differ-



Adult male Red-Spotted Newt

ent land creature called an "eft." Instead of gills it now has lungs and it moves about on four legs stalking and pouncing on live prey. Along with the radical change in diet it has a wide mouth suitable for seizing and swallowing its victims.

More striking than its new lifestyle is the eft's color. It is a flaming reddish-orange all over except for two rows of round red spots bordered with black down the back. Being such a conspicuous color does not seem to make much sense for a two-inch-long, "defenseless" little salamander, especially for one that often ventures out into the open. As with many other brightly colored animals, however, the eft is highly poisonous. Snakes have been observed to spit out efts they have attempted to swallow and then frantically wipe their mouths as if to get rid of the taste. Probably one such experience suffices to teach most predators that the bright color is a warning, not an invitation!

1993 FALL MEETING

This year's meeting will be held on 24 to 26 September in the beautiful, rugged landscape of the Huntsville area, in a Boy Scout camp located at the foot of a secluded bay on Mary Lake. We will have a remote woodland setting as well as a spacious log building for the Friday night meet-and-greet and Saturday's supper. You are responsible for providing your own camping supplies and all your food needs, except for Saturday night's dinner.

We have put together an action-packed weekend for your paddling and canoe junky pleasure. The following are a few of the anticipated events:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Friday | — meet-and-greet with coffee and nibble |
| Saturday | — in-water canoe trials courtesy of Scott and Swift canoe companies |
| | — trip leaders workshop and seminar for old hands and newcomers |
| | — dual-course canoe gymkhana (think of little sports cars roaring around pylons) |
| | — workshop on "no-trace" camping by the outdoor skills group of Sir Sandford Fleming College in Lindsay |
| | — cooking workshop (show us something that you do that is different from run-of-the-mill camp cooking) |
| | — sprint boat demonstration |
| | — catered dinner |
| | — after-dinner speakers |
| Sunday | — an array of planned trips for all skill levels |

The WCA now owns a video player, so bring your videos of trips and other canoeing activities to amaze and amuse your fellow paddlers.

The cost of this feature-laden weekend is only \$26.25. Book early to avoid disappointment because catering facilities are limited. See the enclosed insert.

Bob Shortill, organizer, (705) 277-3538

The strangest thing of all, however, about the eft stage is that it is not the newt's adult form — far from it. After living completely on land for a period lasting one to three years, the eft transforms into yet another creature, as different from the eft as the eft was from the tadpole. The third adult form is a water-dweller which inhabits quiet ponds and weedy bays of larger lakes. It has a long finned tail, is about four inches long, and is colored yellow below and olive green above. The poisonous properties of the eft are retained (adult newts are shunned by leeches, for example) but otherwise

there is hardly a hint of any relationship with the eft stage. About the only visible clue is the presence down the back of the same red spots bordered with black that the eft had. Even then, no-one would ever find serious fault with you if you presumed the eft and the adult were two separate species.

Adult newts have to come to the surface to breathe and in the fall they actually leave the water to hibernate on land. Otherwise they are completely aquatic. We suspect that newts are locally common in suitable habitat here in Algonquin although it's hard to be sure because they are so well camouflaged in the thickly vegetated waters they prefer, and they are often most active at night.

The only practical way to observe them is in an aquarium and when we are lucky enough to capture some they have made highly interesting displays at the Park Museum. They hunt small aquatic animals by sight and swim after them with powerful strokes of the tail.

The male's tail, incidentally, has a much deeper fin than the female's, apparently because of the special role it plays in courtship. The male grasps the female's neck with his hind legs, rubs her nose with the side of his face, and fans her with that special tail. This serves to transport chemicals secreted by glands at the base of his tail to the nostrils of the female. She will be won over by his perfume's strength so the more efficient his tail, the more successful he is likely to be.

Assuming she does accept him, the male will deposit a package of sperm nearby on the bottom of the pond and the female will pick it up into her body, thus assuring fertilization. Soon she will attach up to 400 eggs here and there on pond vegetation and, a week or two after that, the next batch of newt larvae will emerge and start the cycle all over again.

It is interesting to reflect that even the "simplest" frog or salamander achieves something astounding by changing almost overnight — from an aquatic creature to a completely different inhabitant of the land above. But the Red-spotted Newt goes far beyond this! It transforms itself from a water creature to a land creature and then returns to the water as yet another, totally new incarnation. Each of the stages is barely or not at all recognizable as having any connection with the others and each has its own almost supernatural properties.

Perhaps we should not be so quick to dismiss childhood dreams and fairy tales when, with our own eyes, we can see a tadpole change into a miniature red dragon and then into a dancing underwater suitor who showers his mate with aqueous perfume. It may be magic but it's also real.

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

PADDLING GEORGIAN BAY

From Killarney to Britt in the summer of 1992

Michael Herman

Our group, consisting of five men in two canoes and one kayak, hit the water close to 1:00 in the afternoon, and the pace we chose indicated how eager we were to get started. The weather was slightly cool and thick cumulus clouds filled most of the sky like dirty cotton batten. There were almost no waves as we headed east.

The choice of where to paddle was up to us. Should we take the outer fringe of the islands, experiencing the strong, cool caress of the off-shore breeze? Or duck into the protective maze of islands scattered out from the mainland like pieces of a broken puzzle? The choice was ours. No rules! Looking back in the direction we had started, the white hills of Killarney stood out on the horizon. Even though they were miles away they seemed as close as when we started.

After a few hours of paddling we stopped at an island to make a pit stop and stretch our legs. The rock rose up from the water like a whale, smooth from thousands of years of wear by water and ice. Nature's sculpturing still in progress. Recognizing a good opportunity I took a frisbee from my canoe and initiated a game of catch. When we had played long enough, we left, leaving the island alone until the next visitors.

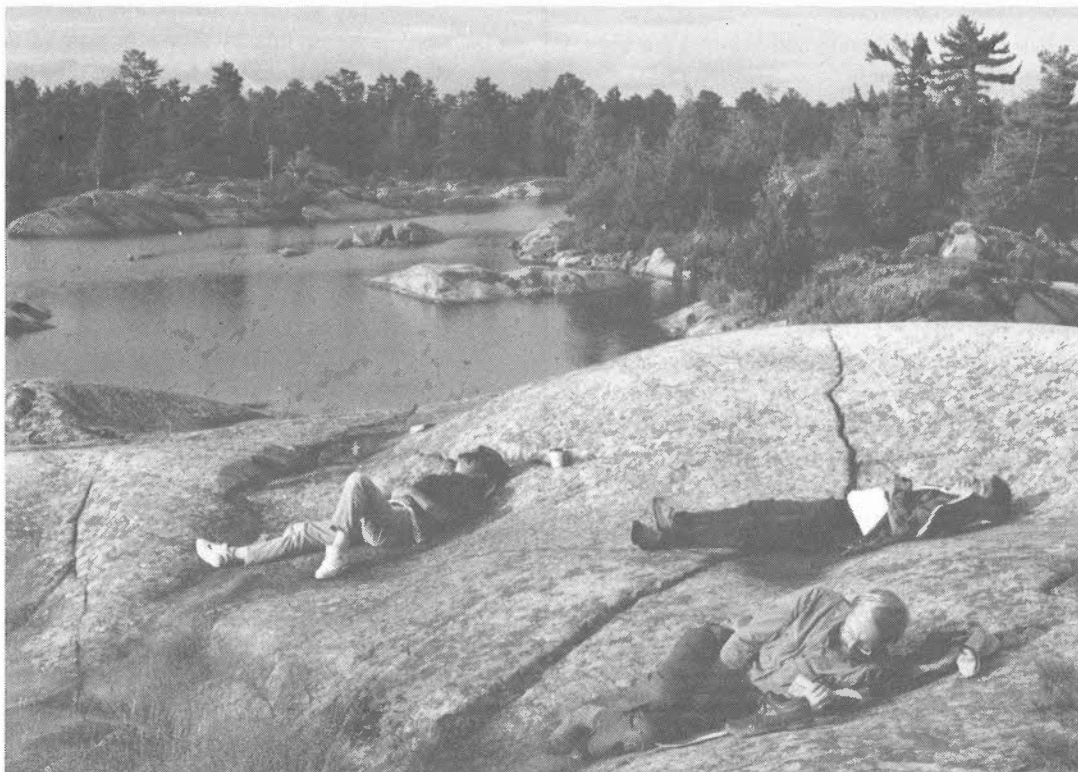
It was late afternoon when we finally found a beautiful campsite on one of the islands, complete with picnic table. While two of us were preparing a sumptuous dinner, each of the others had found their own depression in the rock to lie

in and relax while the silence of their new surroundings penetrated their beings, pushing the world they had left into the far reaches of their minds. Later that night we all sat around a glowing fire, sometimes talking, sometimes just sharing the fire's warmth and comfort.

After we woke up the next morning, we had a morning swim, enjoyed breakfast, and eventually left shortly before 11:00. Making record time was certainly not on our agenda. We had decided to paddle the inside channel known as Voyageur Channel, and often the only way to tell we were still on Georgian Bay waters was by looking at the map, especially when we crossed stretches of water less than 12 inches deep covered in grasses, sedges, and lilies.

Going east, we expected to find a ten-metre portage, but it played hide-and-seek with us for a while. After some confusion we did find the passage hidden between two folds of rock. Following Cross Channel we arrived just below Crooked Rapids and Liley Chutes in an area that appears to be called Bad River Channel, one of the complicated outlets of the Western Channel of the French River. This was the first place we were reminded the Bay wasn't totally ours. While I enthusiastically acknowledged the sight of moving water, we had to struggle to steady our craft from the wake of four zodiac motor boats.

Working our way downstream we found ourselves at the mouth of Lodge Channel, where we discovered the best



campsite of the trip and had another one of our mouthwatering dinners. I doubt there is any such stimulus for creating a huge appetite as exercise in the outdoors. The most bird-like eaters are transformed into ravenous creatures capable of wolfing down their own weight in food after a single day outside.



One of the reasons this was our best campsite of the trip was the sunset. After the red sun slipped below the horizon, the evening sky slowly burned. Like coals in a campfire after the flames have disappeared, the western sky glowed long after the east was asleep. During this time, when daylight was fighting to stay as long as possible, we were treated to the distant call of a Whip-poor-will. We all set around the campfire, talking and eating snackfood. Later the moon rose up through a narrow band of clouds, illuminating the world around us. A person could not imagine a more beautiful night.

When we woke up the next morning, the Bay was calm and the sky a light powder blue. After breakfast we went for a morning swim, a ritual we practised each day before heading out. Our first destination was Southwest Rock, the most westerly island of the Bustard Islands group. I had been told the island was a nesting site for cormorants and also a visual treat. As we paddled closer to the island we could see birds flying above, and when we were within a hundred metres a strong fish odor filled the air, a foul smell (no pun intended), completely intoxicating, the way skunk spray can take over an area. Paddling closer, our attention switched to the birds, mostly cormorants but also gulls. The grey rocks were stained with white bird shit; it looked like it had been painted on. Accustomed to seeing these birds floating on the water or flying in the air, we watched them move awkwardly on land, their heavy webbed feet not being designed for walking. We also saw some young cormorants on nests; still in their juvenile plumage they looked like balls of feathers.

Leaving the birds, we headed east to paddle between the Bustard Islands. Making our way through Wick's Channel, we noticed the water was much warmer than usual, so we stopped for lunch and a swim in a sheltered bay where we were protected from the wind.

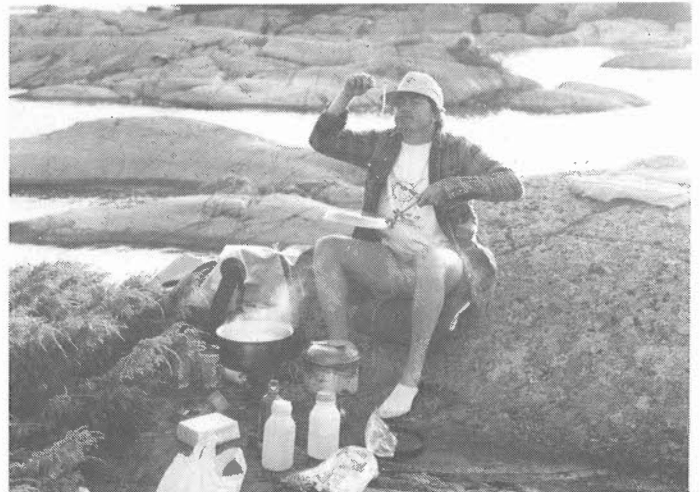
Once we slipped past the last island we lashed all three boats together, the canoes on the outside and the kayak in between, so we could use its rudder to steer. With a tent fly suspended between two paddles we set sail. For over two hours we simply let the wind push us toward the mainland shore.

That evening we chose a campsite on the northwest side of Dead Island which turned out to be by no means as barren as indicated on the map. There was lots of firewood and also plenty of blueberries for pancakes. The night was exceptionally warm and muggy, the kind of night when you're hot sleeping on the outside of your sleeping bag.

The following morning the Bay was calm at first, but gradually the wind picked up and small waves appeared on the water surface. We made a detour to have a look at Key Harbour, where 300-ft-long freight ships used to anchor at the tall wood piers and cribs. Little is left of these constructions and one wonders how these big piers were built.

Leaving Key Harbour we headed south. By now the sky had filled with grey clouds and rain was to be expected. Paddling past the last few scattered cottages we soon left the presence of man behind us. Navigating through the maze of islands the boats would separate but eventually rendezvous further down the coast. Early in the afternoon the sky looked quite threatening, but we decided to go on after a little rain fell, not wanting to stop so early in the day.

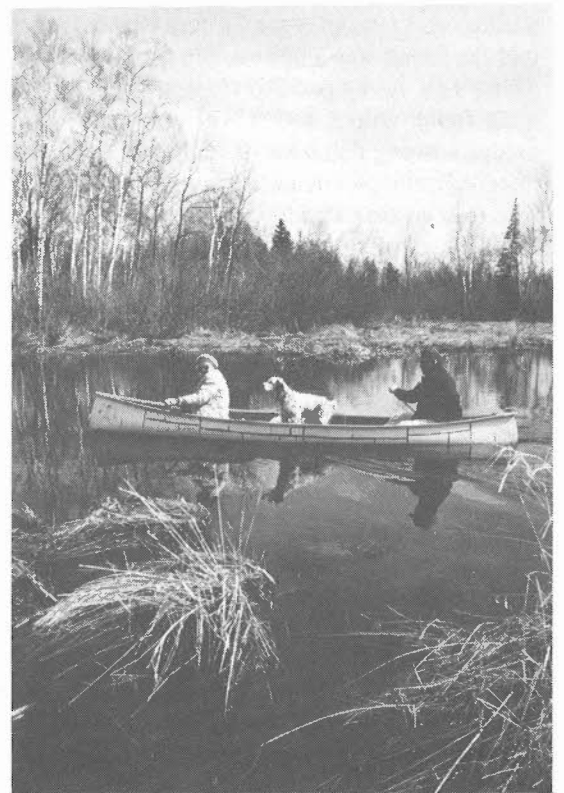
I enjoyed the feeling of the intimidating weather with its cool air. But fear of being overrun by a storm made us decide to look for an early campsite and we found a nice one on an island directly north of Potvin Point, west of Black Bay.



After the tents were up and the kitchen fly erected, it was time to enjoy our last night out. Whether by boat or on foot, we all spent some time alone reflecting on the past few days, saying goodbye to the Bay where we had spent a delightful few days.

The final morning I awoke to the sound of rain on the tent. There was no hurry, so I stayed in bed until the rain stopped at about 9:00 a.m. When I crawled out of the tent the fog was still hanging over the water. It took the group a long time to break camp, no one wanted the trip to end.

The pace to Britt was slow, we were filled with our private thoughts. It wasn't until we reached the mouth of the North Channel that I felt in touch again with people. A short paddle up the inlet brought us to the waiting car. Then we quickly adapted to the chores of unloading boats, packing the car, retrieving shuttle vehicles, and migrating with the masses down the highway. I hope the next trip will call us away soon.

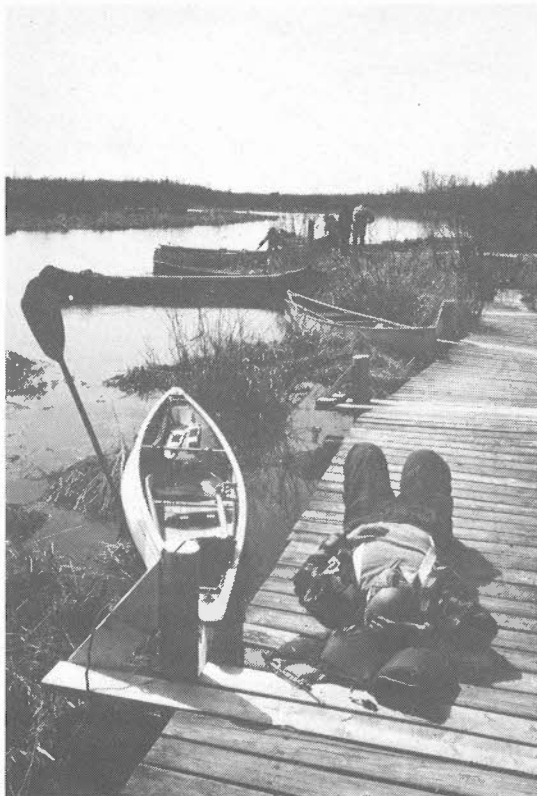




NONQOUN RIVER

The traditional April season opener for Jane Burgess and company. A pleasant 25-km meandering flatwater paddle through wetlands and rolling bush country from put-in just east of Highway 12 to take-out in Seagrave just west of Highway 2. Aaah, the first days of spring . . .

Toni Harting



HOOD RIVER

Bill King

On 4 June 1821, a party of English seamen and Canadian Metis voyageurs under the command of Captain John Franklin left Fort Enterprise, a primitive structure which they had built to house them over the preceding winter, to descend the Coppermine River. It had already taken them two years of travelling to reach Fort Enterprise. Their mission was to explore and map the Arctic coast east of the mouth of the Coppermine, an area completely unknown and unvisited by Europeans at that time.

Franklin's journal makes it clear that their objective was to reach Repulse Bay, a straight-line distance of more than 700 miles. This demonstrated a complete ignorance not only of geography but also of the conditions which the party would face, combined with a well-earned, but in this case inappropriate, confidence in the self-sufficiency of the British navy under any and all circumstances.

Needless to say, they didn't make it. Already behind schedule for a safe return to Fort Enterprise after having explored Bathurst Inlet and the coastline between it and the mouth of the Mackenzie River, Franklin called it quits at Point Turnagain on the Kent Peninsula. Returning via Arctic Sound, which they had noted on the eastward journey to be rich with game, they ascended the lower Hood River, named for Midshipman Robert Hood, one of Franklin's officers. When they grew tired of fighting the current (and also found that the river did not run in the right direction) they set off overland making for Point Lake.

The tragic story of their race with starvation, with its overtones of murder and cannibalism, is well known. Suffice it to say that the fact that four of the five Englishmen survived (Robert Hood was the exception) was largely due to the heroics of some of the Canadians who served them, *nine out of eleven of whom perished*, and of the Copper Indians without whose aid all of them would surely have starved. The officers of the party, which in addition to Captain Franklin included Surgeon-Lieutenant John Richardson and Midshipmen George Back and Robert Hood, all kept journals which survive, in modern reproduction, to this day. They make very interesting reading.

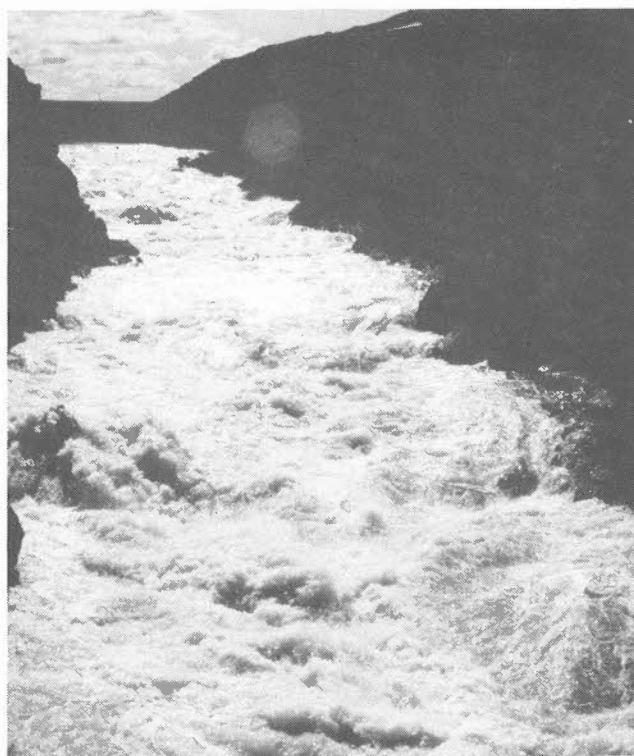
The Hood is scarcely what one would call a "well-travelled" river. While I have no doubt that it was used by coastal native peoples for access to the interior and the rich herds of caribou to be found there, I can find no record that Europeans travelled it for the next 162 years. In 1983, a party of Americans, which included WCA members John Lentz and John Schultz, descended the river and made a successful search for artifacts from a Franklin cache near the mouth of the river. This trip was reported in 1986 in two prestigious journals, *National Geographic* and *Nastawgan* (Vol. 13, #2).

By coincidence, the river was descended the same summer by a Canadian party which included Bill Mason (see *Wild Waters*, edited by James Raffan). Mason's enthusiasm for the river did nothing to diminish its popularity. He described it as an "adrenalin rush" and small wonder since he and Wally Schaber even attempted to run the treacherous

gorge below Wilberforce Falls.

The river, once "rediscovered," has become increasingly popular and is now descended annually by occasional private parties and by two commercial outfitters, Trailhead and Wilderness Bound, the latter run out of Hamilton by George Drought and Barbara Burton. It was with this group that I decided to travel the Hood in the summer of 1992. I did not regret the decision.

After loading what seemed a mountain of gear into and onto a Twin Otter and two Cessnas, our party of ten began the 500-km flight almost due north from Yellowknife to the Hood River on Sunday, 28 June. George likes to catch the relatively narrow window of high water and good weather which occurs in the first part of July at these latitudes, but 1992's late spring almost outsmarted him. It was a depressing sight to see that, before we had hardly gone a third of the way, all the lakes were locked in a frozen state. Would we be able to find any open water on which to land the plane?



To end the suspense: yes, we did, but not at the site where we had originally intended. Finding that river expansion still solidly frozen, we buzzed two other sites further downstream before finding a safe landing spot, the three planes remaining in contact by radio. This meant sacrificing one or two rapids but it still left us with about 190 km of river to travel. As we had two weeks for the trip this hardly dictated a killing pace, but the Hood, as with so many others, is a river which rewards the tripper who has extra time with eskers and hills for side hikes and that added opportunity to appreciate the many beauties of this so-called "barren" land.

The afternoon being late and the routines of camp not



yet established, our first effort was an unambitious paddle across the expanse to a scenic spot at the foot of a large esker. On the way across we had lots of opportunity to hear the tinkling music of the break-up of the candled ice, which at this time of the year has no vertical strength, however much of a horizontal barrier it may prove.

Our first campsite rather set the tone for what was to come. Sheltered from the chilly breeze, it was, nonetheless, free of mosquitoes, who did not yet seem to realize that it was spring. The beach where our canoes were drawn up would have been an asset to any Ontario summer cottage — except that Muskoka lakes are seldom $\frac{3}{4}$ ice-covered at this time of year. On the hillside behind the campsite were numerous caribou trails and at intervals, surely no more than 10 to 15 minutes, caribou, sometimes in twos and threes, sometimes in groups of 10 to 15, would prance past with their graceful gait which is so deceptively swift. The caribou would remain a constant feature of our trip; I would estimate that we saw no fewer than 200 a day.

It was also an excellent opportunity to get to know each other better. Our group included a wealth of canoeing (albeit, mostly in the South) and nature experience, and I can honestly say that I have never travelled with a more compatible collection of characters. The tone was set by my paddling partner, Dorothy's, revelation of her own creation, the "Toilet Tent," a skirt of mosquito netting with an elastic waistband whose usage can be easily imagined. The ribald comments to which this invention gave rise did much to "break the ice," figuratively, if not literally.

This also seemed an appropriate time to introduce the group to Ollie Octopus (*octopus arcticus*), also known as "Ollie of the North," a large, inflatable, plastic octopus, green with pink spots, whom I had brought along to adorn our canoe. He was rapidly adopted as the trip mascot and

graced all subsequent group photographs. He was eventually left as a wedding present, along with the best wishes of the group, for the nuptials of a well-known American author of canoeing literature who had decided that they should be celebrated at Wilberforce Falls.

Our first major obstacle lay some 20 km downstream, where a 17-km, horseshoe-shaped lake promised to be locked in ice. It was! Far from being an insurmountable impasse, it proved to be rather fun — a welcome change from flatwater paddling. For most of the way a narrow shore lead of open water permitted passage. Where it did not, we had the choice of the "icebreaker" technique, the "one-foot-in-the-canoe-and-pole-with-the-other" technique or, rarely, when the ice was really solid, the "getting-out-and-hauling" technique. Following the shore didn't make for the most direct of routes, but it was a whole lot better than we had envisioned.

At the outlet of the lake, a large ice-choked bay with adjacent esker provided another idyllic campsite. Out on the ice, an arctic fox, although obviously disconcerted by our presence, was unable to resist the lure of a caribou carcass (minus its choicer bits), probably the legacy of a wolf. His many pauses to sample our scent only served to make him a better photographic subject.

The next morning, after conducting suitable and highly colorful (red and white) birthday celebrations for our fair country, we went on a prolonged esker hike. At the foot of the bay a small stream descended in a minor waterfall from a frozen lake, recessed part-way up the esker. The current, however minimal, was sufficient to keep the outlet free of ice and the bright sunshine lent the translucent water an unearthly turquoise color. So great was its clarity that the margins of the thick ice-cover were visible for several metres below the surface. The beauty of the fluted patterns made by

its edges was truly memorable.

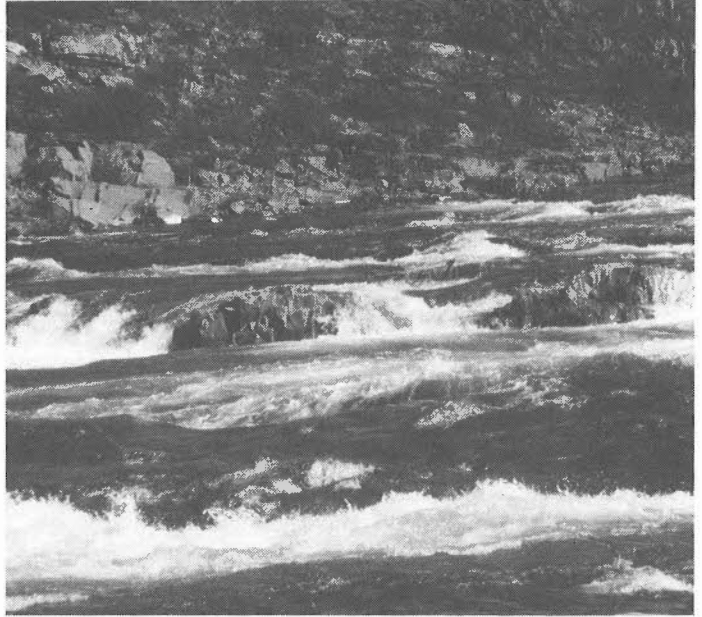
Our esker hike also provided an excellent opportunity for "botanizing." This activity, characteristic of, although not confined to, members of the female persuasion, consists of kneeling, stern aloft, while exclaiming in rapturous tones over some obscure member of the plant kingdom. Whatever the inappropriate term "Barren Lands" might imply, the choice is not limited. In all seriousness, I can say that one of the more positive aspects of this trip for me was the education in natural science which I got from some of my colleagues.

Below "Horseshoe Lake" the serious whitewater starts. As one might expect on such a remote river, there are few official names, the rapids being distinguished only by the names which George has given them. "Skull Rapid," "Bill Mason Rapid," and "Caribou Crossing Rapid" are all spectacular and unrunnable (at least for us and at this high water level) Grade IV to V drops. Interspersed are numerous other lesser rapids which are a delight to run. "Kingaunmiut Falls," named for the Inuit people of Bathurst Inlet, is a wonderful sight. Cascading 25 m between vertical canyon walls where falcons nest, this incredible natural phenomenon, unnamed and overshadowed by the more famous Wilberforce Falls, is seen by very few. The "stay-at-home's" loss is our gain, for we are enabled to see beauty as Nature intended, undamaged by the hand of man.

It seems ironic that, with all the serious whitewater about, our one mishap should have occurred at a minor ledge, unnamed, unmarked, and unnoticed by one crew whose minds were directed more towards the glories of the scenery. Suffice it to say that even small ledges can produce dangerous reversals; one member of that team spent at least 45 seconds being recycled — no joke in those frigid, Arctic waters. It certainly brought home the wisdom of George's insistence that each participant had to come equipped with either a wet or dry suit. Fortunately the total loss, of both gear and personnel, came to one tuque and there was no damage which a change of clothing and some TLC couldn't put right.

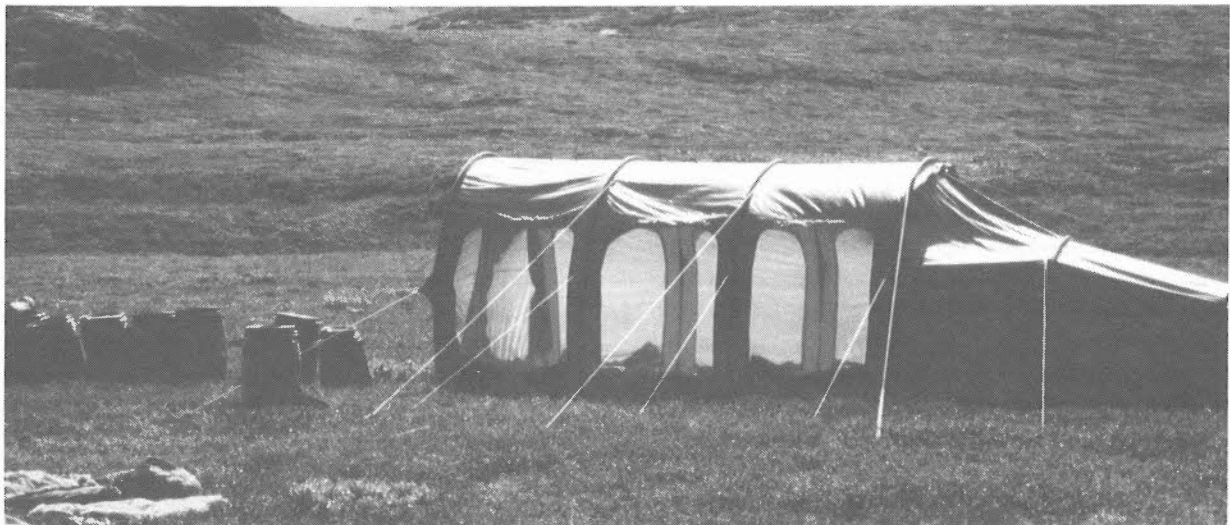
Another reward awaited just downstream where the Wright River joins the Hood from the south. Its descent from the plateau into the Hood River valley produces another spectacular, two-stage waterfall.

The onset of our only period of bad weather provided a marvellous excuse (as if any were needed) to abandon canoeing, which would, in any case have made little progress against the vicious headwind, in favor of hiking/wandering through this magic land. Our rewards for braving the elements included aboriginal campsites of incalculable age, the stones of their tent rings half-buried in the moss, muskoxen grazing in the sheltered areas along the riverbank, and falcons, both peregrine and gyr, nesting on the canyon walls, swooping down to verify our harmlessness and, on one occasion, posing majestically on a favorite "snacking rock" which was adorned on one side with feathers and on the other with faeces.



The inclement weather also provided our first excuse to use George's own invention, the "Tundra Tunnel." A cylinder, sloping at one end, supported by numerous guy ropes, this tent was very stable even in high winds and large enough to accommodate the entire party for cooking and socializing — great protection from bugs and weather alike. Quite an improvement over stuffing-in "black fly sandwiches."

Lest you should think that our party confined itself to summer pursuits, I would commend to you the sport of

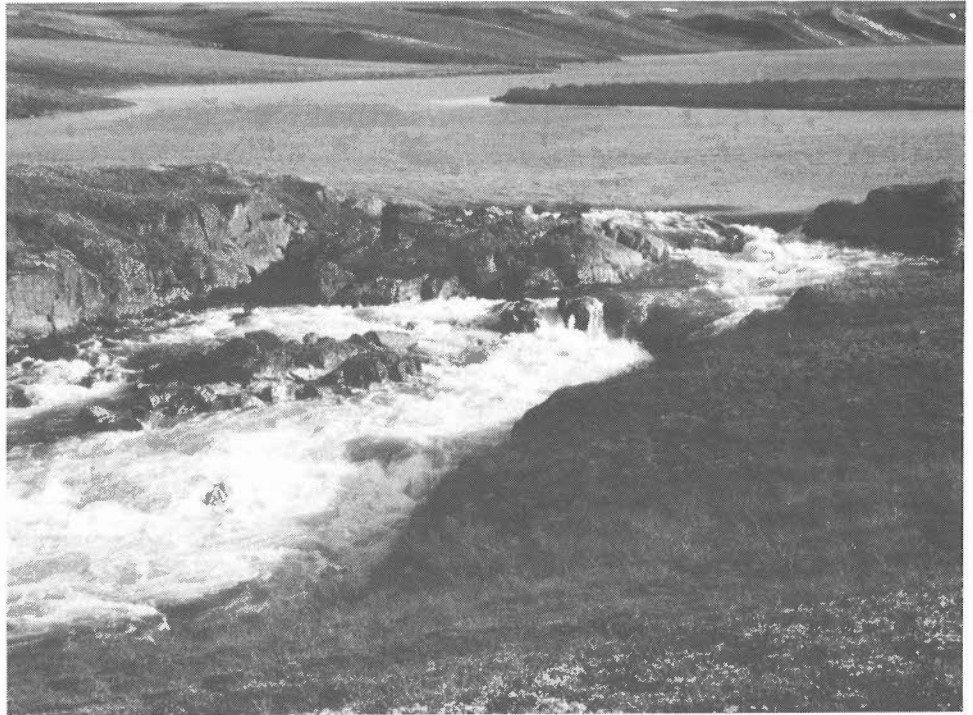


paddle skiing! The recipe: 1. Find a snowbank, preferably one with a good slope. 2. Sit on the blade of your paddle (ABS preferred) elevating the shaft to an appropriate angle with your hands. 3. Lift your feet! Mixed with generous amounts of hilarity this activity is guaranteed to enliven any Northern canoe trip.

Time seemed to race as fast as the current of the river. Were it not for the fun of running the rapids, I think we would have been sorely tempted to backpaddle, the better to postpone the day when it would all come to an end. But the greatest treat of all remained in store — Wilberforce Falls, 80 m of majestic, green and white waters, plunging down between red canyon walls. Like Virginia Falls on the South Nahanni River, with which it is frequently compared, Wilberforce Falls has a central rock island, in this case accessible by wading and providing a disturbingly closeup view of the action.

Only the lucky few who come in high-water years get to see the double falls, when the river rises to the point that it also flows on the Western side of the island. A true “bridal veil,” these subsidiary falls drop an even greater distance than the main falls (which are in two stages) into a tropical-green pool at the base, a scene reminiscent of the best of National Geographic Explorer. The sheer canyon walls have, so far, escaped the fence-building of those who would protect Man from his own folly. A good head for heights is an asset. This wonderful site occupied us for two days without anyone feeling that the time had been misspent.

There is a four-kilometre portage around the canyon for those wishing to proceed on to Arctic Sound, but the river below these falls holds little interest and the Sound is a chancy pickup site in all but the best weather. We chose instead to hike overland to Portage Bay, a straight-line distance of eight kilometres from the Falls, there to be met by



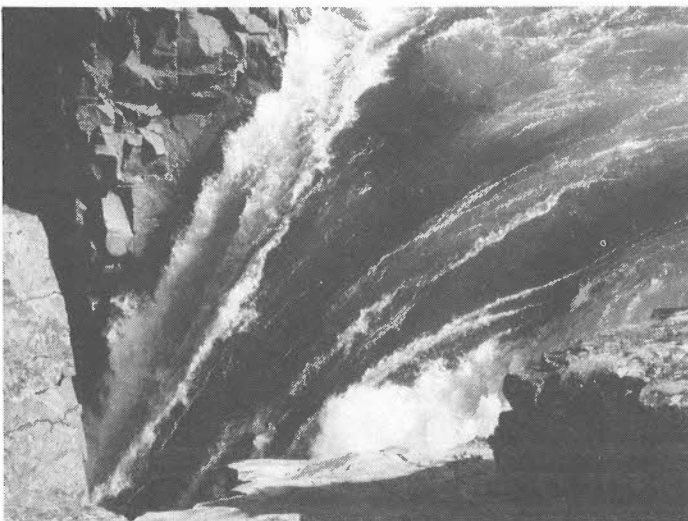
boats from Bathurst Inlet. I think that this option is one which George will repeat. Carrying heavy loads, we all found the hike moderately strenuous but the rugged grandeur of the scenery was more than ample reward.

Bathurst Inlet Lodge is worth a visit in its own right. An ex-HBC post, it is owned jointly by a retired Mountie and his family and the Kingaunmiut (“People of the Nose” — a local geographic feature). Comprising one large extended family, they make up the permanent population of Bathurst Inlet, approximately 25. The lodge draws heavily on the knowledge and folk-ways of the local people as well as the skills of a resident naturalist to provide guests with an experience much more enriching than the hunting and fishing which are the standard fare of the North. Expeditions for birding, geology, botany (the specialty of the naturalist), and exploration by float plane are all available, as well as fantastic food. To experience this at the end of a trip such as ours was truly “icing on the cake.”

One final thrill remained: the flight, by wheeled Twin Otter, back up to Wilberforce Falls to pick up the canoes and gear which we had left behind. The pilot was determined, I am convinced, to show the greenhorns (like me) who had volunteered for this mission that we weren’t as brave as we thought. He flew about 50 m above the tundra! Maybe he just wanted to give us a particularly good view of the falls — he certainly succeeded. After landing (rather bumpily, I thought) on the esker to which we had laboriously conveyed all our gear, he informed us that that wasn’t the esker they usually landed on. All this without parachutes.

The flight back to Yellowknife (in the same plane) seemed comparatively anticlimactic. We were all strangely silent but our spirits revived nicely for a last group fling in the Wild Cat Cafe.

Each time I go to the Arctic I’m convinced that it will be my last, but something seems to keep drawing me back. Maybe after this trip, I have a better idea why.



GOOD TIMES ON THE FRENCH RIVER

Peter B. Irvine

Several years ago, after reading with much enjoyment Alexander Mackenzie's *Voyages from Montreal Across the Continent of North America in the Years 1789 and 1792*, I developed a burning desire to explore one of the old voyager routes. Since our family had never before made an extended canoe trip in Canada, I wanted a route that was challenging but not overly difficult. We decided on the French River, putting in at Dokis Bay, paddle down to Georgian Bay, and then return to Hartley Bay, where we would take out after spending five days on the river. These were the plans; they turned out to be a bit optimistic.

19 July 1987. We had a hell of a time finding the put-in, although we kept following signs to Dokis Bay. Finally, we came to a bridge over the river with a huge sign that said "Welcome to Dokis Bay." The bridge did not look like a proper put-in, so we proceeded on. We came to a second bridge above an extremely narrow channel with a mean-looking rapid. The sides of the river below the drop were cliff-sized (at least 10 metres). Impossible to put the canoes in here.



We decided to go back to the first bridge, where we unloaded the canoes and gear. Three of us drove the cars to the take-out at Hartley Bay, a trip that took some three hours. By the time we returned, a local man had come by and said that we were on the Little French River rather than where we had thought on Dokis Bay. He said that we would have to portage Five Finger Rapids, but that the river would take us to the main channel. Since we were already committed, we decided to proceed.

After loading up and paddling about two kilometres, we discovered a beautiful campsite on a huge flat rock. It was already after 6:00 p.m., so we decided to camp. I looked forward to seeing Five Finger Rapids, which I would like to run if possible. Would there be any wildlife? I thought we had packed too much food and gear. Better too much than too little.

20 July. We paddled against a moderate head wind the whole way; stopped at a rock for a snack of gorp, berries, and kumquats. At 2:30, we rounded a hairpin turn and arrived at Five Finger Rapids. After scouting the waters, which appeared to be a class V rapid, we decided to portage 75 m over the flat rocks beside the river. After the portage we went swimming; the water felt great. When lunch was finished we loaded up the canoes and shot a little rapid at the foot of Five Fingers. We then passed through a very narrow rocky chute, not more than seven metres wide.

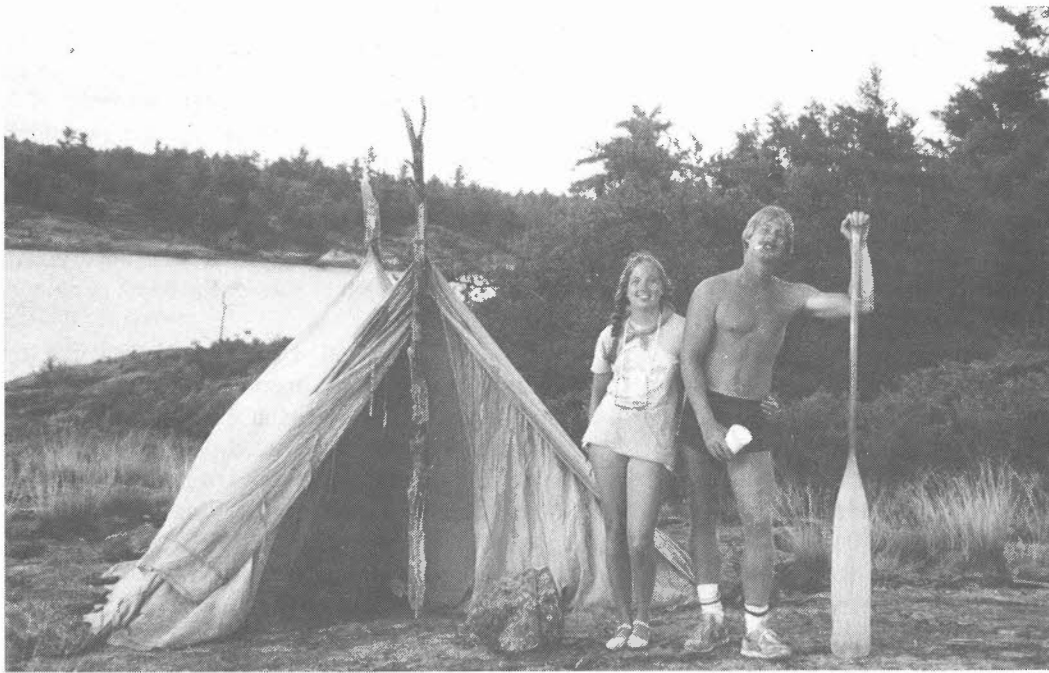
We came out onto the main channel of the French River, realizing that with all the islands and bays, we had a navigational problem. Bringing all the canoes together we looked at our topographical map, agreeing on the correct route to take. Shortly thereafter, we decided to camp on a point on the lee side of an island. Upon examining the map with the aid of the compass, we discovered that we had taken the wrong route, but decided to stay anyway.

21 July. I woke up before dawn today and went out to watch the sunrise. I sat on a rock where the breeze was brisk driving the mosquitoes away, which had sent us to bed early last night. No one else was stirring. A few birds called here and there. The water lapped peacefully on the rocks below. A lone sea gull flew up the lake. The sun had now caught the eastern shore, though I could not yet see it. Dawn was here.

The sun touched our rock and the tents and drew us toward the day. We had the Five Mile Rapids to run, a collection of about eight rapids of varying difficulty (depending on water level), separated by stretches of flat water. I looked forward to the moment our canoe would sit on top of a rapid, pausing a moment before plunging into the foam.



Photos by Vijay Verma



in the middle of the river. We all ran the rapid, but not everyone scouted it first which led to some difficulty with the big rock. Nothing serious, however.

After a dinner of minestrone soup and linguine with clam sauce, the mosquitoes chased us all into our tents. We talked back and forth for a while, telling jokes. Everyone was in better spirits than last night. We saw a weasel or a mink near our camp.

22 July. The morning brought two rangers in an outboard boat, who talked about the French River becoming a provincial park. We all said we were in favor of the plan.

The sun was now just about hidden behind the cloud cover over the whole sky. The moment of beauty had passed quickly. It was cold, and I thought about going back to bed. It began to rain. I retreated to the tent.

We had a bit of a navigational problem today getting around the islands on the way to Little Pine Rapid. We discovered by talking to some fishermen that there was a lodge near the rapid where we could get some ice. We arrived there around noon and purchased a head net for one of the group (who had been miserable with the mosquitoes the previous night) and one bag of ice. We would have gotten more, but the proprietor said his ice machine was working overtime, and he had everybody on rations.

We carried the canoes around Little Pine Rapid, which was at that low water level little more than a chute about 1.5 m wide. There was no question of running it.

Two of us ran Big Pine Rapid somewhat successfully. We banged a rock but did not capsize; the rest of the rapid had to be walked. A little way down we stopped for lunch on a big flat rock. Everyone went swimming and felt quite refreshed. After lunch, I went over to a shady area under some pines and lay down for a nap. The breeze was strong and refreshing. The pine tree above me swayed in the wind. The sky was crystal blue. I felt a profound sense of oneness with the landscape. I could die happy here.

We headed down the river toward a simple rapid that gave us an easy and very pleasant run. On the way to the Blue Chute we saw a loon briefly before he dove into the water. We waited several minutes for him to come back up, but never saw him again.

The entrance to the Blue Chute was marked with a white cross on the right bank. The chute itself was easy and great fun. We did not scout the rapid, because it could easily be seen from the water.

The next rapid, the Little Parisien (on recent maps it is now called by its correct name, Big Parisien, ed.), a one-metre drop followed by standing waves, was more of an adventure. Just below the chute an enormous rock stood right

We set off down the river and after paddling a few miles, stopped for lunch in a little bay. We looked at the map from time to time because we wanted to avoid going down Hammerhead Bay, which would mean backtracking two kilometres. Thirty minutes later, sure enough, we found ourselves at the dead end of Hammerhead Bay. We hoisted up the tarp on the paddles and sailed back to the main channel. Later on in the afternoon, a head wind came up, and the paddling became difficult.

A short time later, we found a magnificent campsite with water on three sides and a spectacular view of the setting sun. There was a beautiful little bay right next door with a gently sloping rock down into the water for swimming. We took pictures of the campsite and the sunset and then had a superb dinner of kielbasa, hot potato salad, and applesauce. The mosquitoes began to attack just as we finished supper, and we all retreated to our tents. The insects made music outside, and we heard the call of a loon.



23 July. We departed our campsite at around 11:00 after a superb breakfast of pancakes with bacon and freshly-picked blueberries. The meal was rivalled only by the previous night's dinner.

We paddled against strong winds that produced choppy waves. It was hard finding a campsite. Some people camping

on the south side of the river told us that all the sites were filled down to Highway 69. We had to backtrack to a sandy beach on the north side.

One of us went swimming off the beach and stepped on a piece of broken glass. His foot bled a great deal. We debated the pros and cons of paddling out immediately and seeking medical help but eventually decided instead to make use of the butterfly bandage we had brought. This episode pushed our dinner an hour late, and the mosquitoes came out in full force. A few dragonflies helped keep down the population, but everyone was more than ready to retreat to the tents.

We decided to take out of the river at Highway 69 the next day and go sightseeing, instead of continuing on to Georgian Bay, as we had originally planned. The head winds had delayed our progress and challenged our endurance.

24 July. Even in the middle of the night I could not sleep, my mind was so full of the places we had been and the experiences we had had. I felt as though I had aged several years, but without regrets. There is a certain ruggedness about the country here and a haunting quality of timelessness that is impossible to escape.

We had an altercation early this morning with some fishermen who drove their outboard boat up close to our campsite, waking several members of our party. After some angry words were exchanged, the fishermen left us to ourselves.

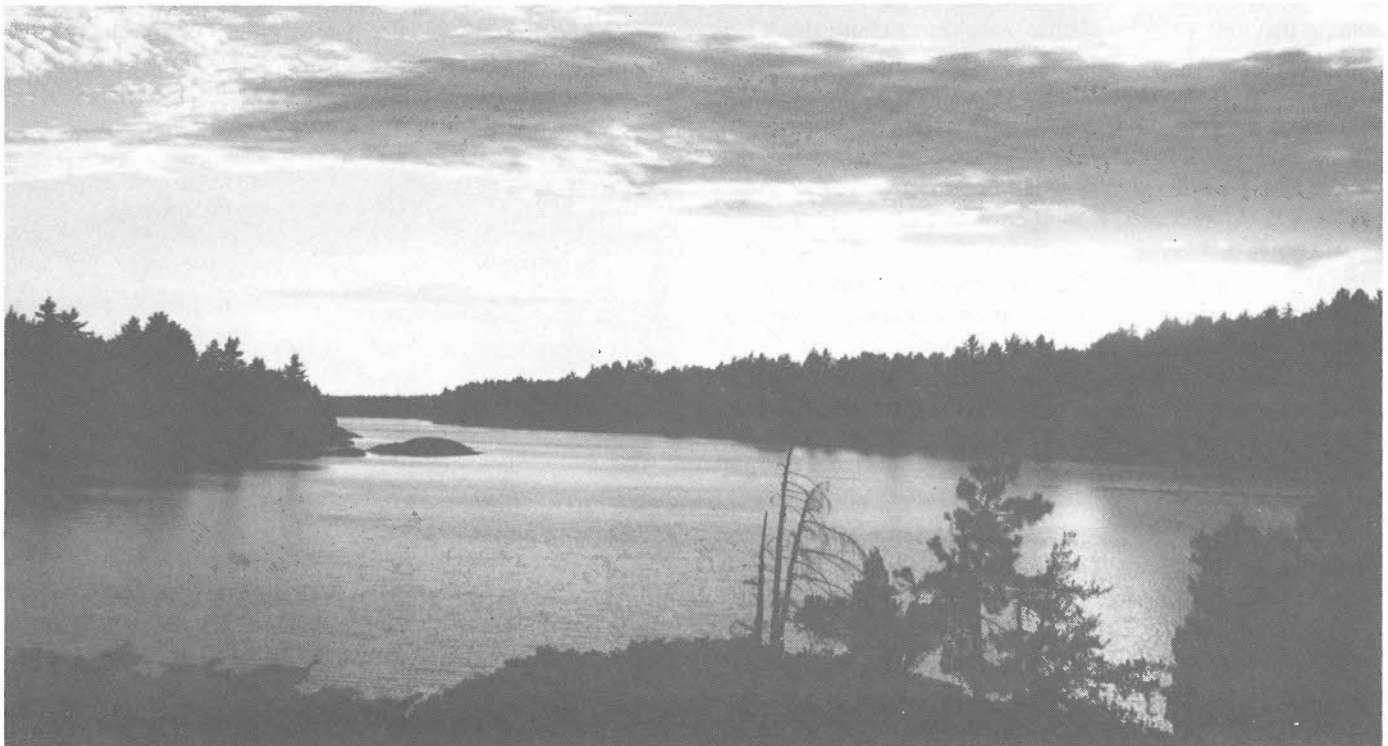
The wind was much milder today than before, and we made rapid progress, arriving at the French River Supply Post — one kilometre east of the Highway 69 bridge — at about 1:30 p.m. The rest of the afternoon was spent checking into a motel, picking up the cars we had left on the Little French and Hartley Bay, and transporting the gear. No one wanted to paddle a bit more than two kilometres downstream to Recollet Falls. We had seen enough to fill volumes.

When I sat in the motel room at the French River Trading Post, listening to the traffic on the highway, I was gripped by the memories of what we did and had seen: the long shuttle to the put-in on the Little French, breakfast of fish caught the night before, the portage around Five Finger Rapids, shooting the Parisien Rapid, paddling against the wind on choppy water sparkling in the sunlight. These images and experiences will remain graven in my memory as if etched by a native carver in soapstone. My simple descriptions of them do not begin to convey the depth of emotions that their memory evokes.

I thought of the journals I had read of the early voyagers and explorers, of Jack London's stories, of the writings of Sigurd Olson, and wondered at these authors' ability to describe what I had merely recorded. The North truly has a magic all its own that no one can fail to experience when he visits here. I remembered too the calling of the wolves in Algonquin, the pictographs on Lac La Croix in Quetico, and the magic of the twinkling reflections on the water when we paddled into the sun.

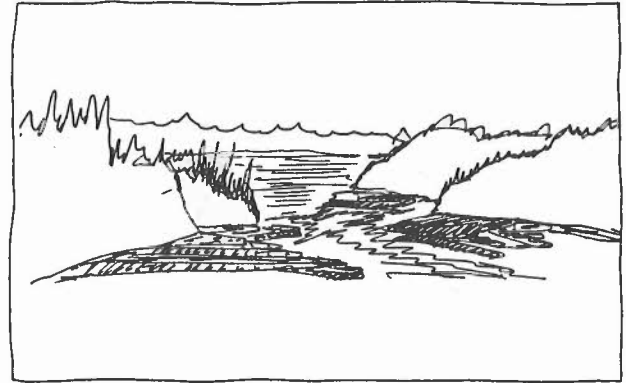
This country represents to me the world as God created it: rough, untamed, beautiful. No feats of engineering by man can equal it. All the bridges and skyscrapers in the world are pale by comparison. The closest we have come to capturing its magic is through the stories, myths, paintings, and music that seek to depict or express the face and forces of the natural world. To see it in the rough is to have touched the very face of God.

Our journey had been not only an adventure in wilderness travel, it had been an adventure in human relations, with the bursts of anger, disagreements, compromises, complaints, demands, and shared elation that are part of it. The group had bonded well, and I believe that other adventures may await us. I look forward to them with the eagerness of one for whom the day is too short, and the night too long.



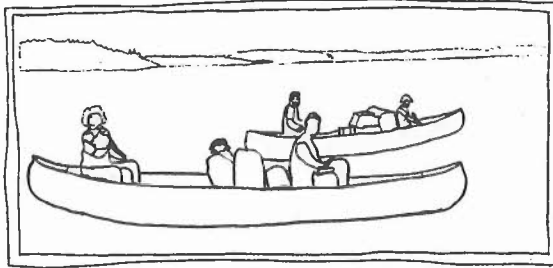
BLOODVEIN RIVER SKETCH BOOK

There are several ways to make a record of a canoe trip — photo album, slide collection, written diary, video, whatever — but the following is something not seen every day. Jon Berger has made a complete sketch book diary of a 1992 trip on the Bloodvein River, each of the 35 drawings — one per page — accompanied by some text. This very personal collection of memories is a delight to study and may inspire some drawing-gifted paddlers to follow Jon's example. Here are a few pages (reduced in size to fit several of them in our journal) of the diary.



Entrance to Little Vermillion Lake - Chukuni River

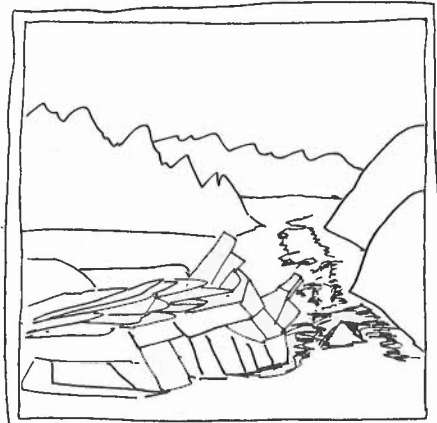
The children got us up early and we started our first full day of travel on my 47th birthday. We had a grand day with a clear cool west wind that pushed us all the way to the river mouth. We struggled over the three portages and late in the afternoon lined up a set of rapids into the lake. Children cavorting on the open rocks.



On the Water

Foreground: Kit in the stern
Becky behind the port
Sylviane in the bow

Background: Jon in the stern
Michael in the bow



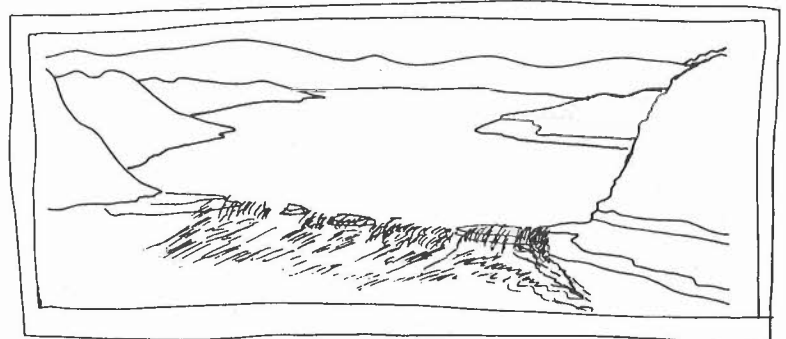
Heavy Rapids enroute to last falls above Kautogin L.

We carried on the left over open bedrock and under scorching sun.



Obstacles on the Upper Chukuni River

We worked our way through shallows, around clay banks, and under and over logs. I cut a short portage up and over a steep bank to avoid several dead falls across the river. Thick bugs. Bull moose encountered in the river.



Sekak Rapids - Bloodvein River

We camped early at a wide rapids.

REVIEWS

HISTORICAL TEMAGAMI MAP. Craig Macdonald's historical travel route map of Temagami (Te-mee-ay-gaming) is now available. It measures 38.5" by 58.5", has a scale of one inch to two miles, is printed on acid-free, heavy 70# patina mat paper, and is in full color. The price is \$30; shipping-tube, postage, and taxes are extra. The map can be obtained from Northern Books, at (416) 531-8873 in Toronto, and at other distribution outlets.

Reviewed by George Luste.

The following words, taken from the text on the map face, summarize the amazing nature of this document and the extraordinary dedication of effort by one individual it represents:

"This map is based on the author's 27 years of research within the map area, and represents knowledge accumulated and compiled from the study of more than 300 original maps, diaries, reports, journals and field notes of numerous explorers, missionaries, fur traders, geologists, surveyors and others familiar with the area. The author has supplemented these sources with over 1,000 miles of personal exploration by canoe, snowshoe and snowmobile. Invaluable assistance and information was further provided by

over 200 Anishinawbeg elders who have imparted to this histo-geographic document a depth and perspective which is unique, and one not currently obtainable from any written source."

The map coverage extends from the Vermillion River on the west to Lake Temiscaming on the east, and from Elk Lake on the north to the Tomiko River on the south. It shows the many historical canoe routes and winter snowshoe trails of this area, complete with summer and winter portages and campsite locations. Some 661 native Anishinawbeg geographical names are shown on the map, with a phonetic rendition based on a transcription devised by the author. Eleven historically authentic life-style paintings, in full color and with descriptive captions, accompany the map face.

This is an astounding piece of work, but with one short-coming: the map begs for a book to accompany it, giving some insight into the 27 years Craig spent on the trail with the project as well as a lexicon of the 661 native names shown. (But please don't take another 27 years, Craig! I may not be around that long.)

Seriously, though, this map is remarkable achievement, worthy of the highest respect. My hat is off to its author.

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THE BAFFIN HANDBOOK, Travelling in Canada's Arctic, managing editor W. Richard Hamilton, published by Nortext Publishing, Iqaluit, 1993, cardcover, 260 p., many sketch maps plus over 75 color photographs, index, \$14.95; available by mail order from Nortext, Box 8, Iqaluit, NWT, X0H 0H0, phone (819) 979-4376; in selected retail outlets; and from Northern Books (Toronto, 531-8873).

Reviewed by George Luste.

This handbook, first published in late January 1993, is a unique and valuable publication for anyone contemplating travel in the eastern high arctic or for anyone who simply wants to better understand life in the high arctic. It is unique because it is the only such guide available and it is valuable because it is both very comprehensive and also of very high quality. Northerners and highly respected northern experts such as Fred Bruemmer, Renee Wissink, Kenn Harper, Terry Jesudason, Beverly Audlaluk, and many others, take

turns in writing the various chapters. The whole is well edited.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first section, (I) "Planning Your Trip," consist of 34 pages of general and specific information, such as northern accommodations, food, weather, insects, listings of outfitters, guides, tour operators, periodicals and books, etc. Section (II) is 85 pages of descriptive information on the eastern high arctic, its native history, geography, flora and fauna, etc. And section (III), at 133 pages, gives specific information on all the northern communities and parks.

There is much interesting material in this most welcome and useful book, material that one simply cannot find anywhere else. For example, the *Your Inuit Hosts* chapter by Ann Meekitjuk Hanson describes how to stay with an Inuit family and what to expect, and also provides a brief introduction on the Inuktitut language.

* * * * *

LIGHTWEIGHT CAMPING, A Four Seasons Source Book, by Michael J. Hatton, Published by Thompson Educational Publishing Inc., 11 Briarcroft Road, Toronto, M6S 1H3, 1992, 287 pages, softcover, \$16.95.

Reviewed by Toni Harting.

I could take it easy and just say: "This is one hell of a book, get it!" and leave it at that, but such a short comment would not do justice to this 'must-haver'. There is so much

useful information on camping in its many forms packed in the no-nonsense, profusely illustrated, low-priced volume that everybody, including jaded old-timers who have seen it all, can surely benefit from studying this reference source. It says on the back of the book: "The focus is on current technical information combined with practical tips that emphasize knowledge and safety." So true. Therefore, again: "This is one hell of a book, get it!"

NAHANNI, River of Gold, River of Dreams, by Neil Hartling, published by the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, 1993, 136 pages, softcover, \$24.95.
Reviewed by Toni Harting.

The South Nahanni River — to call this famous stream by its correct name — possesses an almost mystical lure that over the years has attracted hundreds of visitors to its renowned waters. When asking wilderness paddlers what northern river they would most want to visit before their last portage to the great canoe country in the sky, an often-heard reply is bound to be “the Nahanni!” Here then is a book that would give them the opportunity to prepare themselves for their dream trip by learning many interesting and useful

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THE SACRED EARTH, by Courtney Milne, published by Penguin Books, 1991, 246 pages, large-format hardcover, \$50.00.
Reviewed by Toni Harting.

This is not a book that will make you a better canoeist, but it can certainly help you improve your capability of ‘seeing’ things, observing the beauty that can be found in everything around us if one knows where and how to look. Milne is not only a superb photographer but also a writer with a sensitive and erudite pen, a rare combination that in the case of this extraordinary volume produces a book that

things about this river of their dreams, not only the many geological highlights of the area but also the river’s colorful history, canoe tripping information, and much more.

Neil Hartling is a man who knows the river very well; luckily he also happens to be quite a gifted story teller and well-informed historian who describes the river he so passionately loves with great feeling, understanding, and insight. The many color photographs (of widely different quality, unfortunately), maps, and sketches do a good job of informing the reader what the river is all about. *Nahanni* is the first book published by the CRCA (not your typical book publisher); a fine achievement indeed that should delight many a dedicated wilderness canoeist.

is pure delight for the eyes as well as the mind.

The well-designed and -produced coffee-table book contains more than 240 photographs made at 140 ‘sacred’ sites all over the world, many of the photographs accompanied by a short, informative text explaining the what, where, when, why, and how behind the pictures. It is Milne’s talent to find and record beauty in the natural as well as the man-made worlds that shows us the importance of seeing when we are paddling in our own ‘sacred’ places of canoe country. A selection from the photographs in this book is on display in the Roloff Beny Gallery at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto until 29 August.

WCA TRIPS

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

10–18 July **TEMAGAMI**

Richard Todd, (819) 456-3268, book immediately.

This will be a flatwater trip on some of the central lakes and rivers including Lady Evelyn, Anima, Nippising, and Temagami. Limit four canoes.

18–19 July **MADAWASKA RIVER**

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book immediately.

We will do the classic Latchford Bridge to Griffith run. This makes a great family summer river trip for novices or better. The river is pool-and-drop and all rapids can be easily portaged. Limit four canoes.

24–25 July **MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE**

Dave Sharp, (519) 621-5599, book immediately.

This man-made whitewater course provides some of the best summer whitewater in central Ontario. The rapids are technically demanding and are only suitable for solid intermediate or advanced paddlers with properly outfitted whitewater boats. Helmets are required. The bottom of the course can be safely used by novices to build their skills. Limit six canoes.

31 July, 1,2 Aug. **OTTAWA RIVER**

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 24 July.

The rapids of the Ottawa are large and challenging. This is a trip suitable for advanced whitewater paddlers who are prepared to test their skills to the limit. Canoes must have sufficient floatation and the paddlers should wear helmets to avoid being injured by passing rafts. Limit six canoes.

7–8 August **PALMER RAPIDS RIVER RESCUE CLINIC**

Bill Ness (416) 321-3005, Roger and Sandy Harris, Ken Coburn, Steve Lukasko. Book now to avoid disappointment!

This clinic covers a variety of rescue techniques and is sponsored by the WCA Outings Committee. Rope-handling skills, rescue equipment, boat recovery and rescue organization will be discussed and demonstrated. Bring all your rescue equipment. Advance reading of the book “River Rescue” by Slim Ray is recommended. All paddlers welcome.

21–29 August **GEORGIAN BAY: FRENCH RIVER TO SNUG HARBOUR**

Richard Todd (819) 456-3268, book now.

Weather permitting there will be trips to the Bustard and McCoy Islands. This will be a conservative trip suitable for intermediate paddlers. Limit five canoes.

4-6 September ALGONQUIN PARK

Jasper and Mary Megelink, (416) 877-0012, book before 26 Aug.

We will start from the Rain Lake access point. The exact route is still to be determined. This is a trip suitable for beginners who are prepared for some moderate portages. Limit four canoes.

4-6 September OTTAWA RIVER

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 25 Aug.

Another chance to paddle or swim in the rapids of the Ottawa River. The rapids may vary in difficulty to class IV and all boats must be fully equipped with suitable floatation. Paddlers must wear helmets. Suitable for advanced paddlers. Limit six canoes.

11-12 September HENVEY INLET

John Winters, (705) 382-2057, book before 4 September.

We will attempt to complete the weekend circumnavigation of Henvey Inlet that we started in April. Hopefully the ice is out by now. A good trip for intermediates capable of handling large waves in open water. Solo paddlers welcome. Limit five canoes.

11-12 September LONG LAKE

Steve Lukasko, (416) 276-8285, book before 4 September.

An overnight canoe-camping lake trip in the Apsley area. The exact route will be determined later. A leisurely weekend suitable for the entire family. Fires and frogs for the kids. Limit five canoes.

12 September ELORA GORGE

Dave Sharp, (519) 621-5599, book before 6 September.

The Gorge at this time of year provides a great place for novice to intermediate paddlers to spend a day working on their whitewater skills. Limit six canoes.

19 September MISSISSAGUA RIVER

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 12 September.

If we get a rainy September the Mississagua can rise to near spring levels, making this an exciting whitewater trip. As a bonus, during the fall colors this is one of the prettiest rivers in the area. The outing is contingent on adequate water levels. Suitable for intermediate paddlers. Limit five canoes.

19 September GANARASKA TRAIL HIKE

Peter Verbeek, (416) 757-3814, book before 14 September.

A day hike of about 20 kilometres in the Wilderness Section of the Ganaraska Trail, from Victoria Bridge to Sedova. Medium difficulty.

24-26 September WCA FALL MEETING, MARY LAKE

An exciting weekend of workshops, trips, and fine dining. Sign up early. See notices in this issue.

24-26 September WEST JAMAICA STATE PARK

Brian Blunt, (705) 435-2907, book now.

The West River offers truly exciting whitewater. Contact Brian as soon as possible for more details of this unique canoeing opportunity. Limit five canoes.

2-3 October GANARASKA TRAIL

Peter Verbeek, (416) 757-3814, book before 14 September.

A backpacking trip of about 40 kilometres completing the Wilderness Section of the Ganaraska Trail from Devils Lake to Victoria Bridge. Those who complete this trip and the earlier one, 19 September, will qualify for the "End to End" Chevron.

2-3 October ALGONQUIN PARK

Herb Pohl, (416) 637-7632, book before 18 September.

Starting at the Tim Lake access point we will paddle down the Tim River, past Rosebary Lake, to the portage into Queer Lake. From there several short portages will take us to the finish at Magnetawan Lake. Suitable for the determined geriatric set. Limit four canoes.

3 October ELORA GORGE

Jeff Lane, (519) 846-2586, book before 26 September.

A day trip in the scenic Elora Gorge. The water will have cooled sufficiently to deter the tubers, allowing us to enjoy the serenity of an Ontario autumn at our leisure. Suitable for contemplative whitewater paddlers. Limit four canoes.

16 October GRAND RIVER

Mike Jones, (416) 270-3256, book before 11 October.

Gently moving water, mooing cows, and fall colors at their finest. Suitable for the family. Limit five canoes.

16-17 October FERRIE RIVER

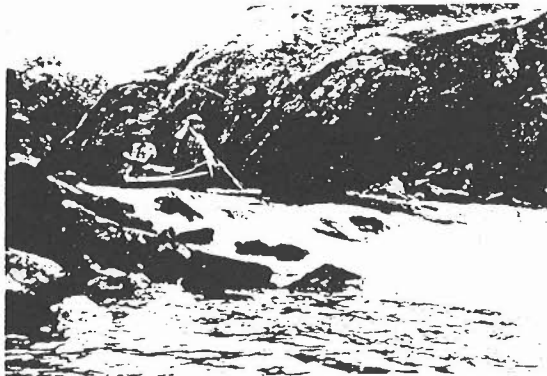
John Winters, (705) 382-2057, book before 4 October.

The Ferrie River is a small feeder stream of the Magnetawan, running from the north. This is an exploratory trip that will reconnoiter the route. The topographical map shows numerous rapids, but who knows what we will find. Suitable for rugged intermediates who enjoy surprises. Solo canoeists welcome. Limit four canoes.

31 October HALLOWEEN ON ELORA GORGE

Mike Jones, (416) 270-3256, book before 24 October.

Suitably costumed for the day, we will paddle the rapids of Elora Gorge in the finest style. Each boat must be equipped with a pumpkin and other seasonal floatation. A prize will be awarded for the most original attire. Suitable for intermediate paddlers, ghosts, and goblins. Limit five ethereal watercraft.

**31 November FINCH RESERVOIR — GRENADIER POND LOOP**

John Winters, (705) 382-2057, book before 1 December.

Travel this historic native trade route connecting Lake Ontario and The Humber River. Experience the rich pageantry of the history of our commerce. Where once the beaver skin was bartered now bags of crack change hands. Enjoy the local color. Bring your camera for great candid photo opportunities. Suitable for novices who don't mind the one long portage of about 13 kilometres up Keele Street. Limit 20 canoes.

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.

CLASSIC SOLO CANOE COURSES Four hours of instruction by Becky Mason; fee \$60. Box 126, RR#1, Chelsea, Quebec J0X 1N0; phone (819) 827-4159.

WILDERNESS BOUND Our new summer 1993 color brochure, presenting outfitted wilderness canoe trips as well as canoe instruction courses, is available by contacting: Wilderness Bound, 43 Brodick St., Hamilton, ON L8S 3E3; tel. and fax (416) 528-0059.

THE SECRET PLACE

I guess everyone who has been on a wilderness trip has one. A secret place of beauty and peace. A place where you can just stop it all, stop every bit of it, where you feel in your guts that this is it. A place where you want to spend more time. Don't know for sure how much time we're talking about, but surely more than a day, two days, a week. Enough time so that you'll know, really know, when it's time to move on. I myself don't know how long that time period is. Never have been able to get my fill of a secret place.

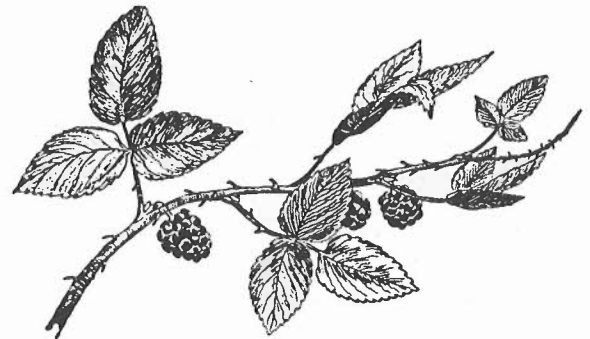
If you recognize that you are in a secret place you have to treasure every second that you've been given. It will not be enough. Hold the moment, the place, as long as you can. Hold it for as long as your tentmates will allow you. Tell them anything. You need more time, you're too sick to travel, the weather looks bad, this is our rest day. Lie if necessary. This is the moment of all canoe travel, indeed of all travel. The discovery of a place too perfect to leave without spending more time. Stay there. It only happens rarely and lasts too briefly. There are only so many secret places allotted to you in a lifetime.

You see, everything has to be perfect. Time, money, family, mental state, physical health, job, food remaining. The list is endless. And never is everything perfect. But canoe travel lessens the importance of all these pins that prick. Almost in the perfect place at almost the perfect time. Grab and hold. Hard. It will have to carry you for a long time.

Greg Went

NORTHERN BOOKS Used, scarce, and select new books on northern, arctica, Canadiana, wilderness, and canoeing topics. Write for free catalog which lists some 750 items, and has a special emphasis on northern Native People and related material. Northern Books, Box 211, Station P, Toronto, ON, M5S 2S7, or call (416) 531-8873 and leave a message.

SWIFT CANOES now available for test paddling in Elora, Ontario. Limited selection, custom orders, discount for WCA members. For details please contact Jeff Lane at (519) 846-2586.



CANOE FOR SALE OldTown Pathfinder 15.6 ft, solo or tandem, red ABS, good all-around boat. Price \$700. Les Palenik at (416) 731-6363.

FREE NEW CATALOG available from the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, outlining one of the most comprehensive collections of paddling materials available anywhere: CRCA, 1029 Hyde Park Road, Suite 5, Hyde Park, Ontario, N0M 1Z0; phone (519) 473-2109.

KIRKLAND LAKE CANOE ROUTES brochure with some maps is available from: District Manager, Ministry of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 129, Swastika, Ontario P0K 1T0.

CHAPLEAU DISTRICT CANOE ROUTES map and information are available from: Ministry of Natural Resources, 190 Cherry Street, Chapleau, Ontario K1A 0E9.



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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.