nastawgan

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ON TO THE BAY

Canoeing the Caribou River

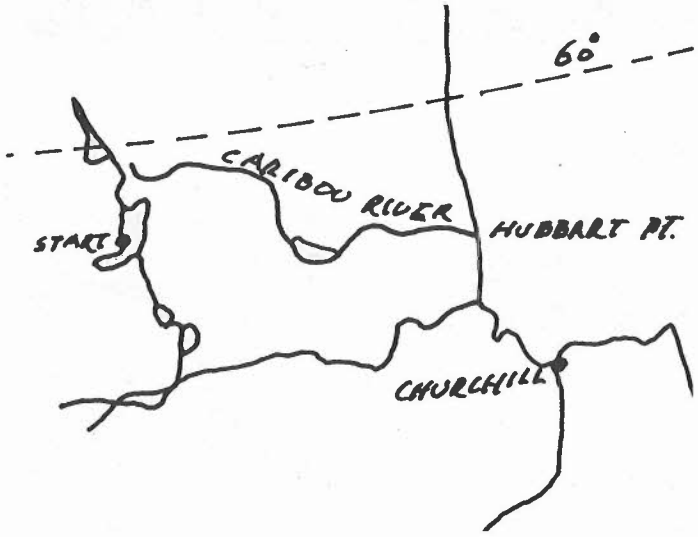
Marti Shaak

Some experiences are meant to be hurriedly written down, so that no detail will be overlooked or forgotten. Others need to be tucked away in the inner-most person, where the mind's eye can sort through the myriad of sensorial impressions. My first attempts to write about the Caribou were frenzied and factual, squeezing into tightly fitting form a story that did not want to be chronological. Ours was one of those experiences that required time for precious interpretation to pass from the senses to the soul. Here is my version of the story of this 1991 trip.

The Caribou is one of several rivers which flows from the vast Barren Lands of Northern Manitoba into Hudson Bay. It is a relatively small river, very remote and rarely paddled. For millennia it has been a main corridor for the flow of snow meltwaters, a barrier to cross for both migrating caribou and the people who followed them. In recent centuries it has served as winter highway for the passage of trappers, hunters, adventurers, and Hudson Bay traders. To canoe this river, 185 miles from the Roberts River tributary into the Bay, was to touch in exquisitely tangible ways the fickle unpredictability of seasonal change, the infinite beauty of tundra life, and timeless paths of the ancient ones who followed the caribou migration.

It is the special moments of this trip which I would like

to share with you in photo-album fashion, those sharply focused images from the past which are irrevocably part of my consciousness. These moments of interaction with our travelling partners, the land, and the river, are at once intensely personal, supremely spiritual, and subtly humorous.



THE ALDERS

"Doc" was the first to get intimate with the alders. Alders and willows are scrubby bushes, usually low growing, which flourish on every square inch of moist soil along the river bank. When conditions are favorable, alders might grow in a tangled mess 20 or 30 feet in from the river bank. Alders and willows provide the bulk of winter browse for caribou and their presence gives some relief to the otherwise treeless tundra.

We all had "brushes" with the alders. The moist soil requirement for rich alder growth we encountered was not synonymous with solid ground. Much of the lower branch growth on alders and willows was at ground level, concealing water holes, rocky ravines, and generally unfavorable walking conditions. With rain, these tangled branches became extremely slippery. For me, it was just a matter of time until one foot would accidentally "fall through the cracks" and I would collapse backward onto my heavy pack. After performing one of these graceful manoeuvres, I did a most convincing rendition of, "Help, I've fallen and I can't get up!"

Doc was the seventh member of our team. Professing to be "primarily a flatwater paddler," Doc often "duffed" in the middle of the canoe which carried three persons. He was frequently obliged to walk around rapids to help lighten his threesome's well-loaded canoe. No small task, this portaging often involved fording sections of braided side channels with shallow, swift water moving over slippery rocks and crossing alder islands.

On one particularly long, difficult rapid, we lost sight of Doc. As all three canoes gathered in a pool below the rapid, we were jolted to attention by what sounded like the Tyrannosaurus Rex of hoot owls. The distant but distinct hooting of this giant bird, which by its sound was clearly in distress, emanated from the tallest stand of alders we had ever seen. The alders towered above us, presenting an imposing and certainly impassable tangle of jungle-like growth.

Lee, a young personnel director from Arizona, was first to comprehend: "Dad, Dad, I'm coming, Dad!" How many generations of students at Washington University School of Medicine would have been deprived of Oncology studies if a happy reunion of father and son had not taken place that day?

Color this picture with big smiles in the foreground, but don't overlook the dark clouds of misgiving in the background as we realized the gravity of what might have been.

FRESH FISH FOR SUPPER

It was one of those blue-sky, clear-blue-water, wind-to-the-back- for-crossing-lakes days. Indeed, we had already grunted packs and canoes over several boulder fields, but who's counting on a day like this? A beautiful series of friendly rapids in mid-afternoon more than compensated for the morning's intermittent hard work.

On casual whitewater play trips, each rapid is typically given a lot of individual attention, accompanied by the body's generous shot of adrenalin. After days of continuous rapids, unless the drop looked death defying, evaluating the water became rather academic and emotionally detached. Often, the burden for decision making fell heavily on the first canoe in line. My husband and I were number two canoe in the line-up this afternoon and we had more or less relaxed into a follow-the-leader routine. So when our lead canoe stopped at the head of the rapid, my thinking went like this: "Too bad, number one canoe is hung up on a nasty, barely submerged rock; this approach looks better: general plan — start river left, end right in nice pool, zig and zag like crazy in between, we're committed, awesome bow view, a zillion draws and cross-draws, 400 metres and sixty seconds later we are within spitting distance of the end, oops, hug that rock, push, grunt, we're free, look at the size of those grayling swimming in the pool."

Somewhere in the middle of a zig or a zag, it occurred to me that canoe number one was purposely perched at the rapid's head, assessing the situation. Canoe number three followed us through the rapid, developed a more enduring attachment to the holding rock, and managed to demonstrate a benign swamping with a remarkable degree of control. Canoe number one wisely and efficiently lined their way to the pool. Bill Mason's son, Paul, would have proclaimed this rapid extraordinarily "tricky."

The foot of "Grayling Pool Rapid" was a perfect place to fish and an artist's choice for a picnic. Catch of the day included six grayling and a three-foot stick pike.

Color this picture with crispy brown fish filets, Suddenly Salad, and chocolate mousse satisfying voracious appetites.

THE FOUR-LETTER WORD

Grayling fortified, we set off for a one-mile paddle to our day's destination, Round Sand Lake. The map indicated "R," meaning rock. It was because of this R word that seven days into our sixteen-day trip we had already used up the two emergency layover days built into the travel schedule. It was because of the R word that we now pushed on after supper to complete just one more mile to reach Round Sand Lake.

Timing is the key to favorable paddling conditions in the north. Start too early and the Bay will still be frozen. Start too late, miss the spring melt, and water levels will be too low. Spring in 1991 came uncharacteristically early. We were faced with long sections of river that were simply not passable.

The mile into Round Sand Lake consisted of a nearly continuous boulder bed. We walked in the water beside our canoes, pulling them between and around rocks wherever enough water allowed. We were all wet to the waist, feet sliding off treacherously slippery rocks into deep holes, where only a firm hold on the gunwale kept us from plunging into the water over our heads. Ultimately, we had to portage everything hop-scotch fashion over the rocks into another area where we could again walk, push, and shove the canoes over and around rocks. It had been a seventeen-hour travel day and the last four hours were a test of endurance.

Suddenly, there was the lake, remarkably round, looking-glass smooth and shimmering with the most vivid sunset colors I have ever seen. A gently sloping sand beach invited us ashore. Between the wet, the cold, the extreme fatigue, and the exquisite beauty of this place, I went about setting up camp in pretty much of a stupor. The remaining hot herbal tea from the thermos became my rare treasure for a "bowl" bath. Even dressed in heavy long johns, it took a long time to warm up in the sleeping bag. It was a heavy-frost night.

In this picture we will focus on the beauty of sunset over Round Sand Lake, intentionally editing out the R word.

WILDERNESS IS A MAN'S WORLD?

History, as taught in public schools of the United States, rarely includes more than a brief reference to exploration of the Canadian North. If mention at all is made of Samuel Hearne, it is a one-line credit: "First European to travel overland to the Arctic Ocean."

A closer look at the story of Samuel Hearne reveals that his 1771 success followed on the heels of two badly bungled attempts and further, that his ultimate achievement was

directly due to women. Hearne's third trip overland was led by a highly respected Chipewyan named Matonabbee. Matonabbee blamed Hearne's previous failures on the decision not to allow any women along. "Women were made for labor," he explained. "One of them can carry, or haul, as much as two men can do. They also pitch our tents, make and mend our clothing, keep us warm at night; and in fact there is no such thing as travelling any considerable distance, or for any length of time, in this country, without their assistance."

As the only woman on the Caribou expedition, let me set the record straight. It was totally beyond my capabilities to carry a ninety-pound food pack over level ground, let alone balance one on my back while deftly jumping from rock to slippery rock. However, not all the men on our trip were able to do that either. It did not take long, under arduous travel conditions, to discover the limits of each person's strengths and weaknesses. The group drew heavily on individual strengths and supported each other in our weaknesses as well. We functioned as a team without regard to societally imposed sexual bias or presuppositions.

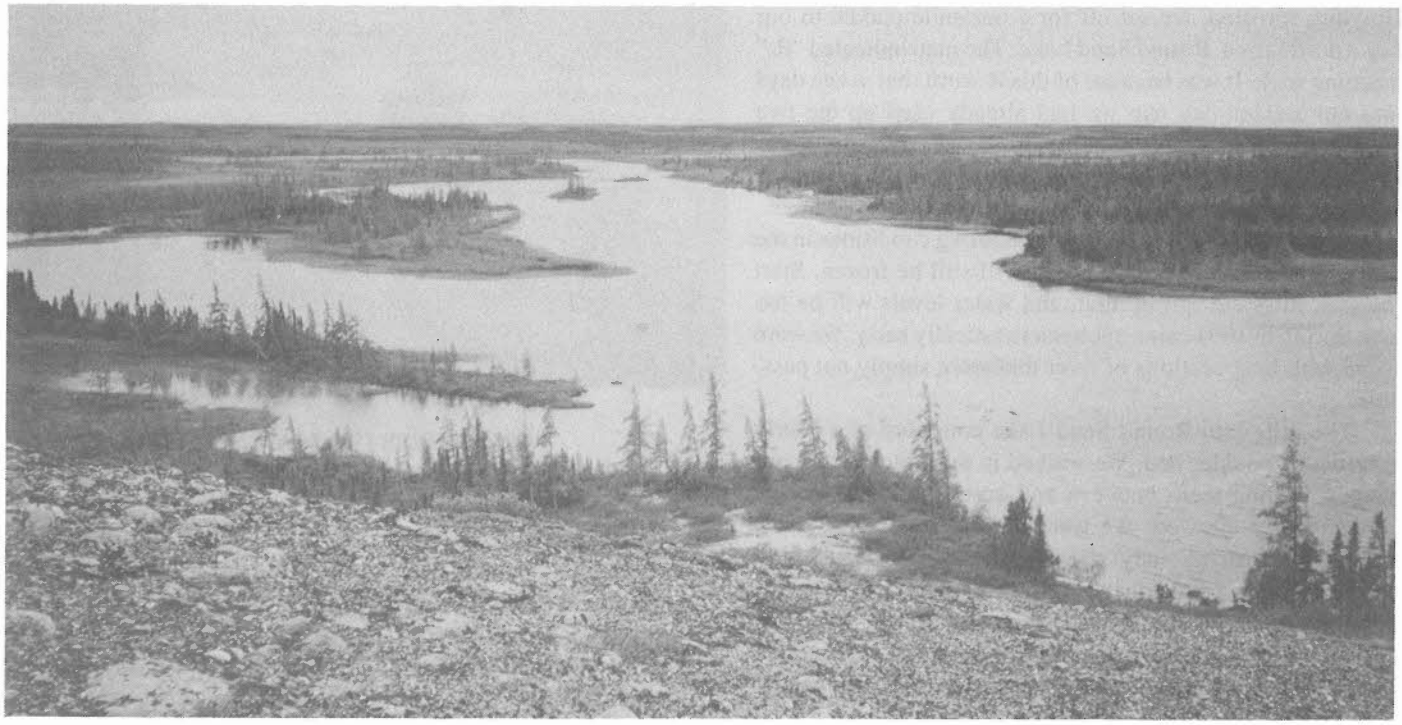
I learned a lot about myself on this trip. Three things which disturbed me were: my tendency to get dizzy trying to walk from rock to rock in knee-deep, fast-moving water; my low frustration threshold when faced with extensive boulder fields; and the day I suffered from river-reading burn-out and gave up that responsibility to my stern partner. The conditions which we faced daily were as incredible to my understanding as they were to my physical performance. On the other hand, my whitewater skills, years of wilderness camping experience, and a real love for wild places paid rich dividends. Even though we were together on the water for only sixteen days, it was apparent as time passed that some members of the group became strengthened and empowered as a result of our experiences, while other members seemed to get worn down by them. I saw myself as one who was resilient, who did what needed doing with a positive attitude, and who became progressively enabled to do more than I ever thought possible. Just how long a trip would be required for me to meet Matonabbee's expectations of a woman is a matter of conjecture.

Color this picture with a woman standing tall on the tundra.

A TRIBUTE TO RUBBER BOOTS

Prior to 1991, I allowed for two alternatives in footwear fashion for canoeing. The first provided for intentional wet feet in Alp sandals or neoprene booties, the second for dry feet in boots. When the suggested clothing list for our expedition included high rubber boots, I naturally concluded that dry feet were part of the plan. Indeed, an initial portage over wet muskeg reinforced the wisdom of wearing such boots. Imagine my surprise when a goodly portion of our first day on the Roberts River was spent walking beside the canoe in water above the knees. The tricky part came when we would hit water deep enough to paddle. This would require jumping up out of the water, with a gallon of water in each boot, and gracefully landing the butt in a well-centred part of the well-loaded canoe. Next, one had to lift each leg into the air, over the side of the canoe to empty the water from each boot.

My first attempt at this procedure resulted in the invention of a new form of feminine hygiene. Having come smartly attired in high-tech, nylon, quick-dry pants, the leg of that nonabsorbent pant acted like a conduit, quickly washing sub-Arctic river water down my upraised leg, swishing through my crotch, down into and overflowing my still full second boot. I soon learned to allow some space between boot top and pant leg while engaging in this activity. To be sure, the boots saved my feet and legs from many a twist and abrasion and are absolutely necessary for this kind of canoe travel.



My second testimonial for rubber boots results from the running of a particular rapid. Throughout my years of whitewater training in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and my native Pennsylvania, I had paddled rivers at a leisurely pace. We would get out at each rapid, carefully choose the best route and then apply good technique to move the canoe through the chute, past the rock, or around the hole. Each successful run would end in a picturesque pool with the sun shining, congratulations from our paddling partners, and the option to run again. My recollection has each rapid providing one or more clearly right or wrong choices.

The reality of running rapids on the Caribou was much different. Many rapids were quite long and complex. They often had to be divided into sections. We might paddle to a certain point, physically pull the boat over an obstacle, line down a couple of ledges, and finally finesse our way through the remaining rock garden. At times we might determine a rapid runnable from the top, but would have to pull out half-way through because of some surprise or another. We were not in the habit of taking chances with boats or people and lining was our best resource in working our way down-river.

The rapid which endeared my boots to me was not a mean rapid. It was maybe a hundred yards long, pushy, very rocky and conformed to a characteristic of many of the Caribou's rapids. Looking clearly runnable from the top, the final drop was obstructed by a rock wall all the way across. Much of the wall was just barely under water making it appear from the top as if there were a way through at the bottom. From a kneeling position, feet securely tucked under the canoe seat, we began our descent. Still looking like a clean run, we abandoned our normal routine of back paddling to slow our speed and fairly raced along.

Exhilaration ended subito abruptly on a huge submerged rock. According to the immutable laws of physics, my body shot forward over the bow in a momentarily suspended face-down, flat-out position and bungee-booted me to a stand-still by feet still tucked under the canoe seat. Gravity finished the job by dropping my upper body into the water. Paddle still in hand, the only thing to do was a sculling low brace with both body and paddle to a point where I could pull my butt back into the canoe. Close call.

Color this picture wet but safe.

REMNANTS OF THE PAST

Never much of a history student in school, I became absolutely fascinated by evidence of the people who had lived in these remote areas under the harshest of conditions. In several places where we took lunch-break hikes or close by our evening campsites, we would find fire rings and corner stones in the dimensions of Hudson Bay-style tents. At Round Sand Lake we found an Indian grave site.

The Hudson's Bay Company began active trading in this area during the early 1700s. Prior to that, the Pre-Dorset people lived here as far back as 1700 B.C. They led a nomadic existence, harvesting seals from Hudson Bay, and hunting caribou inland.

In my pack I carried the published journal of a Hudson's Bay Factor who had served at Caribou Post, located on Caribou Lake, from 1931 to 1937. The journal included some early photographs of the Post in operation. As we paddled toward Caribou Lake, I tried to imagine what we might find at the old Post, even though the journal mentioned that the Caribou Post had been relocated to Duck Lake before 1940.

We had no problem locating Caribou Post. Two old freighter canoes were left on the bank, two buildings remained standing: a cabin and a functional outhouse. Using the existing buildings as markers, the other building foundations were easily discovered by comparing them to the photographs in the journal.

An Indian had assumed ownership of the cabin for a winter trapping and fishing camp. According to the custom of the north, the cabin was open for anyone in need. It was humbling to see the simple but adequate manner in which this person spent the long winter months. Caribou skins provided warmth between mattress and sleeping bag, caribou hair scraped off the hide was used as insulation in the double wall. Another peculiar custom of the Indians who travelled by way of Caribou Lake was to write messages on the walls of the cabin. The messages were generally signed by all members of the party and dated. Many of the family

names scrawled over the cabin walls were the same names that history records acting as guides to the first Europeans who explored and exploited the resources of this area. The indigenous people of the North have a long and lasting relationship with this land which we cannot begin to fully appreciate.

In Churchill we visited Fort Prince of Wales, built by the Hudson's Bay Company in the latter part of the 18th Century. Churchill was a main port for the northern fur trade business for many years. It was, however, Sloop's Cove which most excited me. This sheltered cove, close to the Churchill River mouth, was large enough for several ships to spend the winter. Generations of early explorers "wintered over" in Sloop's Cove and left their autographs on the surrounding rocks. Many of these explorers never saw home again and most who did were those who benefitted from contact with the Inuit or Chipewyan. Color this picture with graffiti-covered rocks; for some of the artisans, a self-inscribed epitaph.

SURPRISE, SURPRISE

Sometimes the most unexpected things happened. We had just left Caribou Post with the vast expanse of Caribou Lake to paddle, when I saw what appeared to be a horizon line ahead of us, right there in the middle of a lake. Within minutes, our ears confirmed what eyes had seen, as we heard the unmistakable sounds of small falls and rapids. We carefully picked our way through this anomaly with lower jaws dropped nearly to the water line. Suddenly, a rather large short-haired head with two beady eyes and gigantic whiskers lifted out of the water right next to the canoe and stared me smack in the face.

Tending to wrap my tongue around my teeth under the most normal of circumstances, it took several attempts at vocalizing along with furious hand motions and pointing "up lake" to communicate S-E-A-L. That was the first of many sightings of what appeared to be a solitary jar (harp) seal, travelling in the same direction we were. At the foot of each rapid, our seal would gather with us in the pool, lift its head out of the water at a respectful distance from us, and count canoes. We joked that the Churchill Chamber of Commerce sent him up-river to show us crazy tourists the way. "Sealy" followed us for at least four days, possibly all the way to Churchill. Two days travel from the Bay we began to see many seals and could no longer distinguish "Sealy" from the others.

Color this picture with curiosity and anticipation, as land mammal and water mammal gazed at each other.

BUGS

No respectable story about the north would be complete without a word or two about bugs. There is neither food nor beverage that cannot be made more nutritious by the addition of fifty or sixty mosquitoes. I counted 34 in my coffee one morning, collected between pouring and bringing the cup under my head net for drinking. Teeth function admirably well as strainers.

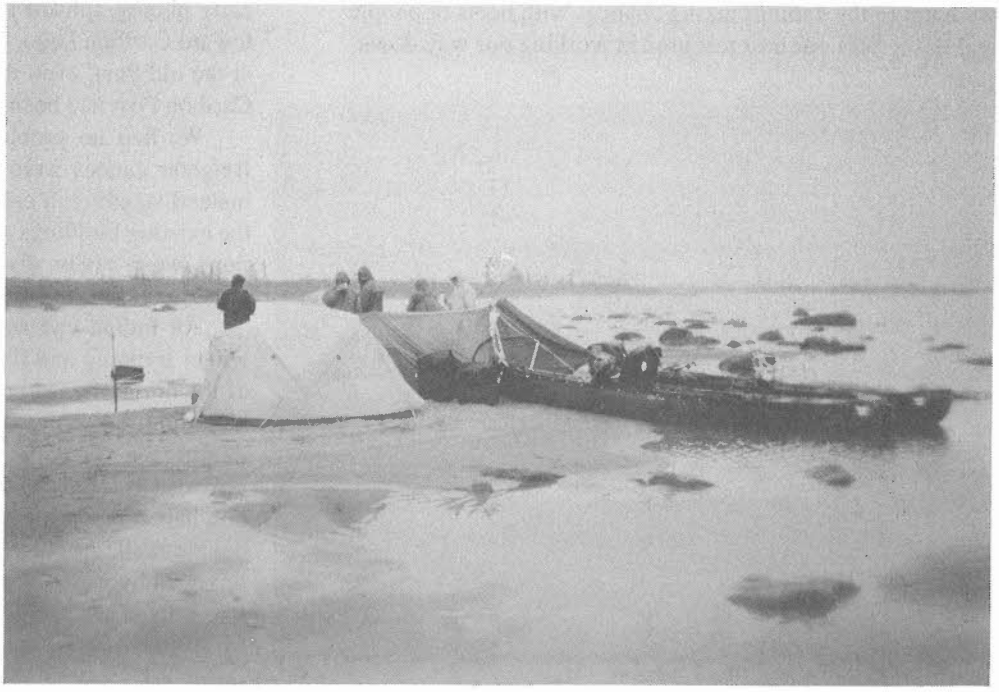
A good clothing cover was our best defense against black flies and mosquitoes, although we used chemical deterrents and head nets when necessary. A tightly-screened tent and an unfailing sense of humor were indispensable. We loved the wind, we embraced the cold, we climbed to the peaks of the highest eskers to escape from bugs.

Compose this picture anyway you like, but finish it with zillions of black specks orbiting around any human form.

LORD WILLIN' AND THE CREEK DON'T RISE

The 16th of July was our scheduled pick-up at Hubbart Point on Hudson Bay. We awakened to a warm, overcast 14 July. Between today and tomorrow we needed to cover a modest 30 miles and a drop of 200 feet to sea level. The rapids began assuming big river proportions with really big waves and hydraulics. Our spray covers enabled us to skirt around water that would have caused certain swamping otherwise. We were making good progress and by noon smells of the sea began blowing our way. Thunder, lightning, rain, and a strong west wind sent us digging through our packs for extra clothing and rain gear. Whatever travail weather patterns over the Bay might bring our way, we were certain now that the Caribou would deliver us. Without warning, the river disappeared. More accurately, the river widened to flow through a boulder-filled plateau. Small channels braided around a mile-wide maze of alder islands, only to dead end in more rocks. We would not get to the Bay without a fight.

After a 13-hour paddling day, we stopped to camp on the only available flat surface. A sand bar in the middle of the river, broken into several sections by flowing water, had room enough to accommodate all of our tents and our cooking tarp. Some of our party were so cold, wet, and exhausted, we delivered dinner to them in their tent. Everyone retired to their tents as soon as chores were done.



While storms had been a nuisance most of the day, it was now that the mother of all storms focussed her fury on our puny defenses. For the first time in two weeks, the night became pitch black. Hurricane-force winds flattened our tent on top of us, the temperature dropped dramatically, torrential rains pushed through every design weakness in the thin piece of nylon which separated us from the elements. As my husband and I huddled together, arms aching from holding the tent away from our faces, we confronted the fear which nearly immobilized us, "What if the river rises?" The pounding continued for hours. It was a long night, with plenty of time to sort through the past, to be assured of peace with the Almighty, and to make promises which involved a hoped-for future.

Morning dawned cold and rainy, water flowing inches from our tents. Breakfast conversation was highly animated and granola never tasted better. Color this picture thankful to be alive.

AGAINST THE CLOCK AND THE TIDE

Events of the night before had served to heighten our perceptions. We were getting so close we could actually taste the saltiness of the air. As the crow flies, we had five miles to cover to our destination. Inevitable rockbed detours and bends in the river increased the actual distance somewhat, but we would make it now against any odds. Anticipation and excitement lighted every face. We were smiling while doing the lousiest of portages.

By lunchtime we hit pleasantly navigable water. The terrain flattened out and we began to notice the effects of the tide. Seals popped in and out of the water everywhere, curious, cute little faces. In mid-afternoon we had paddled as far as we could go on the tidal flats during low tide conditions. Hubbart Point was in sight, with a jumble of rocks and boulders separating us from the take-out point. We pulled over onto a big rock and waited, built a fire to dry our socks and waited, cooked our supper and waited.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the twelve-foot tide began to cover rocks and provide the water we needed to paddle the last mile to our destination. Around 9:30 in the evening, we loaded our canoes and began to paddle across a rocky inlet of the great Hudson Bay. As we paddled, the dark clouds of our final day on the Caribou River parted to disclose a beautiful sunset. Hubbart Point itself was a mixture of wild flowers, sea shells, geese, red-throated loons, seals, sik-sik, and a polar-bear-proofed cabin.

There was quiet celebration that night, which moved even the most reserved of us to soliloquize. The *Arluk*, a fishing vessel, was due the next morning to take us to Churchill. We arrived at the pick-up point at 11:00 p.m. the night before our rendezvous, after fifteen days of uncertainty. At one especially low point along the way, we had discussed the implications of waiting where we were for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to initiate a search and fly us out. A group consensus to persevere and individual efforts to push beyond what we thought were our limitations brought us to the summit of this emotional mountaintop. It was worth the effort.

Color this evening with the reds, pinks, and purples of another gorgeous sunset, the camaraderie of friends to whom we had entrusted our lives, and the supreme feeling of accomplishment against the face of tremendous odds.

Several years later, the images are still clear in my mind. The photographs and written journals fill in any lapses of memory. This was a trip which opened my mind and my heart to places of incredible beauty, to wonderful persons with substance of character, to a new understanding of myself, and to the world of infinite possibilities and potentials. Talk to me about innate beauty, the inner workings of the mind, or the source of spirituality, and I will talk to you about the Caribou experience.

TRIP STATISTICS

DISTANCE: 185 miles Lake Nejanilini to Hubbart Point.
MAPS: 1:250,000-scale 64P and 54M; 1:50,000-scale also available.
ACCESS: Lake Nejanilini and the Roberts River system or Commonwealth Lake, fly in from Lynn Lake with LeRonge Aviation Service.
EXIT: by boat or air at Hubbart Point.
GEOGRAPHY: mostly tundra, some taiga.
DIFFICULTY: high.
ISOLATION: extreme.
RAPIDS: mostly class II and III, some IV; lining skills essential; spray covers highly recommended; at high water — 130 rapids; at low water — many additional rock gardens.
SUGGESTION: be flexible in scheduling this trip for exact timing at ice-out.
LOCAL OUTFITTER: North River Outfitters, 80 Deerwood Drive, Thompson, Manitoba, R8N 1E1, phone (204) 778-6979.

The author wishes to recognize the outstanding trip leadership of Bob O'Hara and the editorial assistance of Bonnie Rhoads.

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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.

EDITORIAL

My apologies for the late publication of this issue of *Nastawgan*. Finishing the writing of my French River book (deadline early October) conflicted with the production of our journal which unfortunately had to be delayed a few weeks. The next issue should be out on time.

NEWS BRIEFS

WHITEWATER SKILL-BUILDER CLINICS Start paddling next spring with a new sense of skill and competence. Develop powerful, instinctive braces that will right a capsizing canoe. Learn to execute aggressive, precise turns. For a real confidence boost, let us show you how to roll a canoe — it's not that difficult. We have a Scarborough pool available Sundays 5 to 6 p.m. from 7 January through 10 March. Cost is only $50 per person for a whole winter of paddling fun. Limit of 20 participants. Register now to avoid disappointment. Call Bill Ness at (416) 321-3005.

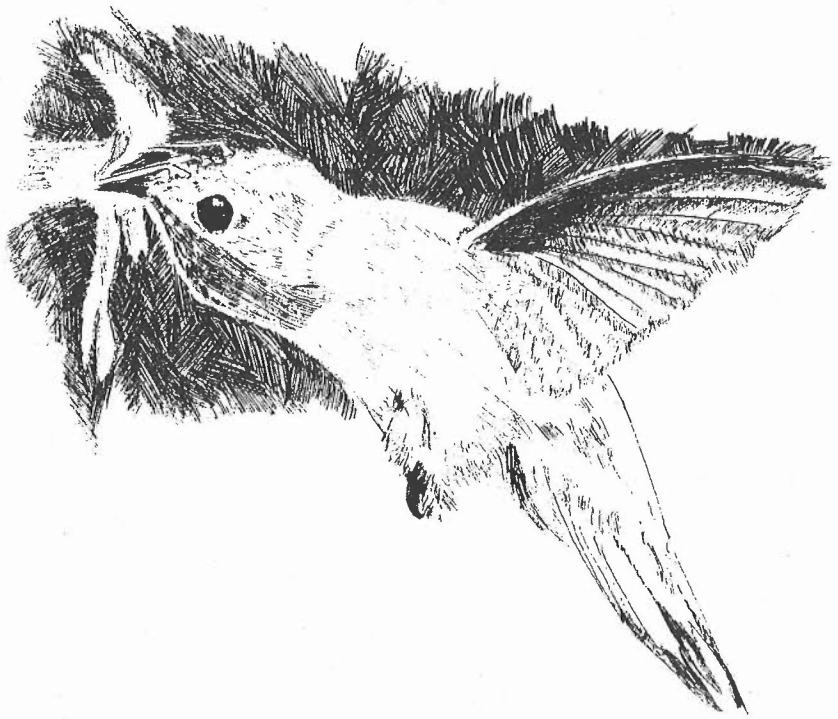
CANOES FOR KIDS The salvation Army's Camp Madawaska is seeking donations of old canoes, preferably aluminum. Why not donate that old Grumman that you're not using anyway? An underprivileged youngster will gain a valuable outdoor experience as a result of your generosity. Call Captain Dirk van Duinen of the Sally Ann's at (416) 425-2111.

COMING CANOE SHOWS Early next year three big outdoors shows will be held in southern Ontario where you can find much valuable information on canoeing: The Toronto Sportsmen's Show and the (new) Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec Canoe and Kayak Show (hope they'll come up with a better name) in March, and the Canoe Expo in April. More information in the coming issues.

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: Winter 1995 *deadline date:* 12 November 1995
Spring 1996 21 January 1996

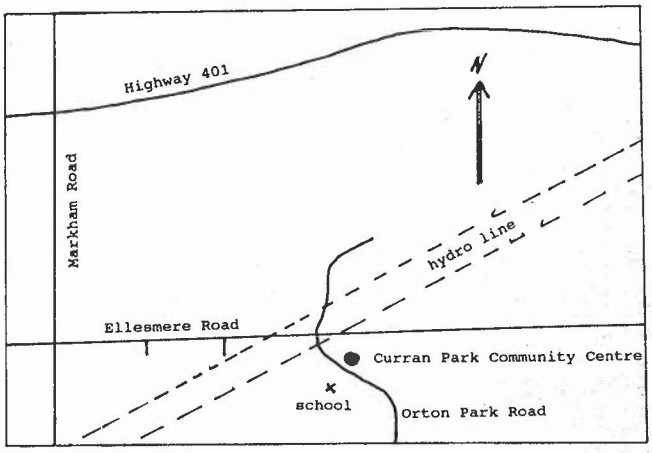
WCA MEMBERSHIP LISTS are available to any members who wish one for personal, non-commercial use. Send a five dollar bill (no cheque, please!) to Cash Belden at the WCA postal address (see WCA Contacts on the back page).



FALL PARTY

Want to meet old canoeing friends? Want to hear some tall paddling stories and see interesting photographs? Want to find out what the WCA is all about. who its members are, and what inside information they can give you?

Then come to the WCA Fall Party, also called Wine-and-Cheese Party, on Friday evening, 24 November. Because the staff lounge at George Brown College is no longer available, THERE IS A NEW LOCATION! Use your outing skills, compass, and topos to get to CURRAN HALL in SCARBOROUGH: take Highway 401 to Markham Road, turn south to Ellesmere Road, turn east on Ellesmere to Orton Park Road (three lights), then half a kilometre south to Curran Hall Community Centre on the east side by the tennis courts. There is parking in the lot behind the building or on the street.



Program

7:00 – 8:00	Registration and welcome
8:00 – 9:00	Featured presentation
9:00 – 10:00	Meet the people, enjoy
10:00	Coffee and clean-up

For more information contact Sharon Hackert (416) 438-7672.

WHITEWATER RODEO

Pirouettes and cartwheels, formerly the domain of gymnasts, are now almost mandatory manoeuvres at international whitewater rodeo competitions. This became strikingly clear recently, when the world's top rodeo paddlers converged on the famous Eiskanal, an artificial whitewater course situated in the town of Augsberg in Germany. The 1995 World Whitewater Rodeo Championships showcased the paddler's skills as they performed technical manoeuvres and stunts in the whitewater. This three-day event consisted of an "extreme" slalom course worth 35% of the score, with hole riding accounting for the remaining 65%. This year the top boaters needed to combine several moves such as pirouettes, whippets, Mctwists, and cartwheels into a 30-second run to score top marks.

Meanwhile, the C-1 paddlers and kayakers were also pulling off some hot acrobatics. The latest move is called a split wheel and it literally adds a new twist to a standard cartwheel. To do a split wheel, start off with a cartwheel to your onside, then twist around so that your next cartwheel is on your offside. It's probably as hard to execute as it is to explain.

When the spray cleared the open canoe event had been won by Uwe Fischer (Ger), second place was for Lars Klotzbach (Ger), with third place going to Jeff Richards (USA). The Canadians placed as follows: Lyle Dickieson fourth, Tyler Elm eighth, Mark Scriver ninth, Paul Mason tenth, Richard Borek twelfth, and Joe Langman fifteenth. Gillian Wright placed fifth in women's kayak, and Ken Whiting placed nineteenth in men's kayak.

After this competition all participants were treated to a week of paddling in Austria and Switzerland, culminating in a Europa Cup Rodeo held in Bremgarten, Switzerland. Here the tables were turned as Lars Klotzbach (Ger) took first place in the open canoe class, with Paul Mason (Can) and Mark Scriver (Can) tying for second place.

Rodeo paddling is developing into a serious sport, attracting sponsors as well as spectators. With this increase in popularity we can expect some gnarly action in the '97 Worlds which will be hosted by either Japan, New Zealand, or Canada.

Paul Mason (member of the Trailhead paddling team, and a wilderness canoe tripping guide)

THE "MISSION" OF THE WCA

At a recent meeting of the Board of Directors, a freewheeling discussion of the purpose of the WCA occurred. Fortunately, our Secretary (and unofficial archivist) was able to recall that in an early (the earliest?) version of the WCA Constitution, whose date of Sep. 18th, 1976, is barely discernable through the moss, there is a statement of the "Aims and Objectives" of the WCA, as follows:

The Association shall be carried out without purpose of gain for its members and any profits or other accretions or accumulations to the organization shall be used in promoting its aims and objectives listed below:

1. to promote and advance the interests of wilderness canoeists;
2. to aid in educating the public to an awareness of, and a concern for, the natural forces and the delicate balance inherent in the wilderness environment;
3. to provide a flow of information pertaining to canoeing and wilderness matters to members of the Association and the public;
4. to encourage closer communication among canoeists and related organizations;
5. to further explore [sic] new canoe routes, and ensure and preserve the right of way on these routes now established, while stressing the careful and considerate use of all such routes;
6. to encourage individual responsibility in canoeing by providing a programme of practical canoeing experience.

What do you think? Is this still what the WCA stands for in the 1990s? Do you think we're living up to the objectives we set ourselves in 1976?

The Board would love to hear your views, either directly or, perhaps better, in a letter to the editor of *Nastawgan.*

Bill King

1995 FALL MEETING

This year's get-together re-affirmed once again that the WCA is alive and well. The meeting at the Whitefish Lake group campground in Algonquin Park attracted the attention of well over one hundred registrants. Particularly satisfying was the turnout of many individuals who had joined the organization only recently and used the occasion to get to know and tolerate the many foibles of the more established members.

There was some concern among the members of the organizing committee, who had arrived Thursday afternoon, that Mother Nature would make things difficult. However, after steady rain Thursday night and frequent showers on Friday, Saturday turned into a most marvellous day. The early morning fog soon lifted, aided by a gentle breeze, and revealed the colorful splendor of the season. At 8:30 (an ungodly hour, as perceived by some of the late-night arrivals), the first column of vehicles was on its way to Cache Lake and the trip on the Madawaska River. Other groups soon followed, some to hike, others to paddle, and by 10 o'clock the campground was deserted.

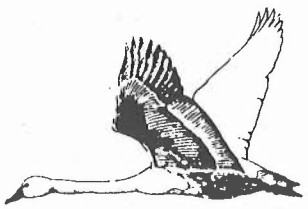
At 6:30 the whole throng was reunited in Whitney for a much-appreciated supper which satisfied both taste and stretch receptors. During the evening, members of the executive busied themselves hawking raffle tickets, the proceeds of which to go to the building fund of the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough. The prize, a rain shelter donated by The Outdoor Inn in Whitney, was won by the writer of these lines. This outcome resulted in cries of "fix!" from the crowd; nevertheless, the new owner is now a satisfied shelter user. It should be mentioned here that the $250 realized from the raffle will be forwarded to the Canoe Museum together with a matching grant from the WCA.

The highlight of the evening was a presentation by the illustrious George Luste which focussed on last summer's circumnavigation of the northern tip of Labrador by his party of four which also included his daughter Tiia, Bill Swift, and John Winters. It may be the aging process, but on this occasion George was unusually candid and actually volunteered the information that some aspects of the trip had an element of risk.

Operationally, Sunday was a repeat of the previous day and people dispersed to the various starting points of the day's outings, some no doubt feeling the effects of Saturday's exertions. It was clear from the participation level that paddling was the preferred mode of travel, but all outings listed, including a mountain biking trip, found takers.

Now, of course, it's time to look towards next year's Fall Meeting. One of the key points the executive is always wrestling with is location. It has to be within reasonable distance from the membership centre, offer a variety of possibilities for short outings, and be modestly priced. Anyone with suggestions (even offers of help) should contact a member of the Board of Directors or

Herb Pohl.



REVIEW

SOLO PLAYBOATING WITH KENT FORD is a video designed to improve the skills of the intermediate and advanced solo whitewater canoeist. Its avowed aim is to concentrate on developing advanced playing skills. The video assumes that the viewer is familiar with the vocabulary of whitewater and has practised and used the basic techniques but now wants to develop more control.

The video succeeds in providing good instruction and accomplishing its purpose. Video is a particularly valuable instruction tool for solo whitewater because the lesson can be repeated after a day's paddling. This video also allows us to see, in the comfort of our living room, different expert paddlers do the same move again and again.

Topics covered include the following: basics of the forward stroke and how to develop fast acceleration; steering from the stern and proper stern strokes; ferrying without losing position on the river; surfing and proper stern strokes; side surfing and the J-lean; rolling the canoe and self rescue; using pro-active strokes in difficult whitewater to control the boat rather than applying bracing; canoe outfitting

With the emphasis on advanced playing and whitewater, this video will be valuable to those experienced paddlers who wish to improve their solo skills and have more fun in whitewater. The video aims at improving already mastered basics rather than teaching brand-new skills to beginners. With the emphasis on having fun in whitewater it is not aimed at those who want to improve their survival skills for tripping in loaded boats.

Ford's discussion of the basic mechanics of the forward stroke is the most thorough that I have watched and is valuable for any canoeist. Learning how to use the abdominal, thigh, and upper back muscles to provide power to the paddle is of interest to every serious tripper as these muscles are much stronger than arm muscles. Mastering the forward stroke is the key to increasing endurance and lessening fatigue.

Any whitewater canoeist should own a copy of this video and watch it many times. Ford's emphasis on basic paddling skills challenges the paddler to improve, the techniques provided are effective and realistic.

(Reviewed by John Hackert.)

WHY AM I DOING THIS?

I have been paddling canoes for 43 years. In all that time, after thousands of miles, I have yet to figure out why. What is it about wilderness travel that becomes addictive, if not actually enjoyable? Have you ever looked at a first-time tripper, three to four hours into a canoe trip ... sweat dripping from a pulsating, rapidly reddening face ... the heat only marginally compensating for the already-damp shoes and socks? Or the frightened look as our novice paddler peeks at his or her companions to see if they could possibly be enjoying this, and the look of disbelief when, at the end of a three-hour paddle against a strong head-wind, he is strapped to a 60-pound pack and pointed uphill in the direction of what appears to be a massive rockslide and told it is the beginning of a portage! Yet almost without exception, at the end of the trip, this same intrepid soul will be desperate to do it all again.

It is easy, when sitting on a rock with a cup of hot chocolate at the end of a long day, to appreciate a flaming sunset, a calm lake, loons calling, and the warm feeling that comes from a good day's work accomplished with congenial companions. However, moments such as these occupy only a very small portion of a canoe tripper's day. And even experienced trippers do not enjoy a steady all-day drizzle, long paddles under a merciless sun, or portages through boot-sucking mud, accompanied by clouds of mosquitoes intent on making a temporary home in the underside of the canoes the trippers are lugging.

When in my early twenties, I enjoyed the planning and the anticipation of a difficult canoe trip. The moment I was on the water, however, my attention focussed on how quickly I could complete the trip, get back home, and get the slides developed. This feeling has gradually diminished, probably because I am neither physically capable, nor mentally interested, in cramming a 10-day trip into six days.

Around the campfire, at day's-end, we occasionally discuss what it is we enjoy about canoe tripping or the particular trip's highlights. Each individual's ideas are different. Of course, a vivid sunset and quiet companionship around an evening campfire rank high on anyone's list. Wildlife is always a highlight, but the viewing of wildlife can never be counted on, many successful trips encounter nothing more than a few birds. Waterfalls, rapids, and scenically beautiful spots are of course memorable.

But invariably, I believe satisfaction is ultimately derived from the challenging of nature on its own terms and succeeding most of the time. It should be considered a humbling learning experience when one doesn't succeed. Lasting trip memories usually begin with the "lowlights" ... the three-mile, swampy portage, the frenzy-inducing bugs, the violent thunderstorm, or the collapsed tent. An individual's most comical memories are often at the expense of a comrade's misfortune. There is a sense both of adventure and of accomplishment at facing and conquering a physical or mental challenge with the reward being nothing more than taking measure of one's self and discovering you were not found wanting. Worries over job, school, and finances recede quickly, as do concerns over life's "window dressings" ... what other people wear, earn, or think. All that matters is a full stomach, a dry change of clothing, a warm sleeping bag, getting one day closer to an ultimate goal, and most importantly, the companionship that comes from achieving all this by working together.

Have I answered my own question? Probably not. One hour into my next canoe trip, I know I'll be asking myself ... why am I doing this?

John Adams

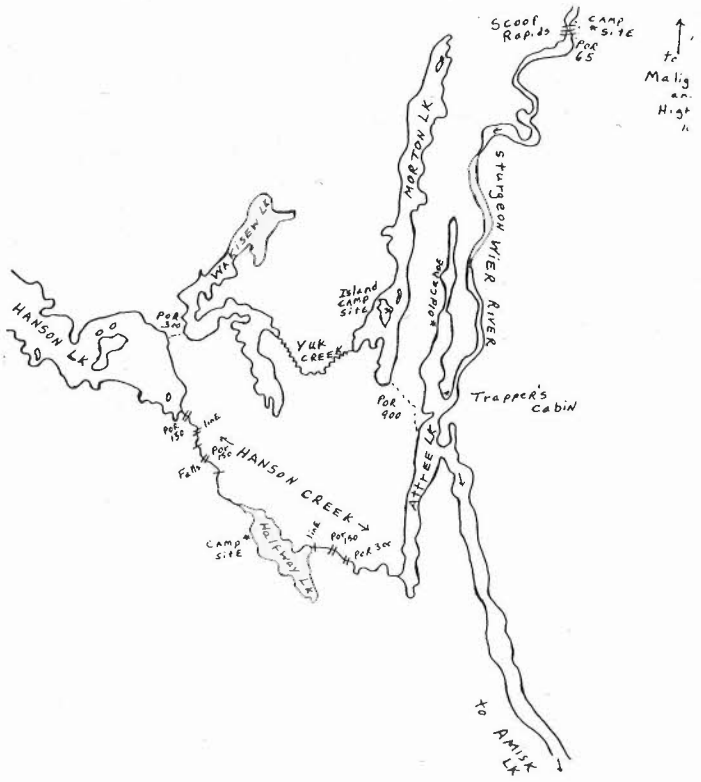
LATE OCTOBER SOLO

Dave Bober

For almost two hours I had been pushing and pulling for all I was worth, and now it looked like I would have to give it up. Actually, I must have been a ludicrous sight — covered with muck to the waist and the canoe and packs smeared with mud, slimy rotting reeds, and millions of cattail seeds. Laughing at myself, several captions flashed through my left hemisphere: "to bravely go where no canoe has gone" (in late October, that is); "to go where every fool should go"; or just "canoes float best on water."

I should have been suspicious when I first entered the tiny crooked stream as there was no current. But two active beaver houses gave me hope that I would be able to manage the five kilometres of almost endless meanders between Wakisew and Morton lakes. Pulling over several beaver dams I succumbed to the temptation of letting out a little water, but the feeble surge hardly helped. My bullheadedness brought me another hard-earned kilometre although the streamlet had all but turned to yuck soup — at least Royalex could slide through the stinky mire. Pushing onward to a roundish pond with a large dead beaver house, I realized that even the beavers had deserted this forlorn stream, having eaten themselves out of house and home some time ago.

Climbing a granite ridge to the north of the old dam I was overjoyed at the glimpse of open water another kilometre and a half to the east. The last slug was even worse but I pushed my way into Morton Lake about 5:00 p.m., which is camping time in October. Autumn canoeing has challenges and charms all its own, from low water (or no water) in the river and ice on the coffee pot, to no bugs and no traffic.



My wife says I'm a tough egg to live with if I don't get out for a final paddle before winter, and that means grinding away at the farm work until it is finished (well, almost). My '94 trip would be a short one, only four days, but the thought of exploring some new country always gets my adrenalin going. Some time ago I learned that an edifying trip does not necessarily have to be long or arduous to be thoroughly enjoyed. Few people experience the superb canoe country lying north or south of the Hanson Lake Road (west of Flin Flon which is near the border of Manitoba and Saskatchewan) as the road itself passes through mostly flat and mundane jack pine country. But precambrian jewels lie just a few kilometres in either direction, some of the most intriguing small stream and lake territory in Saskatchewan that is easily accessible.

My standard excuse for a fall trip is to scout new routes for future youth outings and this time I planned to head south on the Sturgeon Weir River. The friendly secretary at the DTRR office in Creighton provided me with some information on portages and I decided upon a put-in at Maligne Lake. My friend, Charlie Willetts, at Pawastick Lodge had already closed for the season, but I was sure he wouldn't mind if I left my truck there. With mega sunshine and a temperature of +10 C., I started out in high spirits running the little rapid underneath the highway bridge. At the south end of Maligne Lake the sound of Leaf Rapids beckoned and I took a few minutes to scout from shore, remembering my promise to my family to take it easy. It was surprising to see a large flock of ducks as they have usually retreated to the south by mid October. A pair of eagles swooped low as I made good time to my campsite at Scoop Rapids 10 km downstream.

Dusk and cloud cover moved in quickly as I pitched the Eureka lean-to in a clump of giant white spruce about 100 metres above the very short portage trail. The Sturgeon Weir was a prominent fur trade route, connecting the Saskatchewan River system to the Churchill and, for the most part, remains to this day in a pristine state. Scoop Rapids, so named because a hungry traveller could usually scoop out a fish or two by hand below the falls, is a stunning place, the Weir funnelling into a six-metre-wide class IV chute that is actually a small falls. For some reason Scoop is unusually resonant for its volume of flow.

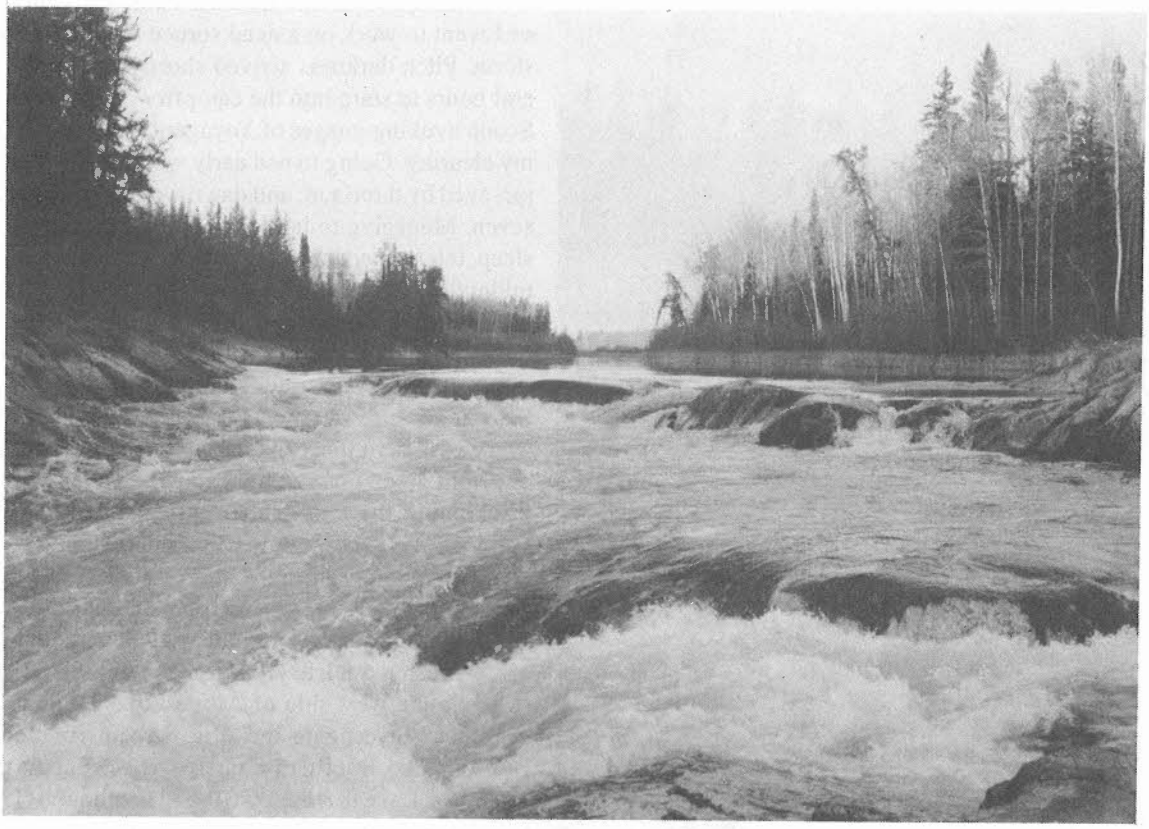
A campfire in late October demands a lot of attention, so I went to work on a dead spruce that had broken off in a storm. Pitch darkness arrived shortly after six, leaving several hours to stare into the campfire coals with the music of Scoop evoking images of Voyageurs squatting at the edge of my clearing. Going to bed early was a "no-no" as I would be pie-eyed by three a.m. and dawn wouldn't arrive until almost seven. Managing to hold out until 9:30 I enjoyed a blissful sleep, interrupted briefly by a few showers moving over after midnight.

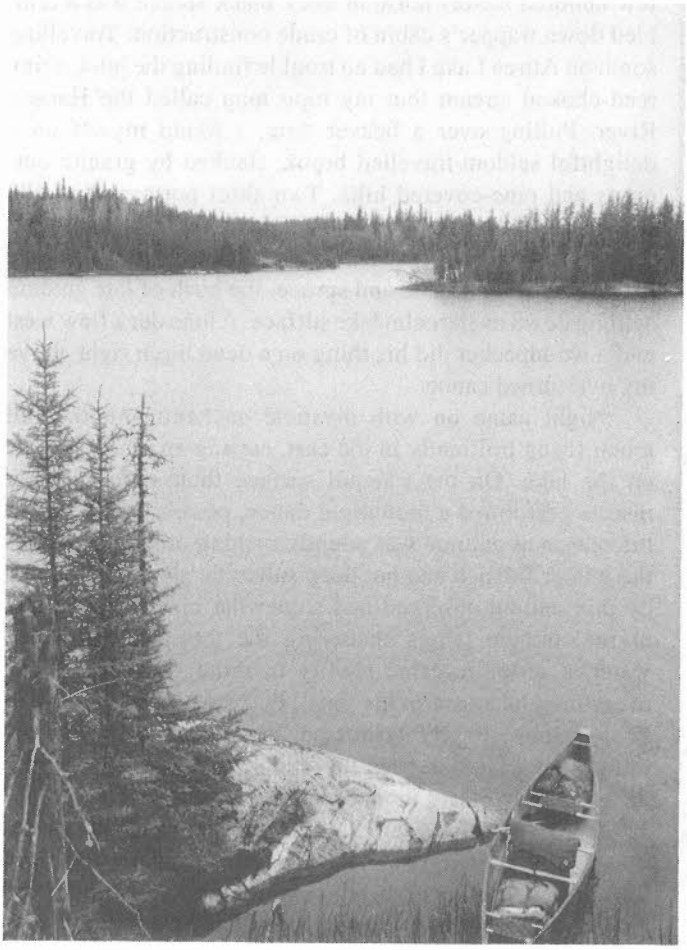
A partly cloudy and mild morning greeted me and I made enough pancakes to share with a curious squirrel. The 1994 growing season had been one of the longest in Saskatchewan's recorded climatic history, and although every vestige of tree foliage had long gone there was a patch of bright green grass at my campsite and a brave dandelion in bloom at the foot of the rapid. The early morning mist rising above Scoop put me in a contemplative mood and I could not get myself in the "hurry mode," as I travelled due south along banks of pine, poplar, and willow.

Although I had no definite route in mind, I wanted to get off the beaten track to Amisk Lake, and the massive granite ridge on the west side of Attree Lake gave me the perfect excuse to investigate the little stream running east from Hanson Lake. But first I wanted to check out the portage trail to Morton Lake that the DTRR had mentioned. The five-contour-line ridge did not lend itself to any kind of sane trail but on a flat shoreline rock I did find a battered old square-back freight canoe, a wood-canvas Tremblay made in Quebec. A few hundred meters north in thick black spruce was a tumbled down trapper's cabin of crude construction. Travelling south on Attree Lake I had no trouble finding the inlet, a tiny reed-choked stream that my topo map called the Hanson River. Pulling over a beaver dam, I found myself on a delightful seldom-travelled brook, flanked by granite outcrops and pine-covered hills. Two short portages and 100 metres of lining brought me to Halfway Lake with dusk close at my stern. The sky cleared as I pitched camp on the northwest shore in pine and spruce, the hush of late autumn settling down on the calm lake surface. A lone duck flew west and a woodpecker did his thing on a dead birch right above my overturned canoe.

Night came on with mystical enchantment, the full moon rising brilliantly in the east, casting an ethereal glow on the lake. On the tranquil surface thousands of water insects performed a moonlight dance, possibly their last of the season as autumn was silently rushing onwards towards the winter solstice and her deep subarctic sleep. Fascinated by this seldom observed and somewhat bizarre scene of a myriad minute wings shattering the tranquil mirror-like water, a scripture came readily to mind: "He hath made everything beautiful in his time" Ecc 3:11. As the writer of Ecclesiastes so aptly expressed, there is time for "everything" under the sun, even this euphoric dance of insect life on this utterly placid moonlit lake.

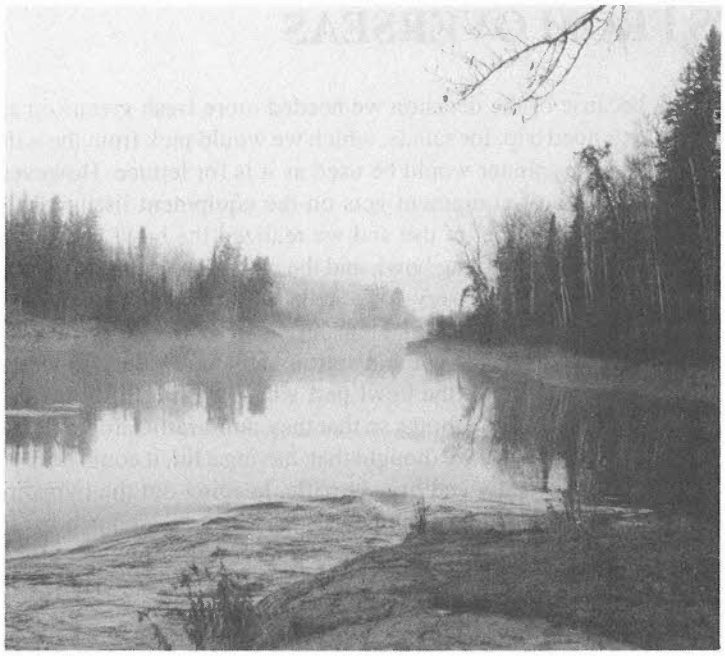
It was a chilly night in the open-front lean-to and despite the addition of my granma's homemade afghan, I was none too comfortable in the early hours. Rising in the darkness, I built up a blazing fire to warm myself and then climbed the





semi-open hill above camp to catch the dawn — the change of the guards as "Mr. Fullmoon" dipped down into the west and "Ol Sol" popped up over the eastern horizon. The feeble light quickly gained strength and soon the ice on the water kettle was transformed into strong black coffee, the long, cold night forgotten. Indian summer pushed the mercury above the freezing mark within an hour and soon I was paddling silently through a thin bed of recently flailed commercial wild rice at the north end of Halfway Lake. Back into Hanson Creek I made two short portages, one around a classic falls of about two metres, and lined through two or three narrow channels that brought me into the extreme east end of Hanson Lake. At 14 km long and 10 km wide, Hanson Lake is one of the larger lakes in the region, with numerous rocky islands and long narrow points that offer a slow-moving canoe a picturesque variety of backdrops. Highway 106 between Flin Flon and La Ronge is still known as the Hanson Lake Road, although Hanson Lake itself is not located along the highway but accessed via a very narrow 10-km road, at the end of which is located a government campsite and an outfitter's camp, a safe place to leave a vehicle.

After paddling only two kilometres on Hanson Lake I found a well-used 300-metre portage into Wakisew Lake, obviously a fishing outpost as evidenced by three boats and motors tethered to a pine at the east end of the portage trail. Moving into "exploratory mode," I checked out the S-shaped lake for tentative campsites and found several on granite slabs. My favorite places must have a view and should include a nice stand of mature pine or spruce — in other words I'm fussy, but my mind can recall many one-night campsites even after a decade. One advantage of solo travel is being able to indulge my search for a Five-Star campsite without straining the patience of tripping partners.



Afternoon was getting on by the time I tackled the nasty little stream mentioned at the beginning of this story. Reaching Morton Lake at last, I was determined to find the supposed portage, the trail I could not find from the opposite side leading to Attree Lake and the Sturgeon Weir River. After searching for only 10 minutes there it was, a couple of 100 metres from the extreme south end of the lake, about 800 metres long, in good condition, probably used by trappers. Near the east end it abruptly changed its easterly direction to due south in order to drop off the steep ridge at an angle. Running back over the trail in the gathering gloom, I was afraid that I might have to settle for a One-Star campsite. A heavy cloud bank had moved in from the east, bringing night down with a disturbing abruptness.

But a pair of friendly whisky jacks seemed to say, "follow us, follow us," and I was relieved to locate a splendid campsite about a kilometre and a half north on the east side of a thickly wooded island. An impeccable niche: I'd call it an "arm's-length" camp — a rock ledge to build the campfire on, a handy pitch stump only three metres away for a hot burning fire, clean lake water the same distance, a comfortable pine to lean my tired back against while preparing supper, and a level tent site in a thick clump of spruce only a few metres farther back.

With coffee boiling and garden stew simmering I felt snug and cosy indeed next to my cheery little campfire. Throwing on a few more pieces of pitch wood, the fire would blaze up so that nothing save the dancing flames would capture my attention. Let it burn down a little and I could comfortably write up my day's journal, fuss around in the grub box, or perform any other chore in the lighted three or four metre radius that seemed to be the extent of my world. But I let the fire die down to glowing embers and gradually my horizons expanded to the dim openness of the lake and the rocky clefts of the islands just opposite camp, a spline of scraggy pines standing as sentinels of the night, guarding this wild domain.

A few sprinkles and then a few more brought my reverie to an abrupt end and a sudden gust from the east encouraged me to secure the canoe and head for the tent. The night was a long and miserable one as the storm grew in intensity. The rain that "cometh down" also "cometh in," and I was forced to crawl out and throw the poly tarp over my feeble shelter, weighing the corners down with rocks or logs. I prayed that the cold rain would not turn to snow and that the wind would not smash a tree down on top of me.

Would dawn never come? It did, but with a sinister look of revenge — where had Indian summer gone? At least the rain had slackened to a drizzle and the gale had not flattened my anatomy. There was no doubt, my unhurried exploratory mode of the last few days was now one of "let's get outta here." The canoe and I fairly flew to the south end of Morton Lake, compliments of the north wind, and the labor of portaging warmed me up to an almost human condition. Reloading on Attree Lake it was "face the north wind" for 17 km of tough slugging. Passing a trapper's cabin, I was tempted to hold up for a while but the dismal, trashy place was depressing enough to goad me on. Fortunately, I had brought heavy woollen clothing and with everything on I was able to ward off hypothermia by paddling steadily in the constant drizzle or rain and a temperature just above the freezing point.

The almost straight valley of the Weir was like a funnel for the north wind, forcing me to change river sides often in an attempt to gain any protection afforded by shoreline relief or vegetation. The double-blade paddle was my salvation against the relentless headwind and although progress was a torturous two km/h I arrived at the highway by late afternoon. Driving home via Nipawin Provincial Park, the first blast of winter — four inches of slippery snow — made travel hazardous. Again I was reminded that late fall canoeing can be capricious but well worth the effort if one is prepared.

RECIPES AND TIPS FROM OVERSEAS

A group of us have been coming over from England to Canada for wilderness tripping for 11 years now, on average every two years. We find we can "dine out" on the stories from our trips for a good year after each trip, because it is such a novel thing to do over here.

One of the great sources of pleasure to us is eating well in the bush. Every trip, we learn a little more and the menus get more interesting and exotic. When we think back to our early efforts and early equipment, we scream with laughter. Certainly, ignorance was bliss and the gods have been good in bringing us back safely and reasonably well-fed, despite our ignorance. So it is with some trepidation that I dare to share a few tips with those wilderness trippers who are fortunate enough to have the wilderness on their doorstep.

GHEE

Everyone has access to the many reference books on wilderness tripping. I've scoured the majority of them for tips on the best food and cooking equipment to take, but nowhere have I seen the suggestion for anything other than margarine as a frying or spreading medium. Perhaps it is because here in England we are blessed with a long period of a substantial Asian influence on the British diet, but early on we came up with the idea of taking "ghee" on our trips. It looks like butter when set (room temperature), and indeed it is clarified butter, cooks at very high temperatures, withstands hot weather without going runny, tastes just like butter, and keeps indefinitely. It is sold in coffee-can type cans, usually with a plastic lid for when the can is opened.

It goes a much longer way than butter because all the impurities of butter have been removed. We prefer tubs of ordinary butter for spreading on pancakes or bannock, but that's a matter of taste. If your tubs of butter do run because of unexpectedly hot weather, you could use the ghee as a butter substitute for spreading. You'll be amazed how little of it you'll use for all those pancake breakfasts. Ghee can be found at any East Indian grocery store, although I realize you don't have so many of them in Canada. Incidentally, don't panic if the ghee is runny as molasses after a long car journey; the agitation causes that and it soon resets nice and solid for the canoe trip. It is wise however to wrap it in a plastic bag just because the outside tends to get a bit greasy from being used.

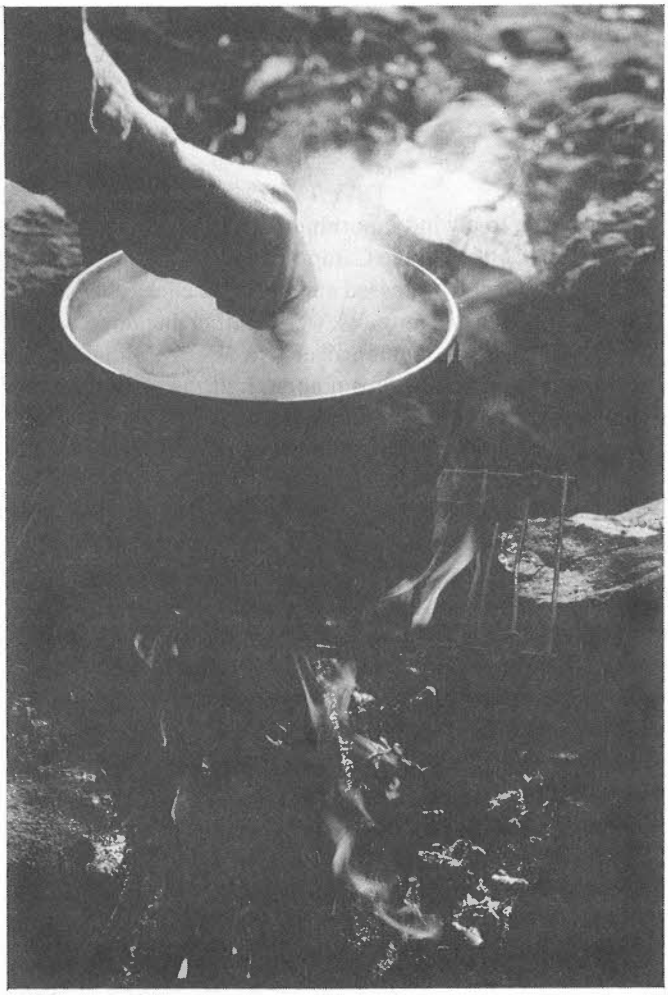
SALAD SPINNERS

On our last trip, we discovered the wonderful versatility of taking along a salad spinner. (I hope that's what you call them over there, or you won't know what I'm talking about.) Originally we got the idea because of the decision we needed more fresh greens on an extended trip, for salads, which we would pick from the wild and the spinner would be used as it is for lettuce. However, no piece of equipment gets on the equipment list unless it can justify a lot of use and we realized the bowl part could be used as a mixing bowl, and the mesh part for draining rice and pasta (with very little loss), and for spinning dry the re-hydrated onions and mushrooms, so that they are dry enough for frying without spitting at you. By definition, the mesh part fits in the bowl part when packing it, and it can hold lots of little things so that they don't rattle around loose in the wanigan. We thought that, having a lid, it could be used for setting jelly and brandy trifle, keeping out the twigsfire ash as well as bugs, but because it was used so much for so many other tasks, there was never a long enough time for it to be freed up for setting desserts. Any argument for two salad spinners?!

LENTILS AND CABBAGE

There are a lot of Indian vegetarian recipes incorporating lentils and other pulses, which by definition are already dried, and CHEAP — a lot cheaper than packaged dehydrated specialist meals. Obviously, meat (other than dried or canned) is "out" on an extended trip after the first few days, and so we get our protein from these pulses.

As everyone knows, just about anything tastes great in the bush, and if you haven't already discovered the pleasures of these designed-for-wilderness foods (suitably spiced to your taste) the bush is a great place to try eating new foods. Below is a recipe for Lentils and Cabbage (sounds exciting, eh?) which I'm extremely glad I agreed to be put on the menu as it was my favorite meal of the trip. It took about 20 minutes to cook up (excluding fire-building and water-boiling time), and fed six very hungry people, two platesful each. We had this on Day 4 because we thought we'd like to



off-load the weight of the cabbage early on, but the cabbage will keep, unrefrigerated, for at least eight days, possibly even longer. The following recipe is presented with thanks to Madhur Jaffrey and Peter Wolff.

Ingredients: 2 packets of dehydrated onions (available at supermarkets); 18 fl. oz. rice; 1 lb. red lentils, rinsed (available at supermarkets); 1 small white cabbage (sliced ⅛th inch thick, cutting out thick bits); 10 fl. oz. ghee for frying (Indian grocery store); 2 tsp. turmeric; 4 tsp. cumin seeds; 1 tsp. fresh ginger, grated; 12 cloves fresh garlic, crushed; ½–1 tsp. chili powder (quantity to your taste); 1 small 5–6 oz. can of tomato paste; about 1 ½ tsp. salt (quantity to your taste).

Method: 1. Slow-boil the lentils in 4 pints of water (with the turmeric and salt added) in a saucepan for 20 minutes, skimming off any scum from the top. 2. Simmer the rice for however long that type needs. 3. Re-hydrate the onions in hot water for 10 minutes and drain thoroughly. 4. Fry slowly in the ghee in a frying pan, first the cumin seeds for about 1 minute (until darkened), then add the garlic and onions. When nicely browned (about 5 minutes), and beginning to produce boils where the oil pops through, add the cabbage strips and fry slowly till the cabbage is soft and palatable (about 5-10 minutes). 5. Add the above to the boiled lentils (which should have absorbed most of the simmering water) and add more salt (if desired), the tomato paste, chili powder, and ginger, and cook for about 5 minutes more. 6. Serve over a bed of rice and enjoy.

Debbey Del Valle
Godalming, Surrey, England

TYING DOWN THE BOATS

Car almost loaded. Going through the gear list one final time. The buddies humor me while I do it. They know I have this ritual when packing the gear and they use it to offset what I consider their eccentric preparations. Give and take starts long before the trip actually begins.

Last item is loading the canoes. Like all preparations for wilderness trips, this one also must be done carefully. You can't be doing 95 km/h and then have sudden movement of the two canoes strapped to the car roof. On earlier trips tried to compensate for the lack of tie-down knowledge with additional ropes. A practitioner of the theory that if one rope is good, ten are better. On some trips it looked like we were carrying ropes rather than canoes to the put-in point.

Canoes still moved too much.

Tying the boats down on the roof of a car doesn't seem like much of a skill. But the ability to do it and do it well has added immeasurably to the joy of the trip. It's a strong suit of one of the buddies. Showed the rest of us at the start of one trip how to tie it down tight. There is nothing like fear of the canoes going airborne to burn the tie-down lesson deep into the heart.

Canoes loaded now. Checking for movement. Using both shoulders to see if I can get the canoes to move. Springs on the car give, but the canoes do not budge. I think of the buddy every time after the canoes are loaded. He would be satisfied.

I remember the buddy ending the tie-down lesson with the comment, "I'm not guaranteeing that these canoes will get where you want them to go, but they're going with the car." Wish I could say the same thing for myself. I hope that I'll always be able to say that wherever the canoes are going I'm going with them. It will be a very dark day when the canoes head north for another wilderness trip and I'm not.

Even when good health lets you do river trips the relentless movement of the calendar tells you yearly that the end is getting closer. Time is the true enemy.

Turned oldest son loose this year. In college. What was probably his last trip to the Canadian north with his father is already in the history books. End of a big chapter in my life.

Only one chapter left. Youngest son turns eleven this year.

Greg Went.

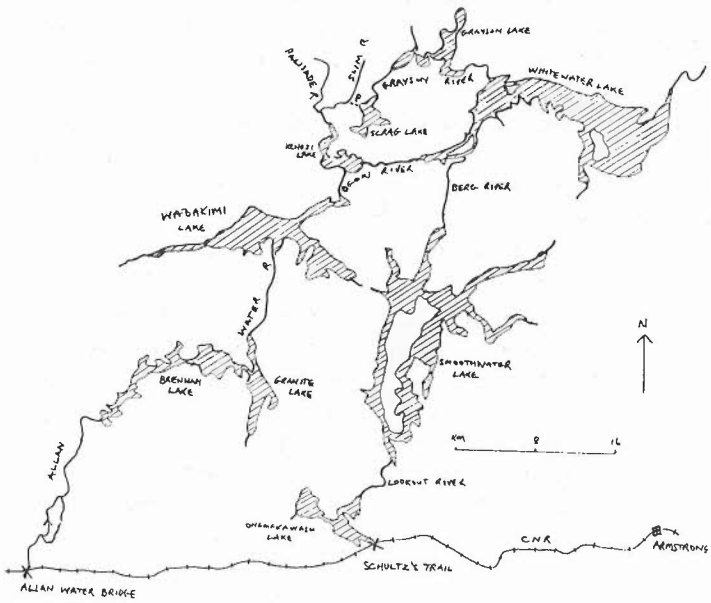
A WABAKIMI TRIP

Janet and Andrew Hall

We started our July-1994 trip to the Wabakimi area of northwestern Ontario by driving to Long Lac to pick up the train to Allan Water Bridge. Arriving late afternoon we booked into a motel for the night. Our hosts were kindness itself, arranging for us to leave our car with them for the two weeks and suggesting we use their car to drive to the station early the next morning. So there we were at 5:30 a.m., the two of us sitting amidst our bags and canoe at Long Lac station, which is not easy to find and is rarely staffed.

After three freight trains passed through at high speed, the Toronto/Vancouver Via train arrived about an hour late and we lifted our outfit into the baggage car and headed to the restaurant car for breakfast. Later, when advised we were approaching Allan Water Bridge, we returned to the baggage car where we met a young American couple on their way to the Allan Water River for a week's vacation. At the bridge we unloaded and portaged our gear to a fishing camp on a small lake where, as it started to shower, we put in and paddled to the river outlet.

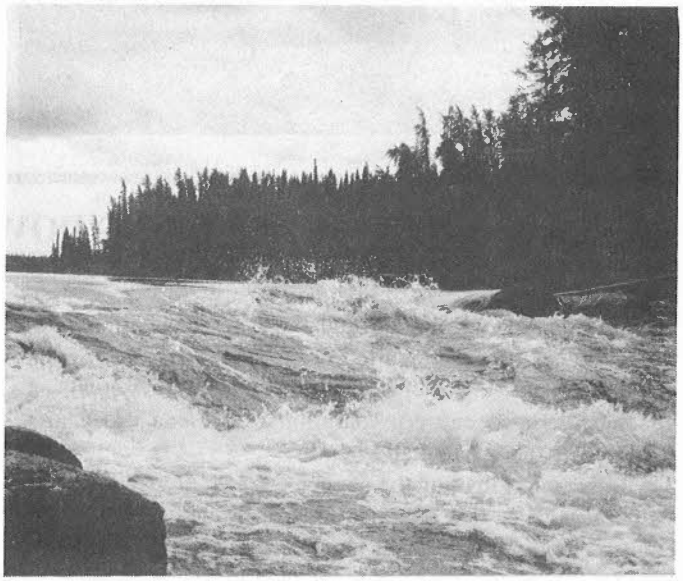
We decided that discretion was the better part of valor and portaged the first set of rapids. However, after that we ran two, portaged two, and ran a long one. We were pretty wet by now in between rain and wading and decided to stop and eat lunch. At the foot of our final run of the day, a long dog-leg, we discovered a group of trippers and leaders from Camp Keewaydin who had set up camp on "our" planned site so we went on. Around a point on an expansion of the river we found a smaller campsite and decided to call it a day at 5 p.m. The weather cleared, so we dried out and enjoyed a lovely evening. Daylight until 11 p.m.



DAY TWO

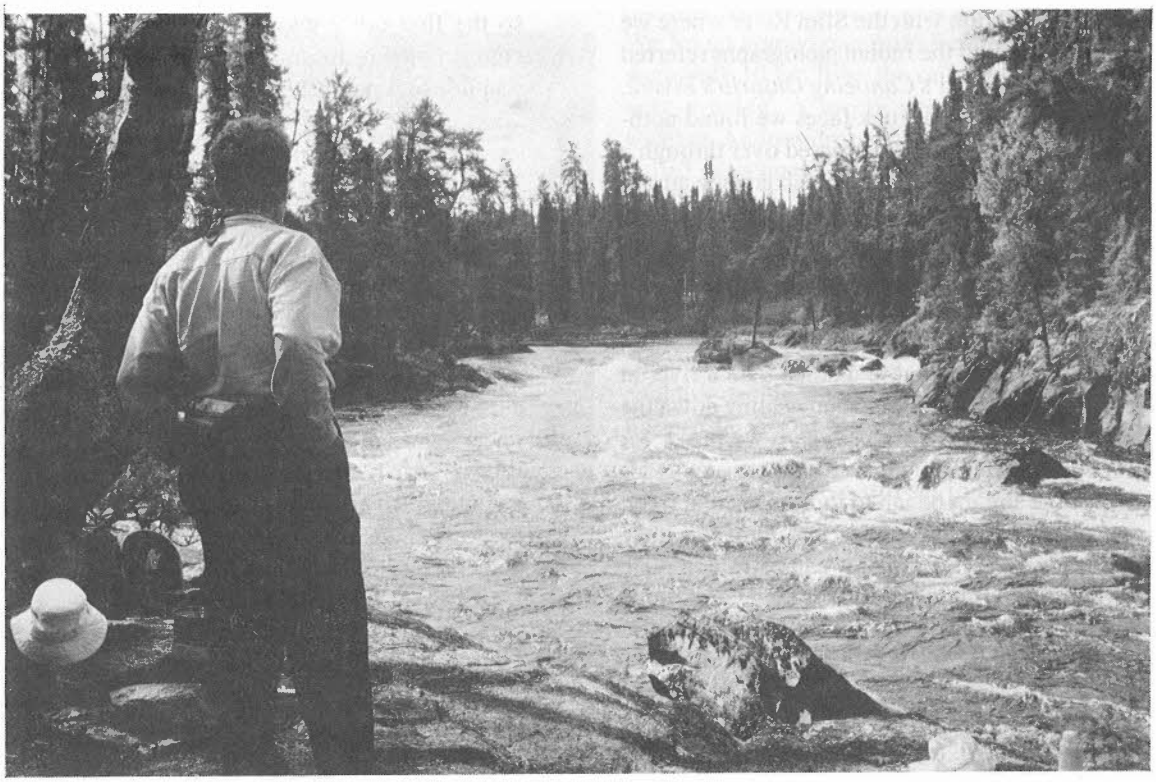
Up at 7 a.m. to a windy morning with sun and cloud. At the first rapids of the day the Camp Keewaydin group caught up with us again and we passed and repassed each other several times during the morning. We were finding that our moderate whitewater skills (developed at two WCA Palmer Rapids weekends) allowed us to run about half the rapids we met. The map shows sixteen rapids between the railline and Brennan Lake, and we found most were ledges followed by boulder gardens.

In the afternoon we passed the Keewaydin group camped early on an expansion of the river, and after a final shallow rocky run we portaged the last rapids of the day at the outlet to Brennan Lake. This was a wide, shallow boulder garden which we decided to portage. We found the portage blocked with blowdowns halfway, so ended up balancing on the ankle-breaking rocky shoreline. Finally we reached Brennan Lake and camped on a sandy beach where we swam, dried clothes, and retired at sundown to avoid the horde of no-see-ums that came out of the sand.



DAY THREE

A glorious sunny day greeted us for an unchallenging, straightforward paddle up Brennan Lake which contains several fishing camps and where we came across graffiti scraped into the lichen on many of the rock faces. Fortunately these were the only graffiti we saw on our trip. Several of the larger lakes have small fishing camps or outposts, but most are not intrusive, the one exception being a large resort at the foot of the Ogoki Rapids at the west end of Whitewater Lake. At the end of the day a short portage around a small falls took us out of Brennan Lake, and we made camp on a rocky point at the foot of the falls. Thundershowers overnight.



DAY FOUR

Showers this morning. We packed up quickly and made our way through narrow, swift channels past several islands and rocky outcrops to a shallow ledge and on to Brennan Falls, a very spectacular and scenic drop through a narrow gorge. The Keewaydin group must have passed us again because we found them camped on top of the cliff. We said our goodmornings and goodbyes as their route would take them south. Onwards down the Allan Water River and through Granite Lake where we took an unplanned sidetrip up an arm — on the fold of the map, our navigator said. Refolded the map and found Granite Falls, another spectacular narrowing of the river.

Continued to Black Beaver Rapids which we judged were unrunnable without a spraycover. We camped halfway down the rapids on a scenic site as we were both thoroughly wet and, horror of horrors, discovered all our medicinal whisky was gone! The bottle had holed and our food pack was very fragrant. We spent an hour washing everything, much to the amusement of a visiting mink. Several small chutes made private jacuzzis.

DAY FIVE

Awakened to a clear morning with some high cloud. A short paddle to an unnamed set of rapids was followed by the Little Sturgeon Rapids. At this point the river is picking up volume and we were quite pleased with ourselves when we successfully navigated all four sections. On through a small pool to Sturgeon Rapids where we portaged round a four-foot ledge with rocks below. We lunched at a very scenic campsite on a high point overlooking the foot of the rapids. Getting used to permanently wet feet. This is the last whitewater before Wabakimi Lake.

We stopped briefly to inspect an old trapper's cabin and then made the stage into Wabakimi. We crossed the lake into River Bay, the outflow of the Ogoki River, where we were repeatedly dive-bombed by gulls protecting their chicks. We made camp early as thunder was rolling around and colder, less humid air was blowing in. A mother merganser passed by with eight chicks in tow like a small wagon train. There were fishing camps on the lake and two or three small fishing boats were buzzing about, but at dusk we seemed to have the whole lake to ourselves.

DAY SIX

A lovely, clear morning for our paddle up River Bay to the Ogoki River where we faced a one-kilometre portage around the rock-strewn shallow outlet. We lined the next section and then ran two sets of rapids into Kenoji Lake. We found a very attractive campsite on an island where the river runs into the lake, so we decided to make an early stop to take advantage of the lovely weather. We hung everything out to air or dry, including ourselves, and enjoyed the peace and tranquillity. Picked blueberries for dessert and for pancakes at breakfast. A mad chorus of loons and gulls serenaded us at bed time. More rain and strong winds during the night.

DAY SEVEN

Grey clouds greeted us but soon the sun appeared and we packed and set off for the Palisade River. This is a very attractive small river with vertical rock cliffs on the east side. For a change we were going up-river. As the river deepened, a black bear trotted down to the river bank, dived in and commenced to swim across. We continued to paddle towards it and eventually bruin realized he had company and turned back, climbed out, glared at us, and disappeared up the

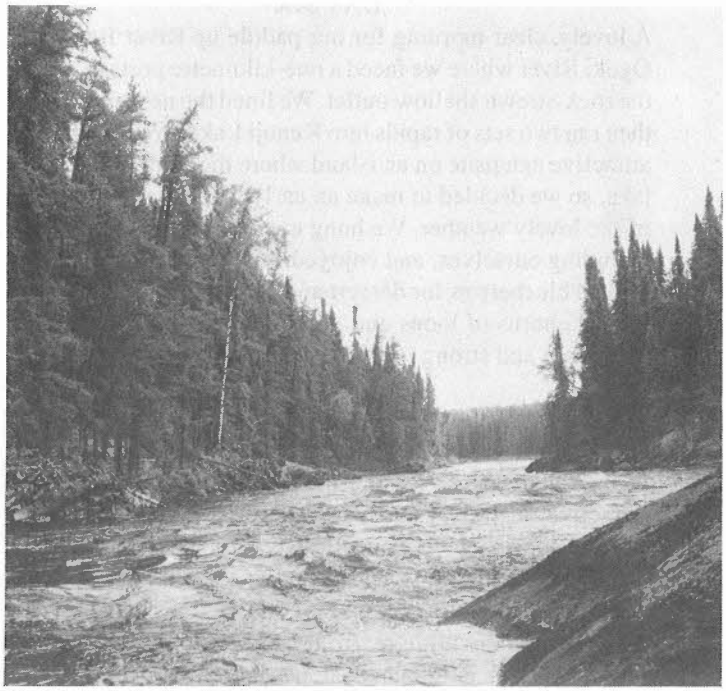
hillside, huffing and puffing. Expect we ruined his morning. We paddled on to the junction with the Slim River where we paused to see if we could find the Indian pictographs referred to in Ron Reid and Janet Grand's *Canoeing Ontario's Rivers*, but despite extensive cruising of rock faces we found nothing. We travelled on up the Slim and crossed over through a couple of small ponds into Scrag Lake. which is quite attractive, where we camped near the outlet to the Grayson River. Lots of blackflies so we retired early.

DAY EIGHT

Woke up to high clouds and sunshine, and found the outlet of the Grayson River, which is more a creek than a river at this point. We spent the morning lining and wading down the narrow rocky channel into Arril Lake where we broke for lunch. We then continued on downriver as the water gradually swelled until the stream began to look like a real river. Finally we ran a set of shallow rapids into Grayson Lake where we found a small south-facing campsite complete with a number of gulls taking turns to guard two youngsters. A chilly evening, but with the tarpaulin up and a good fire going we were quite cosy.

DAY NINE

It was a grey, cool morning as we set off down Grayson Lake where we exchanged goodmornings with more fishermen. Onwards downriver, we stopped for lunch on a small island with scenic falls on both sides and an attractive campsite. Andrew wet the fishing line in the eddy below the falls and hooked a walleye which, however, was lost before it could be landed. On through a small lake expansion to another portage which was wet, wet, wet. The final portage into Whitewater Lake was quite civilized by comparison, and we found a campsite on a large island which had obviously been well used over the years. This was the only campsite where we found garbage — bottles and cans and weird pole structures which might have been constructed by a troop of demented Boy Scouts. The weather continued cool and wet, so the first order was to put up the tarpaulin and light a comforting fire to dry ourselves. Second of course was to don dry socks and sneakers.



DAY TEN

There was drizzle in the air when we emerged from the tent and we quickly packed and started down Whitewater Lake. Paddling around an island in the quiet of a misty morning we practically collided with yet another group of five canoes from Camp Keewaydin — these were on their way up the Grayson. Whitewater Lake is a big lake and there was quite a swell even with moderate wind. Our navigator had his compass over the metal grill in the foodpack and couldn't understand why the compass and the map didn't agree. A little over an hour's paddling and we arrived at the bay where the Ogoki River comes in and where a large fishing resort is located. There is a dangerous rapid noted on the MNR route description for those travelling downriver.

Cross-currents and strong winds made for a choppy crossing to the portage. After walking the good, well-trodden trail, we found it was hard work making headway up the strong current of the Ogoki River, until we turned left into the Berg River. This is a very attractive small river, and we paddled up a long, meandering section before portaging around a longish rapids to a campsite at the top of the trail. We were tired after a heavy day and again the weather was grey and cool with the usual blackflies and mosquitoes. We sadly missed the lost "medicine."

DAY ELEVEN

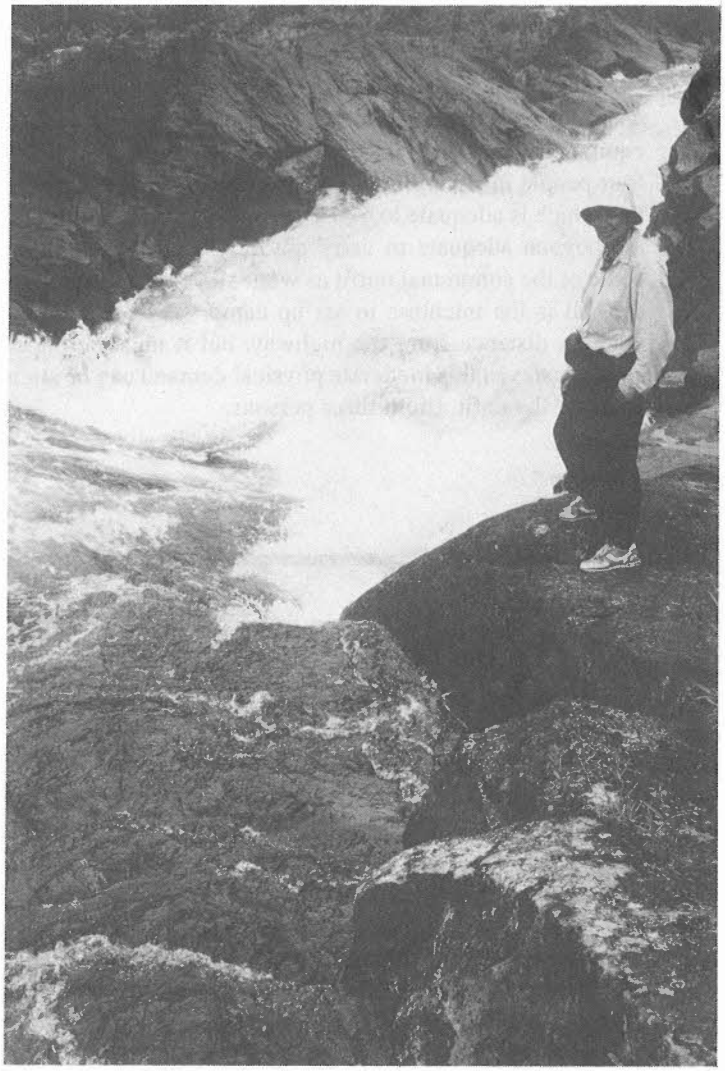
Not a cloud in the sky this morning. We pressed onwards up the meandering river, which contains several narrow sections with ledges which require portaging or tracking, into Smoothrock Lake. There we found a small campsite on a very scenic rocky point at the south end of Outlet Bay. Here we saw the one and only caribou of the trip. It swam across a narrow neck of the lake, out and across a small island and back into the water to the other side of the lake. A nice breeze kept the flies down, and we watched terns terrorizing a gull who kept approaching fledglings out for an airing.

DAY TWELVE

A clear sky with some ground mist when we started the long paddle down the west arm of Smoothrock Lake, headed for the Lookout River and "Fantasia" Portage — so named by Ron Reid and Janet Grand. We passed through a large area of burned-over forest which goes on for several kilometres and where we were dive-bombed by a gull who obviously had chicks somewhere close. We made camp early as we had covered 24 km and preferred to start out on the portage fresh in the morning. Thundershowers after supper, quite heavy.

DAY THIRTEEN

A clear, sunny morning. We watched the sunrise and then packed and got away early to a chorus of eight loons. A short paddle took us to the Lookout River. A pull up a narrow chute and we were at Fantasia Portage. It really does look like something out of the movie. We paddled onwards through



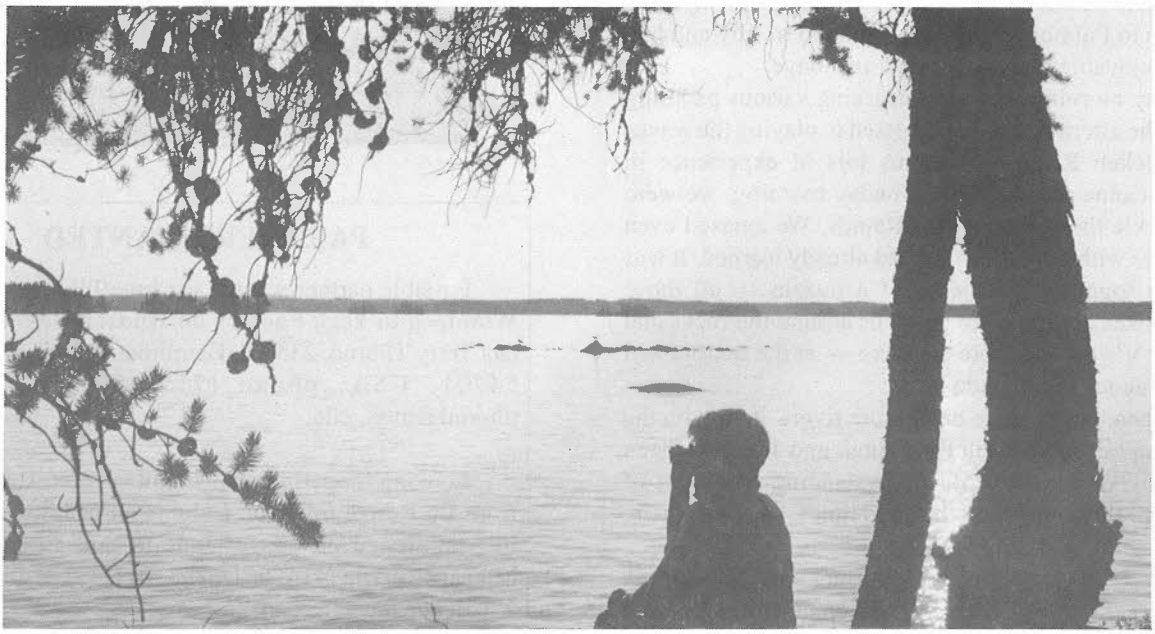
Spring Lake, followed by three short portages, another paddle, and a longer portage past a small falls over two ledges. We found a good campsite here and decided to stay as we were only 10 km from the railway line and our take-out the next evening. A lovely site for our last night, and great weather. Andrew dropped in his fishing line and immediately pulled out a huge pike — fish and blueberries for dinner.

DAY FOURTEEN

We lazed around in a hot, sunny morning — dried out the gear and packed up. It was hard to think of our return to so-called civilization. Two short portages and we arrived in Onamakawash Lake and nearly the end of the trip. We couldn't decide whether the train tickets were in Central or Eastern time, and were also not sure which time zone we were in. We decided that if we were two hours early by our watches, which were still set to Eastern time, we should be safe. We arrived at Schultz's Trail on the CN line to find several cabins, all unoccupied except one. Dick Honeyman from Ohio was in residence and he very kindly invited us in. Dick has owned the cabin, which was built for him by an Indian guide, for over thirty years and tells us there are no other cabins on the lake except the half dozen or so by the railway, all owned by Americans.

A little after 9 p.m. we said our farewells, paddled over to the Trail, and portaged our gear up to the railway line where we covered ourselves liberally with fly repellent and sat down to await the train. At midnight we were getting somewhat worried, as our tickets said 22:00. Finally, at 12:25 a.m. the VIA passenger train pulled slowly around the bend. Together with our gear we were quickly hauled into the baggage car and we said goodbye to the bush. Four hours later we detrained in Long Lac, picked up the car, loaded, and hit Highway 11. Fifteen more hours, and countless cups of coffee later, we arrived back in Toronto.

It was a great trip. Now we are planning to head further north next year in search of that elusive wilderness experience.



WCA TRIPS

For questions, suggestions, or anything else related to the WCA Trips, contact any of the members of the Outings Committee: Bill Ness (416) 321-3005; Mike Jones (905) 270-3256; Ann Dixie (416) 486-7402; Tim Gill (416) 447-2063.

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

4 November **EASY LOOP FOR FALL PADDLING**
Rob Butler, (416) 487-2282, book immediately.

Wren Lake to Margaret Lake loop on Highway 35 south of Dorset. Twelve easy portages. This is also a great area for winter camping, so you can check it out while enjoying the paddling. Limit four canoes.

3–4 February **WINTER CAMPING IN ALGONQUIN PARK**
Herb Pohl, (905) 637-7632, book before 5 January.

This outing is intended for people with little or no winter camping experience. The organizer will provide a tent equipped with a woodburning stove. It can accommodate four people in a snug fit. Participants must have a sleeping bag which is adequate to –20°C, snowshoes and/or skis, and a toboggan adequate to carry not only their own gear but some of the communal outfit as well (stove, tent, pots, food, etc.). It is the intention to set up camp within a 2–3-hour walking distance from the highway, but it must be understood that even this moderate physical demand can be strenuous for the unfit. Limit three persons.

A NOTE OF THANKS

We think it's time that some WCA volunteers were noted for their contributions to the art of canoeing.

Over the last couple of years, we have benefited from several whitewater instruction weekends at Palmer Rapids. Although there are many "teachers" we could thank, Hugh Valliant and Jim Morris have been our primary mentors. They make an excellent team — Hugh with his quiet encouragement and Jim with his descriptive analysis complete with dirt diagrams. Together, they have managed to mold us rank beginners into solid intermediate paddlers.

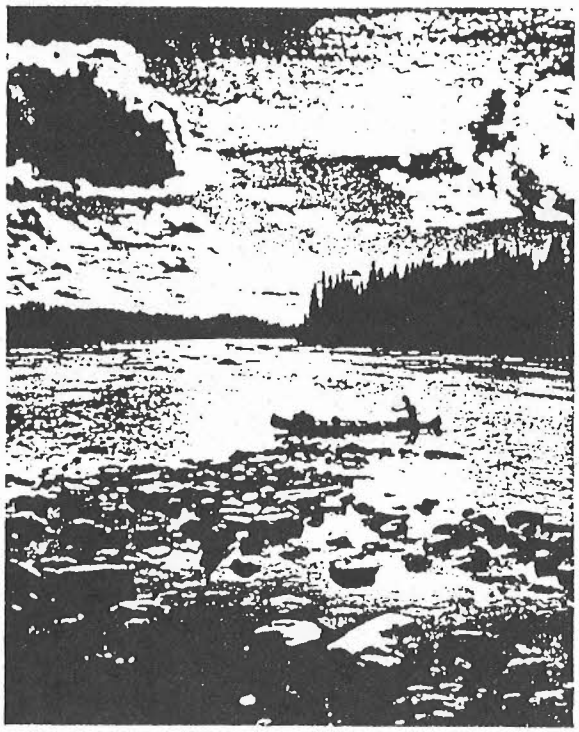
Before we joined the WCA, we had done a lot of "river walking" — our terminology for running the rapids on the Scootamata and Moira rivers in August. We decided it was time to expand our horizons (and time frame) to include the whole summer — which meant, of course, higher water conditions then we were used to.

After a harrowing experience at the Graveyards on the Spanish River, we decided that it was time for some lessons. So we came to Palmer Rapids one weekend in July and had an utterly enjoyable and educational few days.

Saturday morning was spent learning various paddling strokes. In the afternoon, we progressed to playing the waves below "Chicken Rock," giving us lots of experience in canoe-over-canoe rescue. Then, Sunday morning, we were ready to tackle the lower Palmer Rapids. We amazed even our ourselves with how much we had already learned. It was like putting together the pieces of a puzzle — all those separate strokes combined to guide us around the rocks and through the V's — and there we were — at the bottom and still in the canoe! We'd made it!

Since then, we've gone on to more rivers, both with the WCA and on our own. Each time Hugh and Jim have been with us, they've added to our understanding of the art of canoeing. For this, and for all the good times, we thank them.

Barb and Dave Young
Beth and Bruce Bellaire



PARTNERS WANTED

Possible partner wanted for June/July trip from **Lake Winnipeg to York Factory on Hudson Bay**. Please contact Terry Thorud, 2330 E. Hamilton Ave., Eau Claire, Wis 54701, USA; phone (715) 834-3063; E-mail tthorud@uwec.edu.

Looking for partner who might be interested doing trip from **La Ronge to Black Lake (east of lake Athabasca) in Saskatchewan,** end of June to mid August. Contact Michael Kerwin (416) 651-6894 (h) or (416) 469-2008 ext. 238, leave message (w).

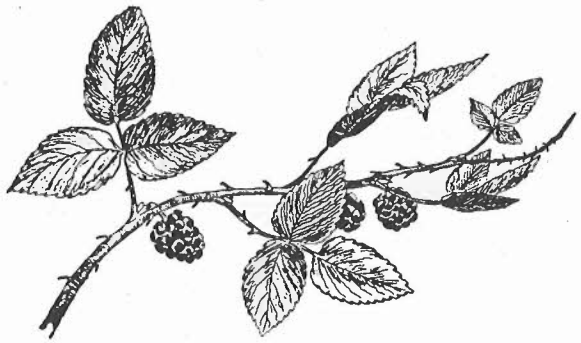
PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

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:
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.

CANOES FOR SALE Bob Special by Novacraft: 15 ft. fiberglass, 58 lbs., red with ash trim, good all-round tandem and solo canoe; $750. Also a 12 ft. cedar canvas canoe, old Chestnut model, fully restored and set up for solo, green, very light-weight; $850. Call Steven Hanson at (416) 658-0099.



NASHWAAK PADDLES High-performance cruising paddles by Nashwaak, in black cherry. Quality guaranteed. Blade design based on historic, native deepwater paddles. Omer Stringer -style carved grip. Call, fax, or write for free information package: Jeff Solway, Nashwaak Paddles, 23 Marchmount Road, Toronto, M6G 2A8; tel. (416) 537-5582; fax (416) 530-4317.

FREE PADDLING CATALOG Canoeing, kayaking, and sea kayaking guidebooks, maps, videos, instructional manuals, calendars, magazines, and much more. For a free Paddling Catalog contact the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, 1029 Hyde Park Rd., Suite 5, Hyde Park, Ontario N0M 1Z0; phone (519) 473-2109/641-1261; fax (519) 473-6560; E-mail crca@publix.empath.on.ca.

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CANOETOONS
PAUL MASON

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Wilderness Canoe Association membership application

I enclose a cheque for CDN $25 (single) or CDN $35 (family) for membership in the *Wilderness Canoe Association* (for non-residents US $25 or US $35). 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:_____

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Postal Code:_____

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❑ Single ❑ Family

Phone Number(s):

(_____)_____(h)

(_____)_____(w)

Ext._____

* This membership is valid for one year.

* Send completed form and cheque, payable to the WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION, to the membership secretary at the WCA postal address.