

nastawgan

Summer 1996 Vol. 23 No. 2

Quarterly Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association



WESTWARD BOUND

Kate Allcard

The jaw of the RCMP woman dropped. Her face held a blank, stunned look as she searched for something to say. Finally she asked vaguely if I had a tent with me.

It was spring 1995 and I was in Leaf Rapids, Manitoba, preparing to set out on a summer-long canoe trip and, being a responsible type, I was checking in with the RCMP to register the first leg of my journey to Pukatawagan.

I, an English woman, had always wanted to accomplish a long solo canoe trip in Canada. Finally I had saved enough money to buy my gear and realize my ambition. Examining a map of Canada I had discovered that the two longest rivers were the Churchill, running east, and the Mackenzie flowing north. The logical plan seemed to be to paddle up the Churchill and then, via

various other rivers, go down the Mackenzie.

I had decided that the first part of the Churchill, where it flows into Hudson Bay, was too isolated, making it difficult to carry enough food. It also looked like a lot of hard, upstream work. So here I was at Leaf Rapids, excited and ready to go, undeterred by people's horror on hearing that I was headed upstream and alone. (I didn't dare tell them I figured on going all the way to Great Slave Lake.)

I pushed off on the evening of 30 May, having just celebrated my 26th birthday. Most of the Churchill is made up of lakes with short stretches of river and rapids in-between. This first evening on Granville Lake was glorious: calm water reflecting the clear darkening sky, only the splash of my paddle marring the soft silence.

I marvelled at my isolation, at the trees coming down to the water, at all the little nooks and crannies of the shoreline. The sky was huge and beautiful above me; I felt lucky to be alive.

As night fell, an island called out to be camped on. That is how I like to choose a campsite; too many plans spoil a place. That first night I was terrified by every slight rustle in the undergrowth, but from then on I never again felt worried and always slept soundly.

I had decided to make early morning starts, take a long midday siesta while the wind was up, and then paddle on again till late evening. So accordingly, the following morning I woke at 4 a.m. (Mercifully, while cleaning a fish a week later, I drowned my 'waterproof' watch which promptly died on me. After that I rose any time after dawn, lunched when the sun was due south, and quit paddling as the sun reached a hands breadth from the horizon. In the end I probably paddled much longer each day than I would have, had I known the time.)

That next morning I loaded my little 15-foot Old Town canoe to the brim, and sat on a pack in the stern — infinitely easier to steer from when laden, than the single, middle seat. I set off with the sun just rising, magnificent and red in the smoky air. Loons were calling, seagulls screeching. So much for the silence of the wilderness.

Granville turned out to be my favorite lake of the whole voyage. I saw nobody all day as I paddled between the classic islands of the Shield. Right then only a few trees had leaves, although, within days, the fresh yellow-green haze of spring veiled the bush. By the end of my trip, fall colors were already tinting the aspens.

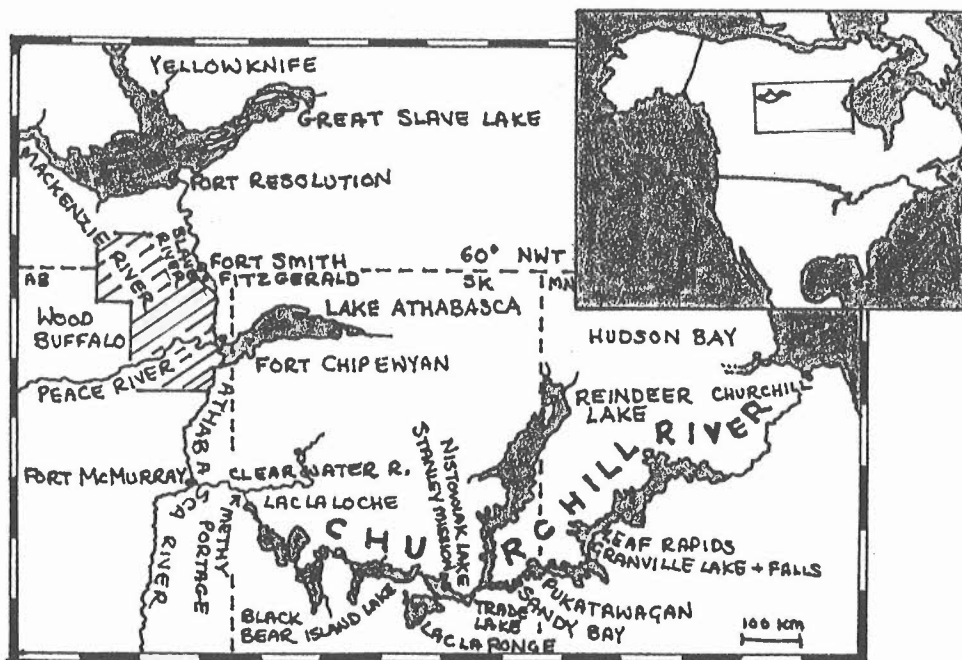
I found a tiny rock island on which to have lunch and take a nap. Fish were running in their hundreds, thrashing in the shallows. Loons called, their cries echoing around the lake from no one particular direction, a haunting, all-enveloping sound as if of the air itself. The essence of the wilderness.

The wind rose and waves broke on the windward side of my refuge while small white caps rolled by as I lay in the sun. Wind was the only weather problem that I had during the whole trip; only twice do I recall a tail wind.

Smoke from a forest fire to windward was thickening and a spotter helicopter flew by. The golden light made a rich contrast with the green lake water. When the wind died I set off once more. Burnt needles and ash floated down from the sky. Hot breaths cut through the cool evening air, like the devil breathing down my neck.

Next day I came to my first stretch of narrow river up which I had presumed lining to be inevitable. But, due to lack of rain, the water levels were low so I had no trouble at all, just paddled effortlessly right up to Granville Falls. And this was the part that everyone had been shaking their heads at! Later on, I was to be surprised again and again at how much easier everything was than I had expected. I made much better time and mileage than I (or the excellent "Saskatchewan Environment And Resource Management" canoe trip leaflets) had estimated.

At these unspectacular falls I also made my first portage of the journey. I like to live in comfort and had accordingly brought gear for every eventuality. This meant three loads: "A", clothes, tent, sleeping-bag, first aid kit, 22-cal. rifle, fishing rod, etc; "B" included a



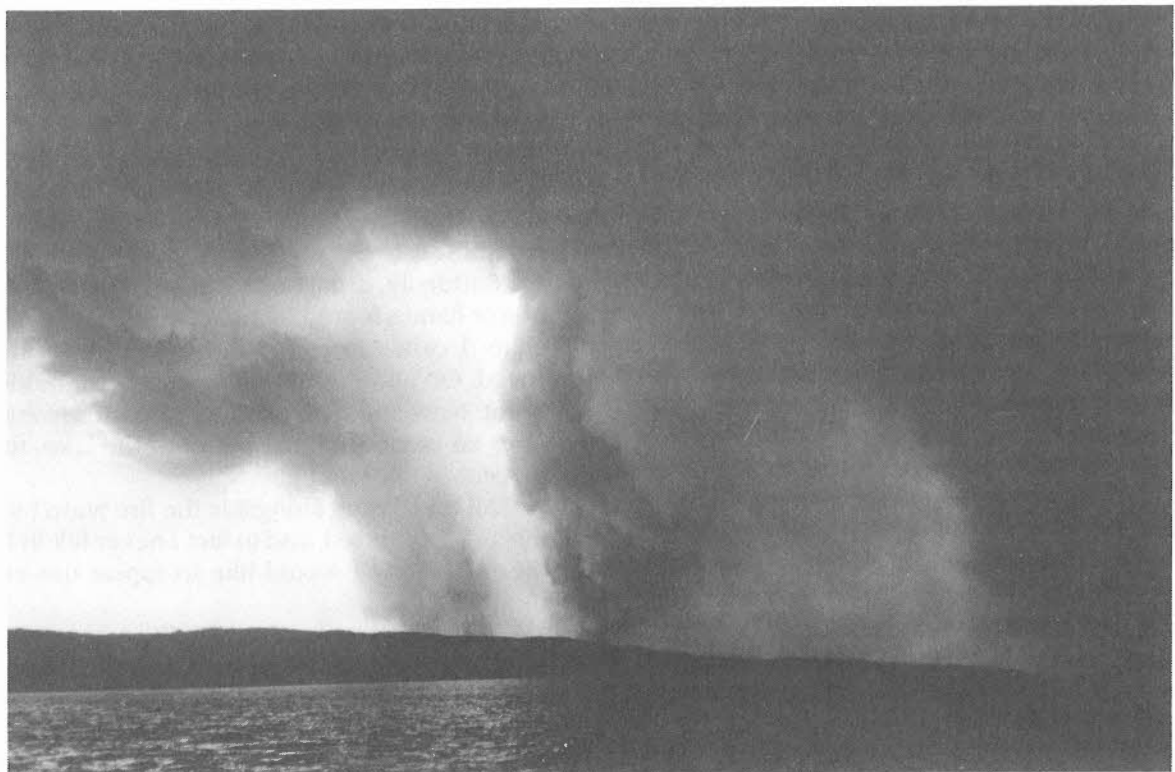


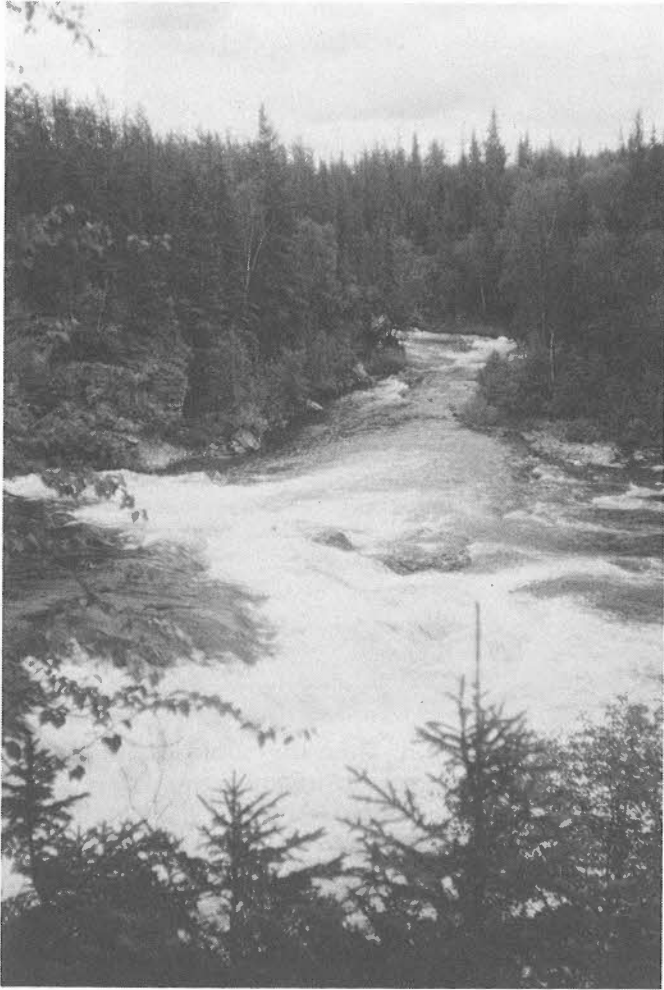
rucksack containing two plastic boxes with cooking equipment, food, and rain gear; "C" was my Royalex canoe, weighing about seventy pounds when the paddles and throw bags had been strapped in. I had made shoulder pads for the yoke which worked very well once I had mastered the technique.

Some weeks later I had just finished a portage when two canoes pulled up (going downstream of course, I wasn't to meet anyone else as crazy as me). The four men stared in amazement at the mountain of

gear I was sitting on. Then they unloaded and I returned the look; they had virtually nothing except two dogs! What if it rained or something? They looked on the thin side and I wasn't at all surprised to hear that for the last week they had eaten only fish (admittedly an easy catch).

Between most of the lakes on the Churchill there were portages of various lengths, the longest being one kilometre, the shortest a mere scramble over rocks. Some were covered by smooth logs, fixed cross-ways,





over which one could drag a motorboat. One portage even had a railway track with a heavy cart to push along it. Occasionally I wouldn't be able to find the trail at all and would have to do some tricky lining and wading. Twice very kind young men did the whole portage for me.

On Day 5 of my voyage, just before arriving at the Indian settlement of Pukatawagan, I took a rest day. I did my laundry and, more importantly, washed myself; something I don't generally bother with when I'm out of smell-range (though I do feel sorry for the people I accidentally meet between towns.) "Puk" is an isolated community with no road access, only the nearby railway line heading up to Churchill. This doesn't of course stop people from having cars to drive the few hundred metres from one end of the village to the other. Here, like in all the towns I visited, everyone was incredibly friendly. Wherever I stopped, people looked after me, often inviting me into their homes and feeding me. I was to be shown around the Sandy Bay dam and a school in Stanley Mission, invited to the movies in Fort McMurray and a wedding in Fort Smith. So much kindness.

My next port of call was Sandy Bay in Saskatchewan; into my second province already. This was the only time that I had anything stolen. As usual I had moored up to a float-plane dock for safety. Here I was just unlucky. Some small kids snuck onto the dock and

lifted what they could. However they didn't get far before they were caught and my gear returned to me.

The Churchill River doesn't change much, being flat and somewhat unphotogenic, but I loved the trees, the streaks of yellow pollen on the water, and the cotton puffs floating in the wind. There were lots of ducks, which, in late spring, were chaperoning adorable fluffy ducklings. Sometimes, white Catholic-style crosses, nestled on promontories, overlooked peaceful views of the wild land.

The spring of '95 was very hot and I wasn't to get any cloud cover or a full day's rain until July. It meant few bugs, a great relief as I had been prepared for the worst. It also meant forest fires.

As I continued west across Saskatchewan, the smoke grew thicker, until one day the sun went out. I decided to stay at a fishing camp and wait with the hospitable people there for the arrival of their float plane. I asked the pilot where the fires were and how dangerous it might be. He reassured me to a certain extent, and when I saw some canoers who had just passed safely through the area, I decided to stop whimpering and set out once more.

On Day 18, as I approached the narrow entrance to Trade Lake, the wind rose so I stopped for lunch on a barren rocky island. Now, to windward, I could both see and hear the fire. Flames suddenly shot up, thick smoke billowed in an awesome spectacle. The water reflected burnished copper, stunning against the lush green of the trees. My problem was that I was quite a way from anywhere. I knew that the fire fighters were busy elsewhere, saving communities — and Trade Lake was on the other side, through the fire.

When the wind died in what I assumed was evening, I paddled on. With little current the going was easy. I saw no animals fleeing before the fire, in fact the reverse. The ducks seemed to ignore the whole performance.

The smoke became so dense that my eyes smarted and I covered my mouth with a wet bandana. A thick layer of pine needles coated the water, scraping against my hull.

Suddenly, a gust of wind swooped down. To my horror flames roared up behind me, right at the water's edge. I canoed on through the narrows at Olympic speed. On all sides trees were alight, smouldering and burnt. Now and then one would come crashing down. After an eternity I burst out onto the lake, the danger passed.

All told, being alongside the fire wasn't as sweltering as I'd expected, and in fact I never felt in fear of my life. Can't say I would like to repeat the experience though.

The next morning the visibility was so poor that the bow of my canoe, "Skookum," looked hazy from the stern. Using only my compass, I headed out across the lake, knowing I'd hit an island before I saw it.

During the following days I continued to see burnt-out bush, right up to Nistowiak Lake. I wasn't bothered

by fire again but whenever the sun went orange from smoke my stomach tightened.

The longest distance I had between towns was ten days and the longest time I went without seeing or hearing anyone was five. This disappointed me. I had expected much more of a wilderness trip. Occasionally local teenagers had even graffitied on otherwise pristine islands. Strangely enough, I hardly met any other canoeists. The most I saw was about a week after the fire when I found the magically beautiful Black Bear Island Lake clogged with canoe groups, thus spoiling it for me.

Soon after, I was passing through lush marsh lands alive with otters and ducks. Day 44 saw me paddling up the La Loche River with its miniature rapids, so cute after the mighty Churchill. Once I chased a moose upstream who wouldn't let me by, till finally she decided to clamber out onto the bank. I also saw deer, although bears were the most frequently sighted large animals. One time I stood up from my tent and there was a big old black bear coming towards me — about three metres away. I asked him what he figured he was doing and he promptly fled. On the last day of the trip I was to see seven bears.

From Lac La Loche, the Methye Portage weaves over a height of land dropping into the enchanting Clearwater River valley, the most beautiful part of my journey. The portage itself is 20 km long. With three loads that made five trips, totalling 100 km. I can't say that I enjoyed the three days that it took me, especially as my left knee was acting up, but I loved the scenery. To start, I took "load A" for three minutes (I had mended my watch for the occasion), then "load B" for

six. I'd pass both other loads carrying "load C" for nine minutes. From then on I'd carry each load for nine minutes in leap frog fashion. The only real problem I had was the lack of water, so I was relieved to reach Rendezvous Lake two-thirds of the way along.

From the ancient mystical Clearwater River with its greenness and silence, a place where I could imagine voyagers around every bend, I entered into the Athabasca, a big river crammed with motor boats and barges. One wind-bound day, a group of tree planters took me in and gave me my first-ever helicopter ride, the Athabasca snaking across the land beneath us. The next day a guy, living with his son in a cabin by the river, invited me for dinner and introduced me to the good taste of Rye which I had always assumed I'd hate.

On Day 61 I arrived at Fort Chipewyan, the most scenic town with fantastic views out over Wood Buffalo National Park. The Slave was my biggest river yet and I constantly seemed to be battling head winds, though the boat traffic eased. Here I had to do my only cheat. Everyone told me that, at Fitzgerald, I'd have to pull out and hitch to Fort Smith to avoid impassable rapids with names such as Rapids Of The Drowned. This I did, although I have since read that it is possible to portage around them.

Finally I hit the Slave delta and wove my way into the Great Slave Lake. I paddled like fury to beat the morning breeze to Fort Resolution, which I did despite a few hairy moments. It was the middle of August, Day 73. I had travelled through three provinces and a territory, covering 1,996 km.

I decided to leave the Mackenzie for next year.





CPM # 0628980
ISSN 1828-1327

Published by the Wilderness Canoe Association — Editor: Toni Harting
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

I have finally run out of excuses. From now on *Nastawgan* should be published on time because my book on the French River is in the stores (see the info notes on pages 24 and 27) and the timing problems that occasionally delayed our journal for a few weeks have therefore disappeared. I would like to thank the Board and many WCA members for their support and encouragement during the years it took me to get the project done. Let's hope that my next book is not going to interfere too much with publication dates. But you never know.



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:

<i>issue:</i>	Autumn 1996	<i>deadline date:</i>	4 August
	Winter 1996		27 Oct.

WCA MEMBERSHIP LISTS are available to any members who wish one for personal, non-commercial use. The list can be ordered as hardcopy or on a 3½ in. DD computer diskette. Send a five-dollar bill (no cheque, please!) to Cash Belden at the WCA postal address (see WCA Contacts on the back page).

WCA FALL MEETING will be held on the weekend of 28-29 September, again at Whitefish Lake in Algonquin Park. Details of the program for the weekend and registration forms will be sent by separate mail in the coming few weeks. For more information contact the organizer Dan Rusciollelli at (905) 839-6004.



THOUGHTS AROUND A SMOKY FIRE

Perspectives on the Near-Wilderness

Ron Reid

This was one of the 19 presentations given at the Luste/WCA symposium in Toronto on 26 and 27 January 1996. Parts of this article have previously appeared in *Islands of Hope*, edited by Lori Labatt and Bruce Litteljohn, published by Firefly Books.

I am a canoeist, whatever else my credentials, and I come here tonight to be among canoeists, and to loosen the cold grip of winter a little by sharing the memories and dreams of canoe trips past, and canoe trips yet to come. For even in mid-winter, with the canoes stowed snug on their rack, like all of you I am yet a canoeist — not so experienced as some of you, nor so brave, nor so strong — but still, one who has been lucky enough to paddle and poke into many quiet corners of Ontario and beyond over the past 25 years.

But I must tell you that I come tonight with a special burden, for my friend George Luste, in asking me to start off tonight's proceedings, told me particularly that he wanted something "cerebral." Now I'm sure most of you, at one time or another, have to stand up in front of audiences and look at least reasonably intelligent, but let me tell you, being asked to be "cerebral" in front of 800 canoeists is something else again. Talk about a recipe for writer's block!

So, after an extended period of mental constipation, trying to get past that intimidating word, I've decided the best I can do is just share a few simple stories with you, and toss in a bit of campfire philosophizing. If, along the way a few new ideas bob to the surface in your brain, great! If not, there's always the reception later on. Some of my stories, by the way, will have a familiar ring to Lori Labatt and Bruce Litteljohn, who edited that magnificent book *Islands of Hope*, since I have snuck in a few passages from my contribution to that book. I think some of them bear repeating.

And just so you know I'm taking this cerebral thing seriously, I am not going to show slides. Going first has its privileges, since I get you while you are still fresh. And Lori's show, coming up next, uses two projectors, so that should even up the score. Instead, I am going to ask you to supply your own pictures, based on your own experiences. I remember asking my oldest son, when he was about three and sitting quietly, looking thoughtful, what he was thinking about. "I'm looking at the pictures on the inside of my forehead, Dad," he said. Well, you can too.

This whole weekend is focussed on the idea of near-wilderness. You can look at that idea on the basis of geography — that near-wilderness is that region within

a day or two's easy drive, that it includes all those parks and waterways where the history of man's frenetic pace has marked the landscape. If you are a wilderness purist, it's easy to be a tad condescending about the near-wilderness — it doesn't quite make the grade, it is somehow diminished by the traces of its past, by its crowds, by its portage signs and biffys. It's not quite the real thing.

In a way, all that is true, and I admit that for many years I have avoided the crowded lakes of Algonquin and Killarney, in large part because of that diminished quality. And yet, 25 years ago, I started my wilderness canoeing career in Algonquin — and I expect that most of you started there too, or somewhere like it — and I thought I was in wilderness.

I didn't start canoeing until I was nearly 20, cause I was a farm boy, and farm kids don't go off to summer camp — they bale hay! But what a way to start — just a bunch of us, all completely green, circling our way down Smoke Lake in our rented tin canoes, struggling up what we thought was a horrendous portage to Ragged Lake, and collapsing among our cardboard boxes and coolers on the first available campsite. The weather was idyllic, the swimming wonderful — until the wind came up, and a smouldering ground fire left by some neighboring campers burst into flames. It took hours, flailing away with cook pots and paddles, to get it out. And the next night, we had a bear in camp — the only problem bear I have experienced in 25 years. And to top it all off, as we paddled a narrow channel one afternoon, a tree fell into the water not 50 feet in front of us. No wind, nothing to make it fall — it just reached the end of its time, and fell — and we happened to be there. We were in wilderness — deepest, darkest wilderness — we had no doubt of that, and I have been hooked on wilderness ever since.

In a geographical sense, of course, we weren't — we were just over the first portage in one of the busiest parks in the province. But psychologically, psychologically we could sense the wilderness feeling all around us — the adventure, the romance, the keen edge of fear. Wilderness is a state of mind, it has been said, and for most people, that is not necessarily far away as measured in miles.

Over the years since that first Algonquin adventure, I have led many canoe trips, introducing people to the near-wilderness, and I try not to forget the importance of that state of mind. Often I paddle with new groups on the Black River, a fine little stream that skirts the southern edge of Muskoka. Like most cottage country rivers, the Black has felt its share of abuses — its pine was stripped early this century, its headwaters are

dammed, it has hunt camps and pockets of cottages and road crossings. But the people I bring don't see all that — they see dark waters and graceful pines and wood warblers and beaver dams — they see wilderness. And I think it is important that we allow them to experience the full measure of that wilderness feeling.

So where the wilderness begins, I suggest, depends more on what's in your head than on the physical landscape. Look further north, and many of the canoeing rivers — the Missinaibi, the Lady Evelyn, and many more, have clear-cuts starting just beyond a narrow band of trees along much of their length. As a canoeist and an environmental advocate, I often face a dilemma — do I show people this false front of wilderness, and send them home outraged? Or maintain the illusion, and hope that their good memories of a wilderness adventure will serve as well in environmental battles to come? For the record, I usually come down on the side of illusion.

And I think there is good reason for that small deception. Aldo Leopold, I think it was, said that there are some people who can live without wild places, and some who cannot. I guess I, and most of you, are among those who cannot. And I believe it is becoming increasingly clear that we all, as the human species, cannot hope to survive and prosper if we do not set aside, and learn from, at least some significant areas of wilderness. We need wilderness as a genetic storehouse, as a benchmark of how ecological systems operate, as a refuge for all species, not just our own. I'll quote Aldo Leopold again, who got so many things right: "The first act of intelligent tinkering is to save all the pieces." We are tinkering with our tiny blue planet on a massive scale, are we not, yet we have given so little concern to the loss of species and wild communities — the vital pieces of Spaceship Earth — as they disappear into the vortex of extinction.

But to win the inevitable battles to preserve tracts of wilderness, we need public support, in the form of committed individuals who are willing to champion the cause. And that's where the deception of near-wilderness comes in. In my view, there is no better way to create that commitment, that support, than to expose people directly to a wilderness experience. I'll put the emphasis on the word "experience." We don't need to, we don't want to take hundreds of thousands of urbanites into the far reaches of the boreal forest — let's leave that terrain for those of you hardy enough and dedicated enough to find your own way there. But we do need to create opportunities wherever we can to immerse as many people as possible in parts of the near-wilderness, so they can come away with at least a primitive understanding of the richness, the beauty, and the wonder of natural systems functioning naturally. Such understanding, such sympathy for the natural order of things, is desperately needed to sustain political support for new wilderness parks, and to help stem the tide of reckless destruction in the 90% of the landscape that will never be parks.

I believe we face a great risk as more and more of our population becomes massed in urban centres, bereft of contact with natural settings. Their opportunities to get to know the varied facets of nature become ever more limited. And you cannot miss what you have never known.

How many of you, for example, have felt a pang of loss over the fate of the passenger pigeon? Probably none. Yet for my great-grandfather, breaking land among the maples and beeches of southern Bruce County, the throngs of pigeons that darkened the sun must have been a sight of great wonder. For my grandfather, the last of the passenger pigeons was a distant childhood memory. For my father, they were the stuff of legends, passed down with the generations. For me, they are simply another story, no more real than the tales of extinct auks or mastodons.

How, then, can we expect these modern urbanites, living in their cocoon of artificiality, to lament the loss of wild nature or to fight for its preservation? A child who has never peered through clear waters at the antics of a crayfish, or breathed in the fresh scent of a pine woods, has little cause to be an understanding friend of nature.

However rich in dollars, too many urban dwellers are ecological paupers. Despite all the bustle, their surroundings have become gradually less diverse, more homogenized in form and content. The grey concrete that surrounds them has crept into their souls. And without the opportunity to experience the rich tapestry of wild surroundings, they haven't even realized their loss.

The antidote, I suggest, is generous exposure to natural environments. And the emphasis must be on environments — total living systems — rather than just bits and pieces caged in zoos. A lonely young moose, listlessly circling in his pen at the Metro Toronto Zoo, what can he teach us about the wilderness? Not much. He is little more than a display object, and we become little more than his jaded spectators, our senses held at bay by the chain-link fence.

In an ecological sense, you haven't "seen" a moose until you have watched the cascade of water and lily pads off massive antlers as a feeding bull comes up for air, until you have smelled the earthy fragrance of peat churned by his hooves, until you have listened to the snapping and crashing of alders as he slips into the shrubbery.

The near-wilderness, especially the more popular rivers and parks, provides the settings for such experiences, sometimes even the opportunities to see wildlife that isn't forced to be wary of humans carrying guns. Perhaps just as important for the urbanite who has grown accustomed to recreation that is constantly structured, parks act as gateways to provide an introduction to the wilds. In the near-wilderness, a neophyte can venture into the wilds knowing that the portages will be marked, the campsites clearly designated, the dangers minimized. He or she is surrounded

by a comforting structure of human regulations, safeguarded from the perceived anarchy of the wilds.

And once hooked, people come back again and again, becoming progressively more adventuresome. Experiencing wild nature firsthand usually comes in the guise of recreation, but I think there is something deeper, something far more fundamental, going on than just recreation.

Tens of thousands of us every year make our pilgrimage to the wilderness; yet few could easily answer the simple question "Why?" When a cold icicle of rain trickles down my neck, or the blackflies carpet my mug of soup, the joys of experiencing wilderness can seem downright irrational.

Without question, I think some of our motivation is competitive in origin — the urge to meet the physical challenge of wilderness travel, to prove ourselves against all the adversity that nature can throw our way. It has been said that wilderness begins where you first feel fear, not only fear of the random hazards that might come your way, but more so fear of your own inadequacy to deal with those hazards. The test is not to conquer the wilderness, but to conquer yourself — the philosophy that is so important to the Outward Bound experience, for example.

For a lot of us, wilderness offers the opportunity to throw off the shackles of domesticated routines, to break out of that structured existence that so often defines us, and confines us. Wilderness travellers rejoice in the sense of freedom, the independence to make decisions unfettered by the institutions of polite society.

I recall one lunch on the Albany River, cold and wet and dreary, with some of our party soaked from a near-dumping just upstream. Hot soup was in order, we agreed, and a fire to dry our clothes. A small campfire would have done the trick, but we were on a bouldery shore lavishly littered with driftwood. Higher and higher we heaped the fire, with faggots thick as an arm, and soon the flames roared 20 feet in the air. And with the flames soared our spirits, buoyed by the exuberance of uninhibited excess.

That somehow strikes me as almost un-Canadian — the idea of celebrating excess without guilt. Maybe the Americans in the audience will understand better — the idea of individual freedom, the ability to make your own choices, and to accept the consequences.

Wilderness travel breaks down other human conventions as well. In Canada, we have more than our share of canoeing celebrities, including a couple of former prime ministers and even occasionally a prince. But in the wild, those titles don't mean much.

One night on the Chapeau River, for instance, my wife and I awoke to the unwelcome sound of rustling among our food packs. We were alone, just the two of us, and the night was as dark as the inside of a dog, as the Australians say. I admit that the beam of my flashlight trembled a little as I poked my head out of the tent, and twisted round to identify our visitor. Not a bear, as

we feared, but a sleek and handsome skunk, gracefully arching his tail as he munched on our granola. I shouted, of course, and he looked at me mildly before returning to his feast. Discretion being the better part of valor, I hastily decided we had enough food to share, and let him rustle to his heart's content.

Now, if I were a prince, do you suppose the skunk would have been impressed? Of course not. In the wilderness, all are equal.

That equality extends well beyond the synthetic sphere of human affairs. At home in the city, the imperatives of work and status and the six o'clock news may seem all-important. But to the loon on the lake, or the moose in the shallows, or the chickadee that comes to your camp, none of that matters. They can live out their lives and carry on through countless generations without the slightest need for our six o'clock news. To a hawk, an unwary mouse is of far more consequence than the likes of you or me.

This indifference to human affairs somehow strengthens my feeling of kinship with wild places. Perhaps it is the realization that large parts of this planet are still beyond human control, that wild creatures go about their business independent of any consideration of human concerns. In the wild, other creatures are not our servants; they are beyond our judgement as beneficial or destructive. They are brethren, co-inhabitants of ... the thin skin of life that surrounds the globe, equal participants in the web of life.

So, I'll suggest, if we want a rationale for why we should pay attention to, even cherish, the near-wilderness, I think we have a potent mix in its ability to give people a taste of freedom, a taste of fear, and a taste of kinship with wild places. And I think, I hope, that people exposed to that potent mix come home from their canoeing refreshed in their determination to see wild places protected.

Moreover, I believe they come home as better people, more understanding of what's really important in their lives, more aware of the ways in which our destinies are intertwined with the fate of the ecosystem we share. When my wife and I travelled overseas a few years ago, one of our friends, John Marsh, told us that we would come back as "citizens of the world." But when we renew our bonds with the wilderness, I like to think we return as "citizens of the Earth."

I talked earlier about how you might know where the wilderness begins — where the wilderness state of mind takes over. Based on trips with many groups over the years, I have my own criteria — kind of a reverse criteria if you like — that wilderness begins where the chatter stops. Most groups, for the first day or two at least, tend to talk a lot, exhilarated by the freedom, verbally bouncing off each other, relating to others in the group, almost ignoring the countryside. But usually a few days out, perhaps on a long afternoon paddle up a dead-calm lake, the chatter gradually fades, and a comfortable silence takes over. And in those silent spaces, the sense of connection, the almost religious

sense of awe, begins to grow. In the silence, we finally begin to open up our receivers, and to learn the lessons that wilderness can teach.

When the wind cuts hard in our faces, or the crash of strong rapids means yet another portage, one of my canoeing friends is apt to remark: "I talks to the river, but the river don't care; he just keeps rollin' along." My friend, I suggest has learned well the most valuable lesson that parks and wilderness can teach us — that we are not all-powerful, that our technology is not the only force controlling the planet.

We humans have the power to destroy, but we cannot create a living river, a maple on a ridge, or even the lowly aphid that feeds on the maple's leaf. Experiencing the wilderness can bring us to understand our limits not just as individuals but as a species. We are

part of a greater whole, albeit an important part, but still simply one part. In that knowledge, our approach to nature should be respectful, even humble.

The near-wilderness, then, must be measured in terms beyond the immediate, beyond the economic and recreational values that accrue to us and our generation. Areas of wilderness we have chosen to set aside, especially parks, stand as symbols of our common humility. Humility in our recognition that we need natural ecosystems as antidotes for our mismanagement, as reservoirs of genetic opportunities to meet the challenges of our common future, as refuges to allow other species to exist. But most of all, they are symbols of our growing awareness that humankind cannot live independent of wild nature.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

As December rolls around each year, my wife and I look forward to the arrival of the registration information for the WCA symposium. The symposium has become our winter getaway and we enjoy staying in Toronto for a couple of nights. We attend because we expect to receive information about areas and trips that we have not had the opportunity to experience. We also expect that several of the presentations will be slideshows providing exceptional entertainment. We also know that at least one topic will reveal some new aspect of wilderness travel that we have never considered. We have never been disappointed.

The 1993 symposium was indeed exemplary. I came away from it awed by the experience and with a feeling of humility at being privileged to have been there. However, to expect something similar in each following year would be as vain as expecting every meal to be more enjoyable than the last.

For canoeists, the symposium is an opportunity to touch the wilderness again. It is as much fun as eating stew and bannock around the fireplace with the lights out. It is essential to our wellbeing.

Please remind George that some of us get tired of looking at our own slides, and truly appreciate the time and effort that he devotes to bringing the wilderness to Toronto each January.

Looking forward to next year.

Will Bartlett

HELP PROTECT OUR PAST

The Inuit Heritage Trust was established by Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated in April 1994, as the lead Inuit agency responsible for the management and protection of archaeological sites and associated cultural resources within the Nunavut Settlement Area. The Trust is very concerned about recent reports of the removal, by canoeists, of artifacts from archaeological sites along the Kazan River and elsewhere in Nunavut.

Archaeological sites in Nunavut form a unique, non-renewable record of 4,000 years of human history in the region. As in other parts of Canada, all of these sites are protected by law, and the removal or disturbance of artifacts or other cultural specimens from any site is prohibited.

The Inuit Heritage Trust recognizes that the majority of canoeists who visit Nunavut treat both its natural and cultural resources with respect. Unfortunately, however, the thoughtless actions of a few individuals stain the reputation of the group.

Please help the Trust preserve the irreplaceable part of Nunavut's cultural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations. If you encounter an archaeological site, take with you only a photograph and the memory of a special experience.

For further information please contact: Inuit Heritage Trust Incorporated, Box 2080, Iqaluit, Nunavut X0H 0H0, telephone (819) 979-0731, facsimile (819) 979-0269, E-mail: dstenton@nunanet.com

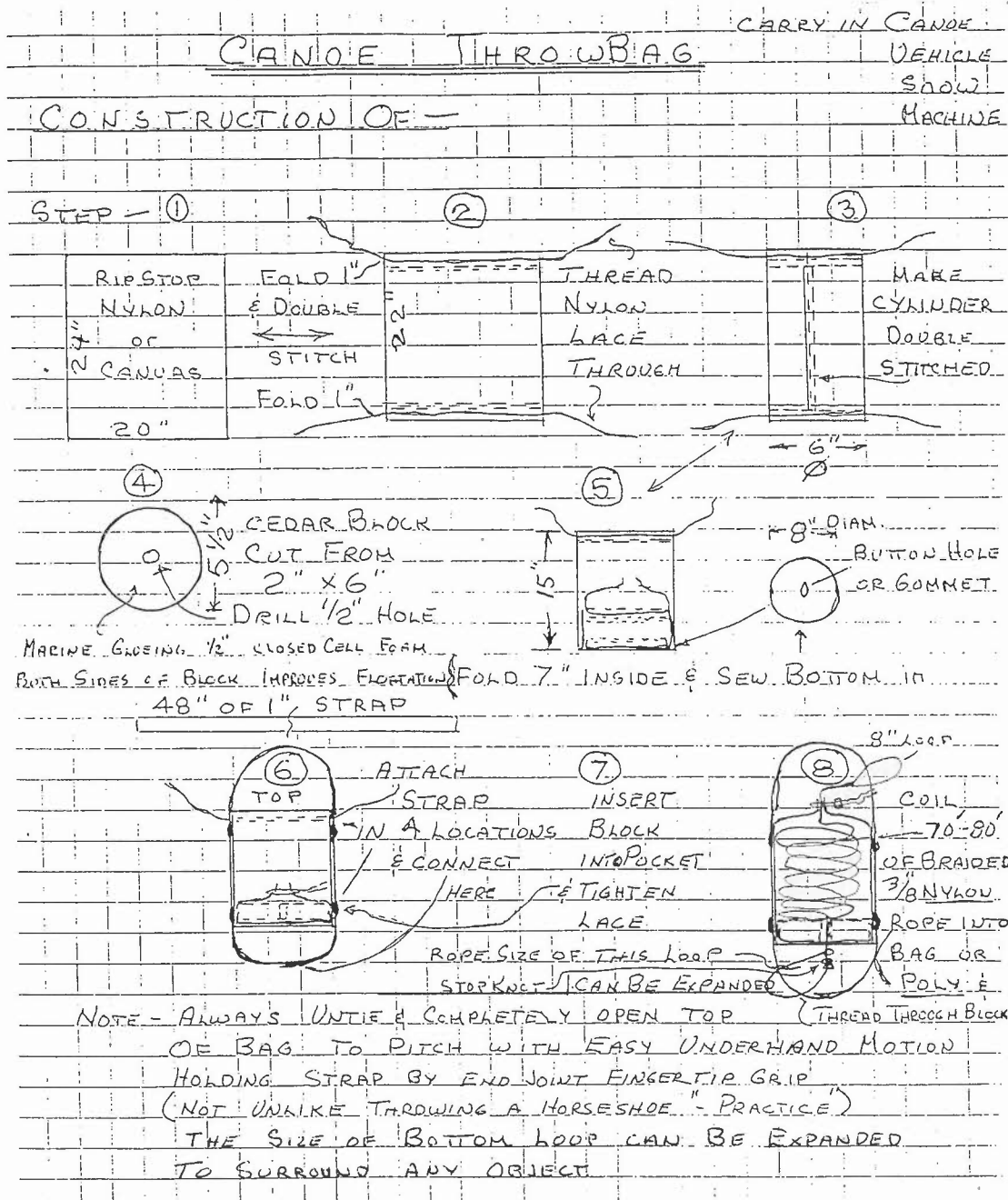
THROWBAG

Several years ago I undertook to produce a simple-to-construct throwbag for our Outers Club. There are so many uses besides "rescue" for this rope-storage item such as canoe lining, food and tarp hanging, etc., that it will pay for its space on any trip.

It is important to practise throwing it. Make a game

on targets 10-20 metres distant. Be sure to completely open the top of the bag before the toss. Use an easy underhand pitch, holding the top strap by a semi-open end-joint fingertip grip. A closed-hand grip will fling the bag vertically straight up.

Bob Burton



PARTNERS AND INFORMATION WANTED

THELON RIVER Sixth person needed for one-month trip on the Thelon, 11 July — 9 August, out of Yellowknife. Phone Anne at (416) 482-0810 or leave a message on the machine at (416) 489-2401.

NASTAWGAN WANTED I'm looking for back issues of *Nastawgan*, either purchase or borrow so I can copy. I already have Vol.18, No.1-3; V19, N4; V20, N2-3; V21, N1-2-3-4; V22, N1-2-3. Jim Hogan, PO. Box 325, 410 Virginia Ave., Moss Beach, CA, USA; tel. (h) (415) 728-9528 or (w) (415) 604-5413.

DÉJÀ VU: The Past Revisited

John Adams

Three decades ago, I worked as a canoe-tripper at a boy's summer camp in Haliburton, Ontario. For several years, "after-camp" was spent with friends taking a variety of personal canoe trips. Much of Algonquin Park was wilderness then, Temagami even more remote. Water and air were cleaner. Even Haliburton did not yet qualify as "hotel wilderness." For the past ten years, I have retraced many of these same routes, this time with my children. Don't misunderstand me! This is not a report on Canoeing with Small Children. I cleverly waited until they were older and capable of carrying me through or bailing me out of difficult situations.

QUETICO PROVINCIAL PARK

In 1963, I embarked upon my first trip to Quetico. I was fortunate to be accompanied by our camp owner, Kirk Wipper, an experienced canoeist, a knowledgeable woodsman, a remarkable human being. Also participating was the camp maintenance man, my close friend and permanent bowman, Jim Gillespie, whose main claim to fame was his ability to light and smoke a cigarette in a driving headwind without missing a stroke. Bob Anderson, Kirk's rifle instructor, and an experienced tripper, was our fourth. We drove for two days in Kirk's rusting Nash Rambler station-wagon, sleeping at night beside the car or, as a special treat, on a motel-room floor. (I distinctly remember Kirk commandeering the only bed).

Our nine-day trip began at French Lake and took us through Pickerel, Quetico, and Beaverhouse Lakes, down the Quetico River, and up the Namakan River to Lac La Croix. The Maligne River ascended to Sturgeon Lake and subsequently to Agnes Lake. We paddled the Boundary Waters, then north to Kawnipi Lake, and back to French Lake via Baptism Creek. We covered almost the entire circumference and much of the middle section of the Park.

Kirk tried with limited success to curb our usual tendency to complete the trip in six days. He tried, with infinite patience, to instill in us an appreciation of the magnificence of our surroundings. He tried, with his sense of history and occasion, to make us pause long enough to hear the footsteps of the fur traders and explorers who travelled these waters long ago.

I vividly recall reaching Agnes Lake at 5.00 p.m. on a warm, hazy afternoon. Kirk, somewhat dispiritedly, asked where I planned to camp. I pointed to a distant island, a vague shadowy hump of land, barely visible on the horizon and at least a two-hour paddle away. There was silence from Kirk. Suddenly with three hard, powerful strokes, he propelled his canoe well ahead of mine. He proceeded in this fashion for some time, his canoe arriving at the chosen island at least 30 minutes

ahead of mine. He made his point. It was the only time in several trips with Kirk that I saw his legendary patience and good humor waver even slightly.

We had eagerly anticipated a visit to the Indian village situated where the Namakan River leaves Lac La Croix. The village consisted of a few shacks, almost hidden in waist-high grass. Kirk asked a weathered native if he could see some Indian handicrafts. The response was: "You mean moccasins and all that crap? We haven't even got the time to cut the #\$\$@&! grass!"

Even though thirty years have passed, other memories stand out. Ivy Falls on the Namakan River was a special place... a rugged campsite beside a frothing rapids, churning between our site and a high cliff of rock and pine. A snapshot, taken by Kirk and now hanging on my wall, shows a lean, crew-cut 21-year-old, at a campsite on a quiet, peaceful Quetico Lake evening.

It was a trip to remember with long days, cool September nights, much humor and good companionship.

In 1992 I returned to Quetico. I wanted to introduce my children to this wonderful place, and to retrace at least a portion of our 1963 route. I was accompanied by Tracey Adams, her husband Steve Desmond, Jen and Riley Watson, and Kevin Bradley, seasoned trippers all. The Rambler was replaced by a DC 9 to Thunder Bay. Our trip was seven days in duration. In calculating our targeted daily distance, I was amazed at how far and how fast we had travelled in 1963. Had I really slowed down that much? Had Kirk's insistence that I pause long enough to enjoy my surroundings finally penetrated? Naturally, I preferred to think that the kids were holding me back.

Our route began at Nym Lake. From bear-infested Batchewaung Lake, a series of small lakes took us into Sturgeon Lake. From there we retraced part of the '63 trip in reverse. The Indian village of Lac La Croix provided the major surprise. The grass was no longer waist-high; indeed, there appeared to be very little grass. Two-story houses with satellite dishes had replaced the tar-paper shacks. Land Rovers and Jeeps travelled a network of roads. Float-planes took off and landed, somehow avoiding the many high-powered motorboats that came and went constantly. A mile down-river, portage trails were criss-crossed by 4-wheel-drive vehicle tracks.

A few hours paddling brought us to Ivy Falls. My campsite was still there, relatively unchanged. The rapids still churned and frothed. The rock cliff still gleamed in the evening sunlight, the pine and spruce towering to even greater heights. It could have been 1963...it could have been 1863!

I also found my peaceful Quetico Lake campsite. I

foolishly tried to duplicate Kirk's 1963 picture of myself, standing in profile, this time with my daughter Tracey. From a personal standpoint, the result looked embarrassingly different. Some things don't stay the same. We returned to find that a series of bear incidents had caused the closure of the entire north-west corner of the Park at the exact time we were in that section.

It was a nostalgic trip, this time haunted by attempts to remember places and moments from the past, but enlivened by fresh faces, strong young muscles, and the same good humor and companionship.

LA VERENDRYE PROVINCIAL PARK

The year 1973 saw me in La Verendrye Provincial Park in Quebec, which contains the headwaters of the more modernly popular Dumoine, Noire, and Coulonge Rivers. The Park, in 1973, was relatively undeveloped. A few canoe routes had been hacked out of the spruce forest. I was accompanied by my cousin, Joe Gill, Jim Gillespie having discovered that canoe trips had to be interrupted by short stretches of employment. Our starting point was Le Domaine on Lac Jean-Pere. Le Domaine consisted of a small wood building, housing a Park office and attendant. A few canoes were strewn haphazardly on the ground. La Verendrye was lightly travelled in 1973, we saw no one in five days of canoeing. We travelled in warm hazy weather, with a heatless sun ever-present but incapable of breaking through the haze.

A few memories stand out: a tiny island campsite on Lac Kondiaronk; awakening at dawn to a thick fog which hid even the point of our small island. We navigated successfully, with compass and good luck, the length of Kondiaronk, until the fog lifted. I recall a hot, sunny day on Lac Poulter...my first and only experience with sunstroke. At the north-east end of the lake we found a mile-long beach, an incongruity more reminiscent of the Caribbean than Northern Quebec. Our tent was pitched on a grassy slope above the beach. I recovered from my sun-induced illness, to make an unsuccessful attempt at bleaching my hair with Sunlight Soap. We enjoyed a beautiful evening highlighted by a spectacular sunset.

I returned in 1993, accompanied by the same 1992 Quetico trippers with the addition of my son Chris. The name had been changed from La Verendrye Provincial Park to Reserve Faunique de La Verendrye. The small wooden building at La Domaine had been replaced by a community of large modern buildings containing a trip room, gift shop, offices, restaurant, and storage rooms. There were rows of kevlar, fibreglass, and aluminum canoes.

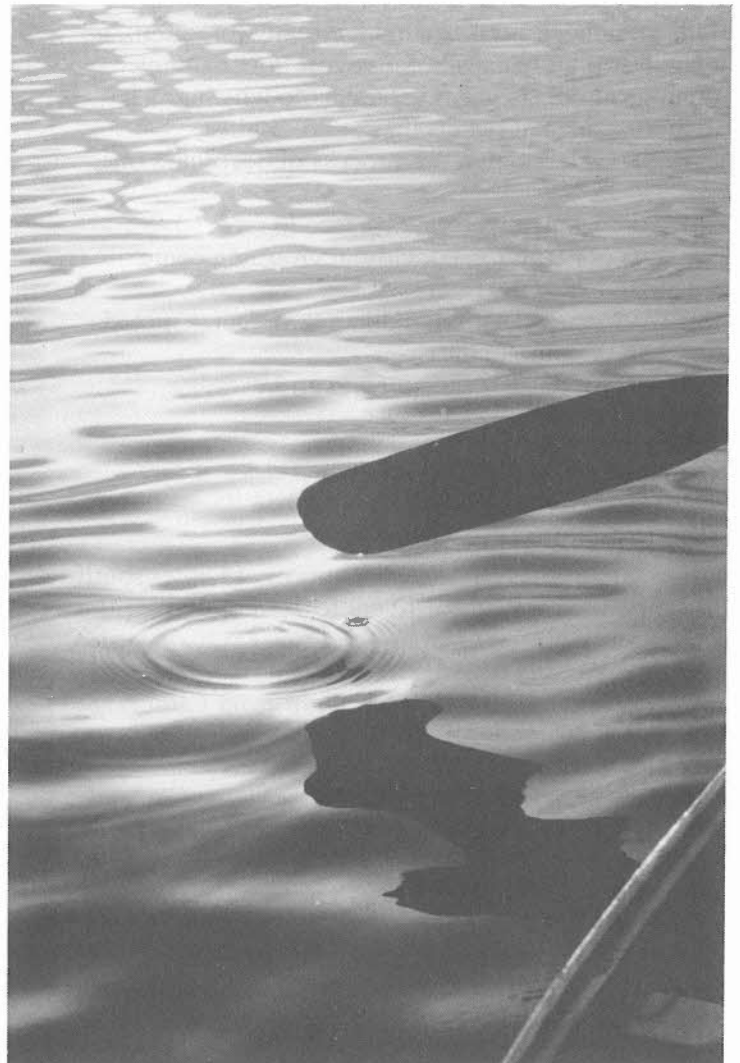
In spite of this, things hadn't changed that much. The Park was still lightly travelled. Our route, longer than in 1973, incorporated most of the previous trip. Sitting around an evening fire on the same tiny island campsite on Lake Kondiaronk, I described our 1973

September fog. Unbelievably, we awoke the following morning to another dense fog. Fortunately we navigated the lake successfully, although, at age 53, I had considerably more difficulty and pressure in performing the same skills I performed automatically at age 23.

Lac Poulter's stroke-inducing sunshine was replaced by a wind-driven thunderstorm. We hastily camped on the same beach as in 1973. When the storm passed, a ten-minute walk along the beach resulted in finding our old campsite, unchanged except that the surrounding trees and brush had twenty years more growth. Concern for hair color had been replaced by concern for hair preservation. But we enjoyed an even more spectacular sunset.

Retracing old routes does little to recover lost youth, but perhaps it serves to recapture the past, enhance the present, and anticipate the future. What's past is prologue. To misquote Thomas Wolfe: "You can't go back again."

But, you know what? You can...and sometimes, and in some places, it's not all that different.



CANOEING VICTORIA ISLAND

Marti Shaak

ARCTIC QUEST

Will perception confirm our months of Arctic reading and dreaming?

What paths will our journey take?

Six patiently wait, packs bulging, last-minute preparations in place.

It remains to be there, to experience.

Hopscotch fashion we work our way north:

Minneapolis, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton,

Yellowknife, Cambridge Bay:

Automobile, commercial air, bush flight.

With each latitudinal increment the temperature drops a few degrees, the sun sets more reluctantly, our eagerness grows.

But still we wait.

Waiting is a rightful, integral part of the journey.

When airline pilots strike and flights are delayed,

Maps and check book are inadvertently forgotten,

When last-minute calls home reveal uncertainties,

When group decisions must be made which touch our personal beliefs, likes and dislikes,

The six travelers begin the process of becoming one.

Today we finally meet Victoria face to face.

The days of planning, packing, regrouping come together in the final thrust.

Anticipation, resignation, exhilaration, fear, a mixed bag of complexities

Propel us forward, responding to an inward, unexplainable call.

Water days: 13-28 July 1994.

Rivers: Tuktu and Nanook from approx. 15 miles south of the confluence of the rivers to Hadley Bay of the Arctic Ocean.

Location: Victoria Island, NWT, Canada.

River Access: Twin Otter bush flight from Cambridge Bay, Victoria Island, Adlair Air Inc. (403) 983-2569.

Trip length: 120 river miles.

Water difficulty: Mostly Class 1-2, last three miles is Class 3-5 through a canyon. At moderate water levels even the canyon is negotiable with a combination of lining, dragging, and paddling. Canoe covers are recommended.

Geography: tundra, no trees, polar desert, moonscape, eskers.

History: evidence of early Inuit, abundant tent rings, food caches, kayak rests.

Remoteness: very.

Daylight: 24 hours per day in July.

Wildlife: Incredible!!! Hundreds of muskox with close-up viewing, caribou, arctic fox, snowy owls, peregrine falcons, rough-legged hawks, arctic loons, tundra swans, geese and ducks of many varieties, migratory birds.

Wildflowers: beautiful, many varieties.

Fishing: Excellent. We ate heartily of char and lake trout. Group record was a 14.5-pound lake trout, caught by my husband.

Problems to deal with:

1. 20-25 mph winds most of the time made lake crossings interesting. We often began paddling when the sun was low in the horizon, about 8:00 p.m. The wind would die down some, we would paddle into the wee hours of the morning, sleep late, hike during the day, break camp after the evening meal, and then paddle again. Cooking with the stove generally required putting up a wind break.

2. Water temperatures were on the cool side, 50 degrees F in the interior, cooler as we approached the Bay. One would not want to spend much time in this water.

3. What appeared to be terra firma on the river banks would frequently give way without warning under our weight, feet and legs quickly sucked into cement-like muck.

4. Average air temperature was 40 degrees F, low of 28, high of nearly 80 for a brief hour one afternoon; 40 degrees with a damp, brisk wind can chill a person quickly. Also experienced snow and sleet showers.

5. Firearms are a good idea. There is a strong possibility of seeing polar bear near Hadley Bay (we did not). Also the Cambridge Bay Wildlife Officer warned us that there are seven grizzlies on the island, one of which preys on young polar bears.





Think about the many factors which go into making any canoe trip extra-ordinary, and the Tuktuk-Nanook Rivers are right up there in the top ten. While the shoaly upper river was shallow enough to require walking beside the canoe for several short stretches, there were no portages on this trip. The weather, as might be expected in a desert, was dry for the most part. We had light showers on two days, and three nights with short snow and sleet squalls as we neared the Arctic Ocean. Insects were not a problem.

We slept long, ate well, read books, hiked every day, and thrilled to the evidence of earlier civilizations. There were no unplanned obstacles and wildlife was abundant for photo opportunities. The crew enjoyed a close camaraderie. Were ease of travel the only consideration, the Tuktuk-Nanook Rivers would be generally accessible to all canoeists. But while the first 117 miles of the Tuktuk-Nanook River system could be described as a novice river, the trip itself is one for seasoned far-northern travellers with a good bit of river canoeing experience.

Firstly, although the Tuktuk and upper Nanook were easy Class 1-2 rivers, the last several miles were wild enough to require much time in study, preparation, and care in executing lining and paddling combinations. We had the extravagance of an experienced crew and plenty of time to spend on working our way through the canyon. We were grateful for every conservative decision made. The last drop on the Nanook River is a very serious section of water.

Secondly, while the river was generally mild, the lakes were nasty and unpredictable. Two of the three lakes along the course of the Nanook River required

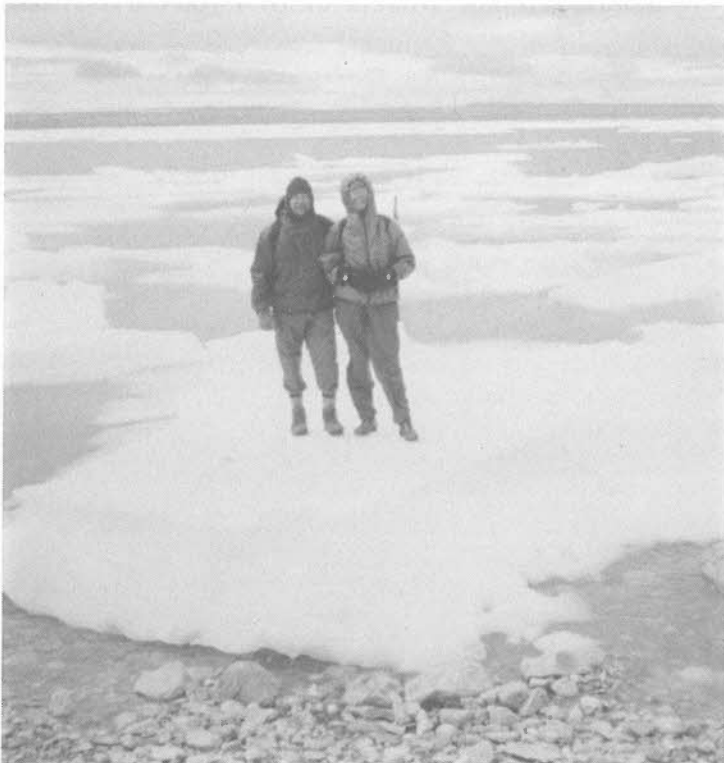
three-to-four-hour crossings, paddling hard. Optimum paddling conditions were from 8:00 p.m. through the wee hours of the morning when winds would sometimes level out to maybe 10 or 15 mph. At their best, these lakes had large swells and waves which sometimes broke over the bow. Extra time had to be built into the travelling schedule for wind-bound conditions. The remoteness of this area was underscored by the fact that two of the three lakes crossed had no names recorded on the map.

Thirdly, I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of hours that were only marginal in terms of hypothermia threat. The rest of the time, a swim would have resulted in an emergency situation. This was not a trip where mistakes were affordable. Both water and air temperatures were cold and we did not have the luxury of being able to build fires for warmth or drying clothes. Clothing for this trip had to be well planned for extreme conditions. Tents had to be durable and aerodynamic. Caloric intake needed to be adequate. We usually carried hot liquids and several times ate a fourth meal upon completing a long lake crossing during the early morning hours.

Fourthly, the town of Cambridge Bay was not set up for outfitting canoeists. If you plan a canoe trip to Victoria Island, make sure that you bring everything from home that you will need. Canoes could possibly be arranged through the bush flight company, but they are not in the best of condition, have no covers that fit over a fully loaded canoe, and you will need to find deck plates, thwarts, seats, nuts and bolts from a pile of parts to put your boats together before leaving on your flight.

Fifthly, be prepared to have a flexible schedule, spend several days to get to Victoria Island and several more to get home. While on the river, you will also need





to allow plenty of time for being wind-bound, for working your way down the canyon, and for locating a suitable landing area for the plane at the end of the trip. We spent a full day hiking along the coast to analyze our last day of paddling and to determine where our final paddling destination should be for plane pick-up. Three weeks was just the right amount of time to accomplish the trip we did. It was also not a cheap trip, which is why we do not do a trip like this every year. The round-trip bush flight on Victoria Island was \$6,000 by itself. This, of course, gets divided by the number of persons in your group. We opted for six for safety reasons as well as for financial considerations. Three stacked canoes in a Twin Otter leaves room for six persons and their gear.

Sixthly, be prepared for the possibility of one or more of the lakes having ice. We packed deer drag harnesses in case we needed to pull the canoes over ice. Fortunately, we did not require their use, as this would have involved more time, work, and potential danger than simply paddling across the lakes.

Would I recommend this trip to others? Absolutely! I would only suggest taking seriously all the precautions listed, plan well, and then enjoy.

AGAWA CANYON

Jay Neilson

The Agawa River just east of Lake Superior Provincial Park is a scenic canoe route through old-growth hardwood forests of maples, oak, and pine, which cover the hills along the wet Superior Coast. The Agawa Canyon fault was probably created by the Lake Superior rift which was active one billion years ago, setting up structures along the east coast. At that time the Agawa Canyon area was located near the equator. In spring, when the snows melt, and also after the autumn rains, awesome streams and falls cascade down the canyon walls, escaping into the endless rhythm of the waves.

When considering a canoe trip down the Agawa River, we were concerned about the MNR caution that the area was not maintained and was considered to be dangerous. We had visions of impossibly steep canyon walls and treacherous rapids. After extensive telephone discussions with other voyageurs and the MNR, we became reasonably confident that the river would be user friendly even in very high water. We were assured by the presence of the railroad close to the river.

The Agawa River is negotiable from Agawa Canyon to Highway 17, and can be accessed by taking the railroad from Frater to the canyon. On the Saturday that we started our trip, the train arrived about an hour late. There is a small camping location north of the visitor gardens at the canyon. From the 350-foot observation platform we saw a cute black bear cub pick up an apple-juice bottle. The view from the top of the canyon, with the surrounding panoramic autumn colors, was spectacular. A ribbon of water and a rising mist disappeared into a kaleidoscope of timeless fall foliage.

That afternoon we explored Agawa Canyon Park and were thrilled by Otter Slide Falls and Twin Black Beaver Falls, which gushed and roared down the canyon walls. Sunday morning we reverently meditated at Bridal Veil Falls. We pushed off at about 1 p.m. and the first rapid was a soaker. The river generally featured short rapids and easy take-outs, with no nasty dog legs or sweepers. The portage trails were marked with recent yellow signs.

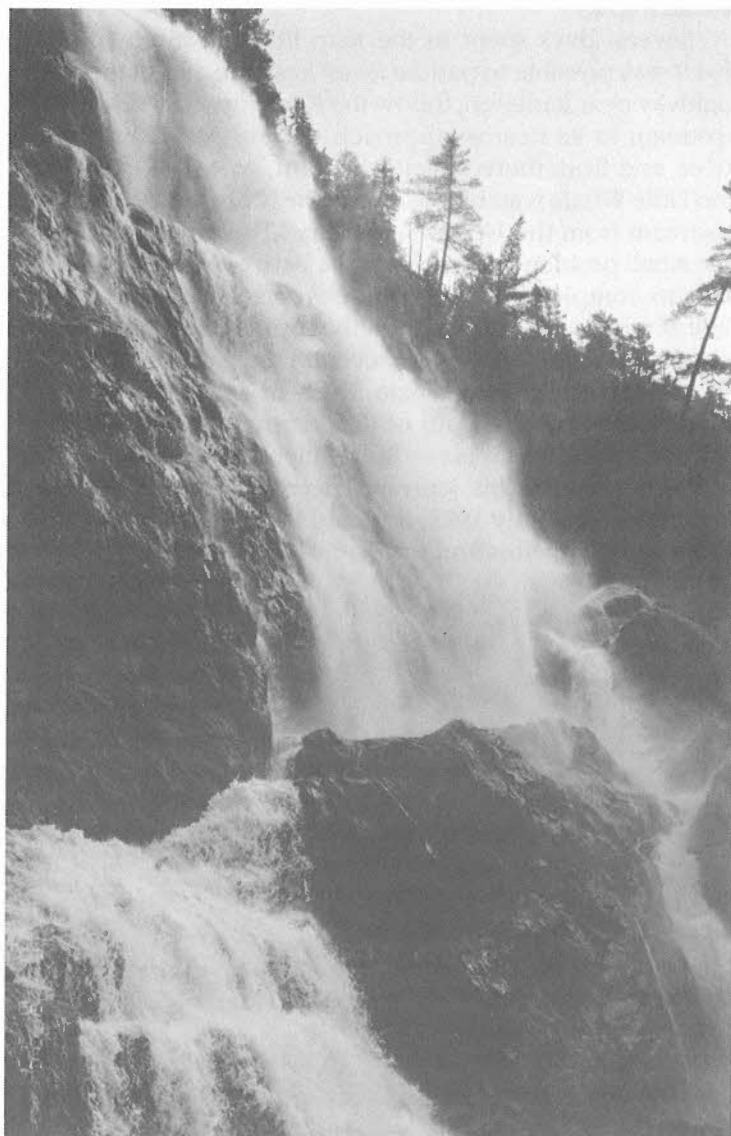
The rapids before the falls looked almost runnable, except for a terminal hydraulics, which is a Class 6 kayak challenge in high water. The 300-metre portage at "the dam" backtracks up the hill from the take-out. All of the portages were enjoyable and one or two offered steep inclines where the canoes could be loaded with gear and lowered by ropes.

Tragedies have occurred on this river from ignoring the first safe take-out above Agawa Falls. The water becomes deceptively Class 2-3 with a few mushroom boulders. The thunderous roar of the 26-metre falls is muffled by the sound of the rapids above it. It is easy to develop a heated argument that it would be folly to portage an extra 100 metres when the second portage

sign is easily visible in an eddy. I tucked my arm around a shivering young voyageur, holding on to him at the edge of the wet crevice for a better view of the tremendous falls. "I bet you're sure glad we portaged the extra 100 metres! Why, we even helped clear the trail for the next kids."

Sunday night we camped about half a kilometre below the falls. The run down to the road, for a late lunch, was swift-moving water with one or two Class 2 rapids. Whitewater enthusiasts run the five-kilometre gorge from above the canyon. In summer, the river dries up, and the section below the falls, where the riverbed widens approaching Lake Superior, requires a push-and-pull canoeing approach.

As a final remark: always double check your car keys. Luckily, Frater is only a six-kilometre walk from the take-out.



IN NORTHERN QUEBEC

Herb Pohl

Sometime during the winter of 1992/93, the illustrious George Luste, that tireless wilderness traveller and occasional bookseller, allowed me to glance at a book he thought might be of interest to me — *NORTHERN QUEBEC AND LABRADOR JOURNALS AND CORRESPONDENCE 1819-35*, published by the Hudson Bay Record Society. With bait like that I'm helpless and George knew it of course. What he did not know was that my wife was looking for a birthday present for me. So, unselfish and anxious to please as always, I played the intermediary and made both of them happy.

The inevitable consequence for me was a rekindled interest in the region north of Radisson, the northernmost town in Quebec with road access. In particular I wanted to visit the Upper Seal Lakes, cross from there to Clearwater Lake, then follow either the Caribou River or Rivière Du Nord to Richmond Gulf, and finish by paddling south along the coast to Great Whale (now Kuujjuarapik).

Several days spent in the map library confirmed that it was possible to paddle away from the end of the highway near Radisson, follow the Kanaaupscow River upstream to its nearest approach to the Great Whale River, and from there travel due north, past the Great and Little Whale watersheds to join the Nastapoca River upstream from the Upper Seal Lakes. There was only one small problem — it would take between 45 and 50 days to complete the trip, well beyond the length of time at my disposal. To shorten the trip I decided to fly into Lac Lenormand, one of several large lakes in the watershed of the Little Whale River. In an attempt to assuage the financial pain of this alternative I invited two other WCA members — Rob Butler and Mike Jones — to join me on this journey. From the start in the second week of July 1993, it would take us 28 days to cover 580 kilometres and traverse 44 portages.

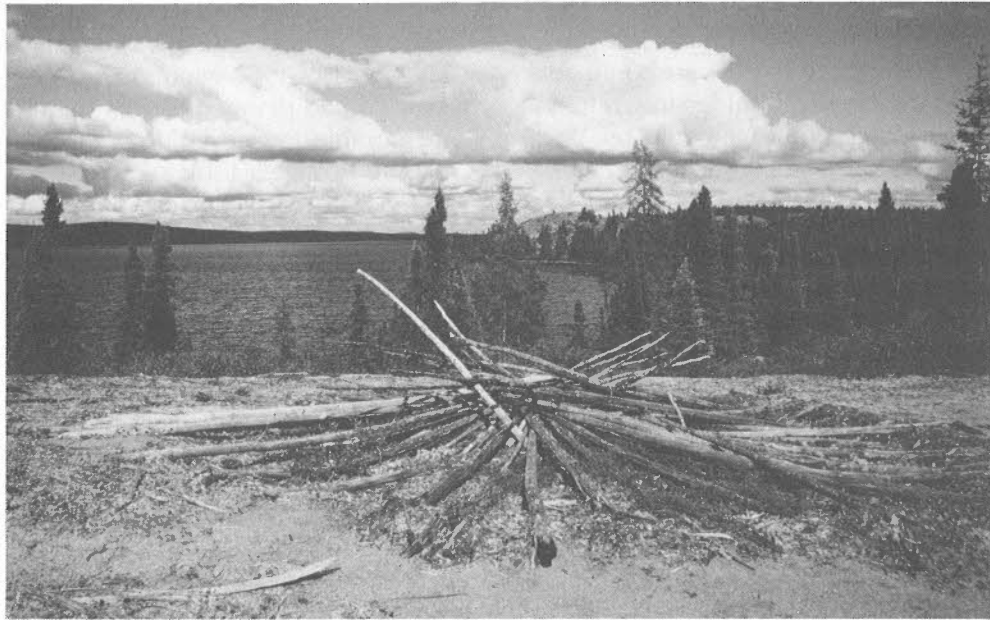
The two-hour flight from the seaplane anchorage of Air Wemindjii began in perfect sunshine. As we headed north across a vast expanse of drowned land — the storage basin of Hydro Quebec's LG 2 power complex — sunshine gave way to threatening clouds, strong turbulence, and rain squalls. Despite my conviction that our pilot was hopelessly lost among the uncertain outlines of hills and lakes, he put the plane down right on target at the base of a sandy esker. With leftover firewood from an old campsite nearby providing warmth, and a quickly erected rainshelter giving protection from the elements, we spent the rest of the day (once again) trying to sort and organize food and equipment into a manageable configuration.

For the next three days we paddled in a northeasterly direction through a region of open woodland and large lakes. Despite the presence of many outcrops of shield rock which rise up to 100 metres above their surroundings, the feeling is one of endless open space. The lakes we traversed are connected by short sections of flowing water which occasionally demanded a short portage or walking the canoe upstream. While paddling on Lac Saindon we unexpectedly found our upstream journey transformed into a downstream float towards Lac D'Iberville. Some of the Little Whale River headwaters apparently spill over into the Nastapoca River watershed.

Lac D'Iberville is bisected by an esker which starts as a massive pile of sand and gravel on the western edge of the lake and runs in ever-diminishing height towards the eastern shore. We arrived there just as the swirling mists evaporated in the morning sun. The combination of warm sun and gentle breeze, the shimmering waters of the lake speckled with tiny islands, and a kaleidoscope of colors was joy to the senses and balm to the soul.



A vast expanse of drowned land.



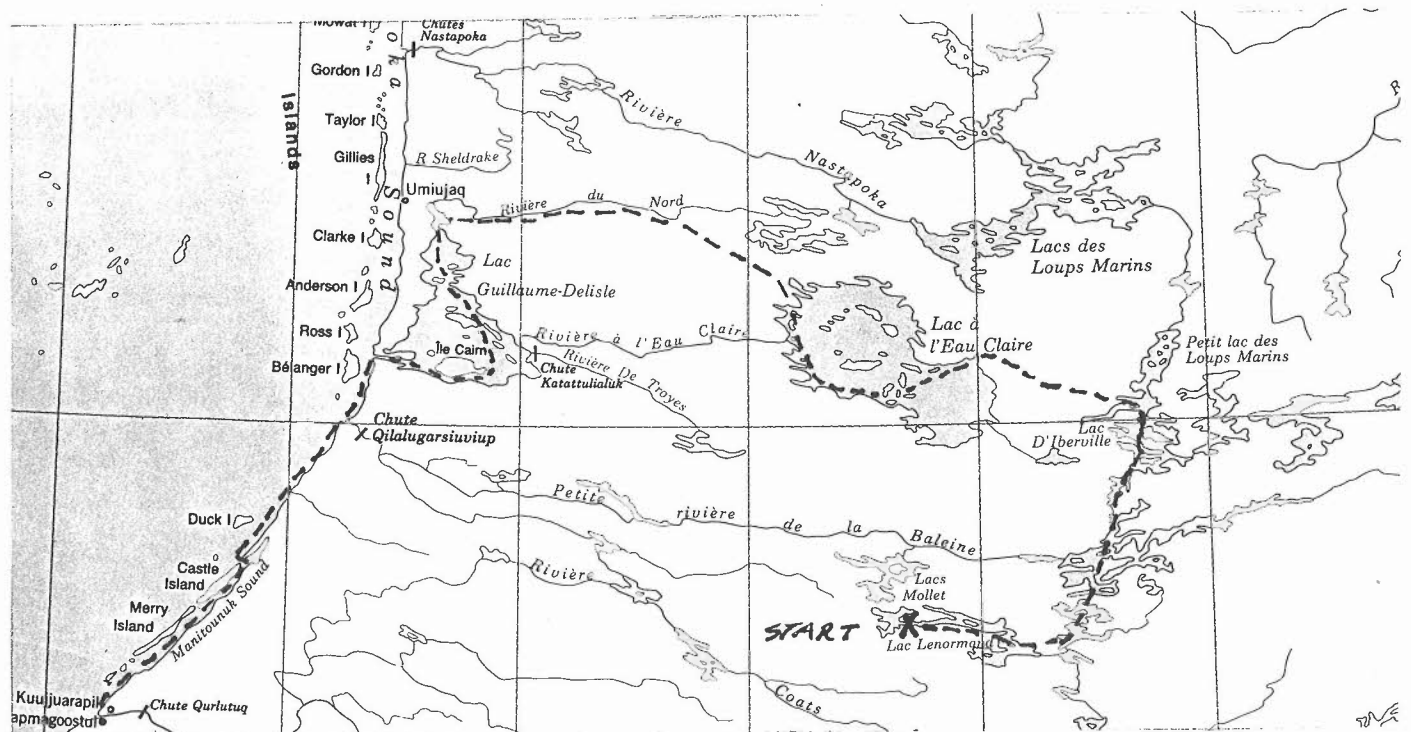
The remains of an old encampment.

That evening we stopped near the remains of an old encampment. The poles of a large teepee had collapsed inward but still showed that all the structural components had been carefully tied with split spruce roots. It must have been occupied for a considerable period of time as there were virtually no trees left in the immediate neighborhood even though the area in general was well wooded.

Early the next morning we launched our boats into Petit Lac des Loups Marins after a short carry past the rocky outflow of Lac D'Iberville and headed for one of the many high mounds of glacial till. Climbing to high ground and looking over the lay of the land is an

important and satisfying component of my outdoor experience, but this time there was a little more tension than usual associated with the process.

In 1820 James Clouston had passed through here on his way back to Hudson Bay from the Kaniapiskau River. In the course of his exploration of the region at the behest of the Hudson's Bay Company he produced a crude map which showed his route from the Upper Seal Lakes to Clearwater Lake. Since he was travelling in the company of a large group of natives, I presume that he was following a well-established track. It was my hope to find and follow that portage route to Clearwater Lake.



In spite of the short distance which separates Lac D'Iberville and the Upper Seal Lakes there is a pronounced change in the landscape — trees are confined to sheltered areas and the barren, boulderstrewn hills are higher. From our vantage point we could see the shallow treelined depression which conceals a creek which flows in from the northwest. I was confident this was the beginning of Clouston's overland route.

Our campsite that evening was a sombre place, bare, rocky desolation; and yet, in the last orange rays of the sun, it was wildly beautiful. Three long and sweaty days later we floated out into Clearwater Lake. All along we had seen absolutely no sign of anyone ever having travelled the same way. So much for my route-finding ability.



Portage from Seal Lakes to Clearwater Lake.

Clearwater Lake is a huge body of water which occupies the site of twin impact craters. The two halves of the lake are separated by a string of islands which rise 150-200 metres above water level. It's a place of extraordinary visual appeal — the bare, light-colored hilltops, the dark green seams of stunted trees in miniature valleys, the light green and unusually transparent water, the dramatic cloud patterns on the huge expanse of sky, all combine to awe the viewer.

Just as we entered the lake, a brief and violent rainsquall sent us ashore. A persistent breeze out of the northwest had us briefly wind-bound during our traverse of Clear-

water Lake but two days later we entered the long narrow channel which was the starting point of Craig Macdonald's 1987 winter trip (see *Nastawgan*, winter 1987). I had planned to visit the first campsite of that memorable journey, but at the end of a hard day's paddle nostalgia took a back seat to practicality. We opted instead to set up camp on a sandy beach, applied soap and water to skin and clothing, and basked in the sun.

The canoeist has several routes to choose from when travelling between Clearwater Lake and Richmond Gulf. The Hudson's Bay Company men used the Caribou River to travel upstream to Clearwater Lake but preferred to use the Clearwater River when going downstream. Another route, described by A. P. Low (G.S. report of 1888) which I had followed in 1990 uses in part Rivière de Troyes as the connecting link between the two bodies of water. Lastly, there is Rivière du Nord which has its origin in an unnamed lake a short distance from the north-western shore of Clearwater Lake and flows into the northern-most bay of Richmond Gulf. It became the river of choice, primarily because I could find no reference of anyone ever having travelled on it.

Two short carries brought us to the small lake which spawns Rivière du Nord. It was an exquisite, cloudless day and the sense of travelling in "unknown" territory added excitement to the venture. I was quite prepared for a day of wading and portaging, but we had only two short impassable stretches and a surprisingly strong flow of water immediately below the headwater lake before we entered into a plain



One of the bays of Clearwater Lake.

of low ridges of sand and gravel through which the river made its way westward in a series of long and narrow channels.

A fire some thirty or forty years ago had burned off most of the vegetative cover and new widely scattered trees were only now making a hesitant return. Successive river channels were separated from one another by outcrops of shield rock or boulders which required short lift-overs. The first camp on the river was set up on a sandy bay among a few weather-beaten tamaracks. Mike disappeared with the fishing rod and came back empty-handed but with a "the big one that got away" story. Except for a 15-centimetre trout which Rob snared the next evening, it was the closest my companions came to success at fishing on the whole trip.

During the night I woke to the sound of clacking hooves and the grunts of a large group of passing caribou. At daybreak only their tracks remained save for a solitary bull who observed us at close quarters while we broke camp. It was the only caribou we actually saw on the whole journey.



Increasing gradient of the river's descent.

With each succeeding day the gradient of the river's descent increased. By the end of the next day, gravel and sand had been replaced by boulders and rock, and lift-overs by portages of increasing length and difficulty. The river became more and more recessed and hills of bedrock more austere. Anyone not into wilderness travel would have found the landscape intimidating, but our frequent hikes to high ground only evoked a deep sense of joy at the scene before us.

Except for one very old teepee site about halfway down the river we came across no sign of human occupation. This added to the sense of adventure, as

the best route for each carry had to be "discovered," a process which occasionally required the needless expenditure of energy. To all these (imposed) challenges my companions rose without complaint.

The most memorable of these was a portage which was no more than 1.5 km long as the crow flies. It started with a steep ascent up an alder-clad embankment to more level ground above. To ease the process I cleared a route with my axe. After an exhausting scramble through more alders and willows we changed tactics and moved to higher ground still. Evening found us encamped a long way from a source of water but with a wonderful view of the river below, the roar of the rapids just a faint murmur, and the dark silhouettes of the western ramparts of Richmond Gulf painting the horizon. It took another half day to slash our way back down to the river.

It was enterprises like these which made me forget my preference for solitary travel. There is something reassuring about the grunts and heavy breathing of your companions when you yourself are laboring under a weighty load on the trail, and consoling to see their sweat-soaked, tired faces at the end of the day. It was nice, too, not to have to do all the chores by yourself every day. But there was one aspect of my companions which cast a pall on everything — it was the disproportionate distribution of blackflies. If I had been travelling alone I would have simply accepted the presence of this winged scourge as an unavoidable price which must be paid. But here I endured bloody discrimination — while I was constantly besieged and grievously wounded, my companions lived a charmed and essentially bug-free existence.

The last obstruction on Rivière du Nord is a 4.5-km long rapids with a drop of more than 80 metres. We didn't have to scout it to know it wasn't runnable. A close look at the map revealed a shorter portage route to Richmond Gulf through a gap in the rocks some distance south of the present channel which appears to have been the original outlet to the gulf. Two short portages brought us to the shore of the last freshwater lake where we set up our tents and made the obligatory hike to high ground from which we could observe the rugged landscape of Richmond Gulf.

The three-kilometre portage to saltwater the next morning was remarkably painless. Well-trodden game trails breached the dense jungle of vegetation at the base of the escarpment, then sloping bedrock made progress even easier. Only the last few hundred metres of willows posed an obstacle which required axe work. But there was, in the end, a disagreeable element — timing. There are extensive foreshore flats along parts of the eastern shore of Richmond Gulf and now the tide was going out. No matter how speedily we tried to return with the next load to the boat left at the water's edge, it required dragging across oozing, foul-smelling muck to catch up with the constantly receding waterline.

On our way south to the mouth of the Caribou



The last portage to the shore of Richmond Gulf.

River, we experienced one of the sudden blows for which Richmond Gulf is known. In minutes a strong westerly had rows of white-capped waves marching in a most disturbing manner. With a fractured rocky shoreline discouraging any attempt at landing, we were forced to ride the watery rollercoaster for an hour or more until the wind died as suddenly as it started. The next day, while approaching the narrows which separates Cairn Island from the south shore of Richmond Gulf, another sudden blast had us scramble ashore barely in time to observe the fury of the elements from the shelter of house-sized boulders.

Richmond Gulf is connected to Hudson Bay by a deep channel which is barely 100 metres wide in some places and for much of its three-kilometre length is bordered by vertical rock faces. Strong tidal currents give rise to considerable turbulence and early white travellers report that the natives preferred to portage rather than face the whims of the spirits which inhabit the place. Its name — Le Goulet — does little to reassure the traveller. Dominating the entrance to the channel from the east are the ramparts of the “Castle,” a rocky peninsula whose vertical walls rise nearly 400 metres into the sky. After a damp night and a fog-shrouded morning we approached this imposing place just as the emerging sun began to dissolve the mists. With it a dreary, monotone landscape was gradually thrown into sharp and colorful relief, and I into photographic improvidence.

Our passage through the channel to the wide horizon of Hudson Bay was entirely uneventful and did not warrant the nervous tension with which I approached the task. Once out on the Bay, a light westerly breeze was sufficient to create a confused slop which made paddling slow and tedious, and we went ashore at the first sandy bay which came equipped with clear running water and plenty of dry firewood.

The eastern shore of Hudson Bay all the way from the mouth of the Nastapoca River to the Great Whale River offers many attractive campsites, although most are exposed to the prevailing westerlies which can



The eastern shore of Hudson Bay.

make landing and launching in the waves interesting. One can be windbound for extended periods in bad weather, but we were fortunate and only had to put to shore for a few hours when the waves became too ominous. Evidence of human presence manifests itself in Inuit tent rings near the shore, Indian hunting camps further inland, and the accoutrements of western civilization everywhere — rubber boots, bits of plastic, empty oil cans, even disposable diapers.

We arrived at our last campsite before noon with the intention to have a good wash in privacy at the last creek before town. We quickly found out that privacy was to be in short supply. It was Sunday and half the population of Kuujjuarapik roared up in their ATVs to spend the day at their favorite picnic ground.

The return flight to La Grande the next day proved to have another surprise in store for us, this one much more appreciated: Canadian charged us only by weight for our boats, not volume. That saved us at least \$300; enough to put a smile on Rob's face on our flight back to La Grande.

REVIEWS

THE ASHLEY BOOK OF KNOTS. By Clifford W. Ashley. Doubleday, New York, 1944, 620 pp., illus. \$49.95.

KNOTCRAFT. The Practical And Entertaining Art Of Tying Knots. By Allan and Paulette Macfarlan. Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1967, 186 pp., illus. \$7.25.

SELF-WORKING ROPE MAGIC. 70 Foolproof Tricks. By Karl Fulves. Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1990, 148 pp., illus. \$8.00.

THE KNOTS PUZZLE BOOK. By Heather McLeay. Tarquin Publications, Stradbroke, Diss, Norfolk, 1994, 48 pp., illus. \$11.95.

Well, you've mastered the knotting board for klutzes, banished the rabbit down its hole behind the tree and you are ready to tackle something a bit more challenging. Here are four interesting books about knots and their properties that will keep you occupied for many a quiet evening.

The Doubleday reprint of **The Ashley Book of Knots** is perhaps the most exhaustive and technically correct book on the subject. Ashley describes 3,854 knots from a simple overhand knot to decorative marlingspike seamanship. Directions for tying each knot are precise and clearly illustrated. As well, Ashley outlines the history and usage of all the knots and, at the beginning of each chapter, provides interesting and often amusing quotations concerning knots. Due to its encyclopedic nature, this book is rather hefty -- not something to pack away in your tripping outfit -- and tedious to use. Someone looking up a simple overhand knot in the index, for example, faces no less than 22 entries. Nonetheless, **The Ashley Book of Knots** is well worth the investment for anyone seriously interested in knots.

Knotcraft/ The Practical And Entertaining Art Of Tying Knots is a handy and inexpensive little paperback. As the title suggests, the book includes general information on historical aspects of ropes and knots, natural and synthetic fibre ropes, knots, games, stunts, tricks and magic. While the book is easy to use and contains some interesting background information on ropes and knots, it is not without fault. Illustrations and directions for tying knots are not as clear as they might be and some information is not technically correct. The instructions on tracking canoes, for example, are cursory and do not mention the use of bridles. The discussion of synthetic ropes is dated and limited to polyethylene and nylon fibres. Of greatest interest perhaps, are the chapters on rope games and tricks. While most involve the use of a section of rope rather than knot tying, these games would add an entertaining element to any evening campfire or instructional session on knotting.

Rope tricks have long been part of the magician's repertoire. In **Self-Working Rope Magic**, one of several books on magic written by Karl Fulves, the author describes 70 "self-working" rope tricks, that is, tricks that do not require "unusual dexterity of long hours of practice." The book is arranged into 11 short chapters dealing with such specialties as tricks based on the overhand, slip and square knots, special effects, dissolving knots, cut-and-restored rope. Explanations are explicit and clearly illustrated.

The Knots Puzzle Book is an intriguing introduction to the mathematics of knots. Traditionally, knots have been classified into families of related knots according to their practical function -- knob knots, bends, hitches, etc. For the mathematician, however, knots are grouped into families according to their geometry or shape. In this short book, the author clearly defines such concepts as the crossover, endless knot, unknot, crossing number, prime and composite knots, and the "3-colour test". Interspersed throughout the text are 36 puzzles while at the end of the book is a listing of the 36 distinct prime knots that have crossing numbers of 8 or less. For those with a mathematical bent who wish to learn more about knot polynomials or n-colouring using modulo arithmetic, there is a short bibliography. **The Knots Puzzle Book** is an excellent handbook that ought to dispel any misgivings on the part of those who, like Samuel Johnson, feel that, "Knotting ought to be reckoned, in the scale of insignificance, next to mere idleness."

Submitted by Michael Kerwin

BOOKS

Due to the limited space in our journal (and because in the case of one of the books it just would not be appropriate), the following books are not reviewed in this issue; therefore only some basic information is presented.

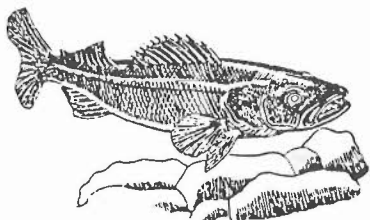
Canoeing Canada's Northwest Territories, edited by Mary McCreadie, published by the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, Hyde Park, Ont., 1995, softcover, 194 pages, \$21.95.

This is a detailed paddler's guide book offering a large amount of varied information on many northern rivers. The book presents maps, photographs, sources of information, transportation opportunities, outfitters, rentals, trip planning, weather, water levels, and more. Trip reports are included on the following rivers: Anderson, Back, Beaulieu, Burnside and Mara, Cameron, Coppermine, Hanbury/Thelon, Hood, Hornaday, Horton, Kazan, Mackenzie, Mountain, Natla/Keele, Slave, Snare, South Nahanni, Wecho, and Yellowknife.



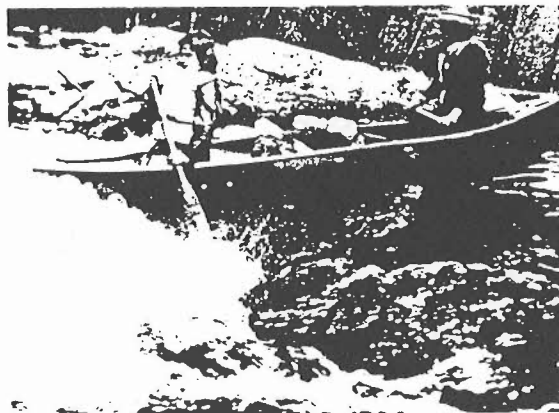
Canoescapes, by Bill Mason, published by Stoddart / Boston Mills Press, 1995, 160 pages, \$50.

This is the latest book with work by Bill Mason, presenting color reproductions of many of his paintings. (A review will be published in the next issue of *Nastawgan*.)



Superior: Journeys on an Island Sea, by Gary and Joanie McGuffin, published by Stoddart / Boston Mills Press, 1995, hardcover, 160 pages, \$50.

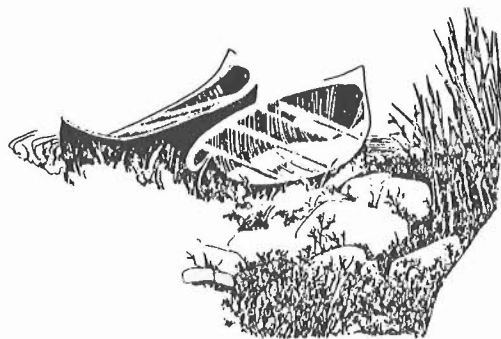
Full-color coffee table book with 140 photographs and extensive text recounting the couple's adventures and discoveries when making self-propelled journeys — by canoe and kayak, hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing — around the circumference of Lake Superior in all four seasons.



French River: Canoeing the River of the Stick-Wavers, by Toni Harting, published by Stoddart / Boston Mills Press, 1996, softcover, 160 pages, \$34.95.

The first book to document the exhilarating days of exploration, adventure, and trade on the French River system and to feature historic canoe routes and 44 recommended canoe trips for the modern canoeist. It presents about 100 illustrations including original color and black-and-white photographs as well as several historic maps and sketches by early travellers and twenty modern maps especially created for this book.

(See the announcement in the Products and Services section.)



Up the Creek: A Paddler's Guide to Ontario, by Kevin Callan, published by Stoddart / Boston Mills Press, 1996, softcover, 126 pages, \$16.95.

This is a collection of descriptions of canoe trips on 15 rivers and areas located along a broad band between the St. Lawrence River and Quetico Park (Frontenac, Mazinaw-Mississippi, Madawaska, Barron, Algonquin, Magnetawan, Wolf-Pickerel, French, Killarney, Spanish, Temagami, White, Upper Missinaibi, Quetico, Lake Superior). The book includes detailed information, photographs, maps, access points, outfitters, portage lengths, and advice on everything from running rapids to shuttle arrangements. The writer provides plenty of history and folklore as well as anecdotes of his encounters with wildlife, weather, and paddlers.

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.

22-23 June LOWER MADAWASKA

Tim Gill, (416) 447-2063, book before 12 June.

From Latchford Bridge to Griffith, a pool-and-drop run with an overnight camp on the river. Suitable for intermediate or experienced novices (all drops can be portaged). Limit six canoes.

22-23 June BUZZARD AND VIXEN LAKES

Bob Shortill, (705) 277-3538, book before 15 June.

The frequency of paddling visitors to these ruggedly beautiful, granite-ringed lakes just north of Peterborough has increased significantly over the past few years. While this means that more folks are enjoying the pleasure of the land, it also means they are overstressing campsites. This is a flatwater trip with two short and flat portages. We will explore the beauty of the lakes, and place some thunder boxes (toilets) at some of the more heavily used campsites. The plan is to have several plastic barrels that will have been cut in half to do the job. Need 6-8 WCA paddlers that want to help ensure we have clean campsites. Paddling skills not important but enthusiasm and concern for the environment a must. A bit of digging to set in the thunder boxes, then off for exploring, fishing, or relaxing in the sun. Limit five canoes.

29 June — 1 July TIM RIVER

Howard Sayles, (416) 921-5321, book before 20 June.

Three-day paddle on the Tim River. Enjoyable long weekend for those who enjoy a faster pace and who have the skills to manoeuvre a canoe through tight S-turns. We will search for old ranger cabins (turn of the century antiques) below Rosebary Lake. Limit three canoes.

29 June — 1 July OTTAWA RIVER

Harrison Jolly, (905) 689-1733, book before 22 June.

Large standing waves and steep drops characterize the Ottawa, the largest whitewater river in Southern Ontario. The Middle Channel with less water has several exciting pool-and-drop rapids, the Main Channel with more water can have very turbulent sections. McCoy Rapid, the first on the regular run, combines all of the flow and is a very serious rapid in high water. If the levels are still high, this is a trip for expert paddlers in fully outfitted boats only.

13-14 July MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE

Steve Bernet, (519) 837-8774, book before 6 July.

The Gull at Minden is a man-made whitewater course that can challenge the most experienced canoeist (if there is any water left this year). If there is high water this is a serious test of skills; however, those who wish to practise basic moving-water manoeuvres can paddle in the run-off at the bottom of the course. Limit six portable rigid watercraft. Helmets are required.

28-29 July RIVER RESCUE CLINIC PALMER RAPIDS

Bill Ness and WCA Outings Committee, (416) 321-3005, book immediately.

This clinic, which covers a variety of river rescue techniques, is sponsored by the 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 a book on river rescue techniques is recommended. All paddlers welcome.

28 July — 4 August (or 4-11 August — date flexible)

LAKE SUPERIOR, PUKASKWA TO WAWA

Gerry O'Farrell, (519) 822-8886, book as soon as possible.

A one-week trip along the scenic north shore of Superior. At least one day will be spent hiking. Book immediately so we can get together for planning. Limit four boats. Suitable for competent intermediates.

3-5 August GIBSON — McDONALD

Howard Sayles, (416) 921-5321, book before 25 July.

The Gibson-McDonald canoe route goes through approximately 35 miles of lakes, rivers, and creeks in the Georgian Bay area. Access to the route is from Highway 69. This is a nice three-day paddle. Canoeing the loop or not will depend on the group. Limit three canoes.

3-5 August OTTAWA RIVER

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

We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful private campsite on the river, right where we take out. On Saturday we will paddle the Middle Channel, on Sunday the Main Channel, and Monday the Middle again. Suitable for paddlers with intermediate whitewater skills who are prepared to portage if they choose to. We will scout most rapids. Boat floatation and helmets required. Limit six canoes.

24-25 August MISSISSAGUA RIVER

Bob Shortill, (705) 277-3538, book before 17 August.

Definitely not a whitewater trip. Wet suits and float bags are not required. However, this trip should appeal to whitewater enthusiasts. We will attempt to repair/rebuild two of the old rock rubble dams. These dams were built by the loggers to help them push the logs down the river to the saw mills near Buckhorn. These old dams still play a very important role in maintaining water levels in some parts of the river. But with every surge of the spring melt more of the rocks get pushed away. This is truly a picturesque little bit of river that is quite close to Toronto and well worth the effort to maintain. We went through in the fall putting up portage signs, cleaning campsites, and opening up portages. Come out and have fun throwing a few rocks around. A real rock-and-roll experience. Limit five canoes.

31 Aug. — 2 Sep. OTTAWA RIVER

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 22 August.

See previous description. Wet suits recommended.

31 Aug. — 2 Sep. FLATWATER CAMPING TRIP

Howard Sayles, (416) 921-5321, book before 22 August.

Route to be determined by group. Suitable for novices with some tripping experience. Limit three canoes.

8 September BURNT RIVER

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 1 September.

Between Kinmount and the village of Burnt River, the Burnt is a placid stretch of water with a few small riffles and a couple of larger scenic drops which are easily portaged. By this time of year there should be few bugs, but the water should still be

warm enough for swimming. This leisurely Sunday paddle makes an excellent family outing. Suitable for novices. Limit six canoes.

21 September **MARGARET LAKE LOOP**

Rob Butler, (416) 487-2282, call before 14 September.

This trip is in the Leslie Frost Cross Country Ski Area. The route starts at Wren Lake on Highway 35 south of Dorset and goes through eight lakes which are joined by easy portages. Good weather almost guaranteed. Limit four canoes.

22 September **MISSISSAGUA RIVER**

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 15 September.

The Mississagua River is a classic pool-and-drop run. The river is a series of Class 1 to Class 3 rapids separated by flat sections, and some scenic falls (Class 4-5). All major rapids can be easily portaged making the trip suitable for intermediates. The fall colors should be at their peak so bring a camera. Limit six cameras.

5 October **BIG CREEK**

Mike Jones, (905) 270-3256, book before 28 September.

Never been there before, should be fine fall colors on this placid river. Bird migration will be observed on this leisurely Saturday paddle. Limit six canoes.

12-14 October **PETAWAWA**

Tim Gill and Earl Silver, (416) 447-2063 or (416) 486-7402, book before 5 October.

Pumpkin pie on the Petawawa for this classic fall trip from Lake Traverse to Lake McManus. Some rapids, all can be portaged, most can be run by intermediate or better paddlers. Limit six turkeys.

26-27 October **UPPER MAGNETAWAN RIVER**

Tim Gill, (416) 447 — 2063, book before 20 October.

An exciting whitewater weekend on the Magnetawan, from Ahmic Lake to Wahwashkesh Lake. The upper section contains a series of Grade 2-3 rapids and some falls that must be portaged. Cold water equipment and floatation advantageous. Fit, intermediate whitewater paddlers should enjoy the challenge of this historic waterway. Limit five canoes.



ONE DAY ON THE GREAT WHALE RIVER

Came across my notes for our trip down the Great Whale River in northern Quebec. We canoed it from Lake Bienville to Kuujuaapik on Hudson Bay in July 1980. We picked the Great Whale for that year's wilderness canoe trip because it was one of the rivers scheduled to be damned in the James Bay project, and we wanted to see the river before it lost its wilderness character.

Looking at the notes for the day of 16 July 1980. Seems like a long time ago, but after reading the notes, it seems like yesterday. Made a promise in the notes that I'm trying to keep.

16 July 1980 Overriding impression today is the power of the river moving downstream. Big swells. Most dangerous that I have ever seen. Even when the river just rolls with no whitewater, you can feel it. The force of the water pushing you, like riding waves in an ocean. The river is confined between cliffs for long distances, so there are whirlpools everywhere. Not enough places for the water to go, so it just swirls. Stuck my finger in one whirlpool as we swept by. Just wanted to say hi.

Not so sure that I like these boils and whirlpools. Too much power there. Didn't come to fight. Just came to get back in touch with myself. To cleanse the body and soul and mind. Of fat. Junk food. Television. City thoughts. City thinking.

The feeling of danger on this river is very high. No lark travelling down it. Danger is not just in the powerful swells of foaming white. It's just there. On the cliffs. In the silence. With the wind. In the fast water. By the waterfalls.

It's as if the river is saying, "I'm strong. I know that I'm going to die soon, but this is what I am. Look deep now and never forget. We will never have a chance to talk again, you and I, so take it in now. Tell them this is how I was. There have been so few who have met me and they have not passed on the knowledge to many others. I know it is too late for me, but tell them. It will help make the coming years behind the dams easier to bear."

Told the river I would. It was the least that I could do.

Greg Went

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.

FRENCH RIVER BOOK Toni Harting's book, *French River: Canoeing the River of the Stick-Wavers*, is now available in the stores (see info on page 24). Save a few \$\$ by ordering directly from the author: CDN\$33 (no tax) if picked up, and ad \$4 if mailed (US\$26, plus US\$6 if mailed). 7 Walmer Road, Apt. 902, Toronto, M5R 2W8, tel. (416) 964-2495; fax (416) 922-4020.

FRENCH RIVER MAP The new and improved edition of the 1:50,000-scale map is now available, printed on water-proof/tearproof paper. Sales of the double-sided map — which costs \$14.00 (including tax) plus \$2.00 postage and handling — are primarily made through the Friends of French River Heritage Park, P.O. Box 142, Copper Cliff, Ont., P0M 1N0. I have a few maps available in Toronto for direct sale at \$14.00 when picked up or \$16.00 by mail; Toni Harting, (416) 964-2495.

CANOE SCHOOL Improve your canoe and kayak paddling skills. The Grand Canoe School runs ORCA accredited moving water and flat water canoe classes as well as OWWA accredited kayak courses, all in the Guelph area. The school also offers wilderness canoe trips throughout Ontario. For a brochure, please phone (519) 763-3394 or (416) 440-4208, or write to: The Grand Canoe School, 17A — 218 Silvercreek Parkway N., Suite 101, Guelph, Ont., N1H 8E8.

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.

TEMAGAMI Smoothwater Outfitters offers unique trips and courses, including Full Moon Canoe Trip, Storytelling Canoe Trip, Women's Quest by Canoe, Bush Survival and Primitive Skills. Also ORCA Canoe Tripping levels 1, 2, and 3 and Advanced Wilderness First Aid. For artists we have a line of art, craft, photo, and music workshops. We also specialize in canoe outfitting with our own line of dehydrated gourmet trip food. For our '96 brochure, contact Smoothwater Outfitters, Box 40, Temagami, ON, P0H 2H0; phone (705) 569-3539; fax (705) 569-2710.

CANOES FOR SALE 16' Tremblay cedar canoe with fibreglass cover, 15" depth, excellent secondary stability, \$600 or best offer. 15' Langford cedar canoe with fibreglass cover, 15" depth, excellent secondary stability, \$450 or best offer. Moving, must sell. R. Rodgers, (416) 982-8904 and (416) 423-0237.

FOR SALE New Perception saddle for whitewater boats; black plastic with airtight container, \$75. White Swift Winisk canoe, ultralight Kevlar, wood trim, as new; for sale or exchange for similarly equipped Kipawa. Les Palenik, 40 Alexis Rd., Thornhill, Ont., L3T 6Z9; tel. (905) 731-4276.

CANOE FOR SALE 16.5' Blue Hole Starburst, complete with straps, air bags, paddles; \$1000. Michael McMullen, RR#1, Barrie, Ont., L4M 4Y8; tel. (705) 721-7707.

NORTHERN BOOKS Used, scarce, and select new books on northern, arctic, Canadiana, wilderness, and canoeing topics. Write for new free catalog #14: Northern Books, Box 211, Station P, Toronto, Ont., M5S 2S7, or call (416) 531-8873 and leave a message.

SEAKAYAKING IN B.C. Three alternatives for exploring the thousands of islands along the main coasts across from Port McNeil on Vancouver Island: seakayaking from a sailboat which will visit different locations every day, seakayaking from a base camp on one of the islands, and touring the area by seakayak with daily changes of camping sites. Every alternative is a week duration. Small groups. Food, equipment, gear, everything supplied but your personal belongings and transportation to Port McNeil. Contact Silver Seas Adventure Tours, tel. 1-800-992-8687; Internet <http://www.com/vtourist/silver.html>

CANOE ROUTES ABSTRACTS Ashford Outdoor Media provide detailed canoe route information on Natla/Keele, Taltson, Geikie, and Porcupine Rivers, with more river abstracts in process. Information presented includes trip length and duration, logistics and access, air services and local contacts, listing of maps needed, UTM listing, info on special hazards, canoe and outfitting suggestions, weather and seasonal factors, wildlife and fishing observation, pacing background. Cost each US\$7. Contact Beth and Dave Buckley, 6478 Ashford Hollow Road, West Valley, NY 14171-9612, USA; tel. (716) 942-6631.

OUTER PLACES All-season wilderness adventures: whitewater canoeing, family canoe trips, lodge-to-lodge canoe trips, winter camping, and more are provided by Outer Places, your custom-service wilderness specialist. Contact us at RR#1, Keene, Ont., K0L 2G0; tel. (705) 295-6777; fax (705) 295-4109; E-mail: Outer_Places@oncomdis.on.ca

RAVEN EYE OUTFITTERS is located in Lynn Lake, Manitoba, and offers self-guided as well as guided trips for experienced and also less experienced travellers in many locations in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories. Contact us at PO Box 698, Lynn Lake, Manitoba, R0B 0W0; tel./fax (204) 356-2243.

Where it is ...



... in this issue

- 1. Westward Bound
- 6. Editorial
- 6. News Briefs
- 7. Thoughts Around a Smoky Fire
- 10. Letter to the Editor

- 10. Help Protect Our Past
- 11. Throwbag
- 11. Partners and Info Wanted
- 12. Déjà Vu
- 14. Canoeing Victoria Island
- 17. Agawa Canyon
- 18. In Northern Quebec

- 23. Reviews
- 24. Books
- 25. WCA Trips
- 26. One Day on the Great Whale River
- 27. Products and Services

WCA Postal Address:

P.O. Box 48022
 Davisville Postal Outlet
 1881 Yonge St.
 Toronto, Ontario M4S 3C6

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Earl Silver (Chairman)
 117 Sherwood Ave.
 Toronto, Ont., M4P 2A6
 (416) 486-7402

Paul Hamilton (Vice Chair.)
 Georgetown, Ont.
 (905) 877-8778

Pat Buttigieg
 Pickering, Ont.
 (905) 831-3554

Sharon Hackert
 Scarborough, Ont.
 (416) 438-7672

Mike Jones
 Mississauga, Ont.
 (905) 270-3256

Dan Rusciollelli
 Pickering, Ont.
 (905) 839-6004

WCA Contacts

SECRETARY
 Bill King
 45 Hi Mount Drive
 Willowdale, Ontario
 M2K 1X3
 (416) 223-4646

INFORMATION
 Herb Pohl
 480 Maple Ave., #113
 Burlington, Ontario
 L7S 1M4
 (905) 637-7632

WCA TRIPS

Bill Ness
 194 Placentia Blvd.
 Scarborough, Ont., M1S 4H4
 (416) 321-3005

JOURNAL EDITOR

Toni Harting
 7 Walmer Road, Apt. 902
 Toronto, Ontario M5R 2W8
 (416) 964-2495

TREASURER

Rob Butler
 Toronto, Ontario
 (416) 487-2282

MEMBERSHIP

Linda Lane
 Elora, Ontario
 (519) 846-2586

COMPUTER RECORDS

Cash Belden
 Toronto, Ontario
 (416) 925-3591

CONSERVATION

Richard Culpeper
 160 Wembley Drive
 Sudbury, Ontario
 P3E 1N2
 (705) 671-3343

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: _____

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.