nastawgan

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June 10. Great Slave Lake

"CANOEING" GREAT SLAVE LAKE IN JUNE

Article and photos: George Luste

It's always interesting and sometimes even exhilarating to try something new. The "new" this past summer was to canoe 400 kilometres of Great Slave Lake, from Yellowknife to Reliance, during spring break-up in June, then to paddle and portage north to the Arctic Ocean during July and August, and finally to return south to Yellowknife in late September or early October, when one could expect fresh snow on the ground.

That was the grand plan when George Grinnell and I shoved off into Great Slave Lake from the Yellowknife dock in our new, super-strong Russ Miller canoe on the warm and sunny afternoon of June 7th, 1996.

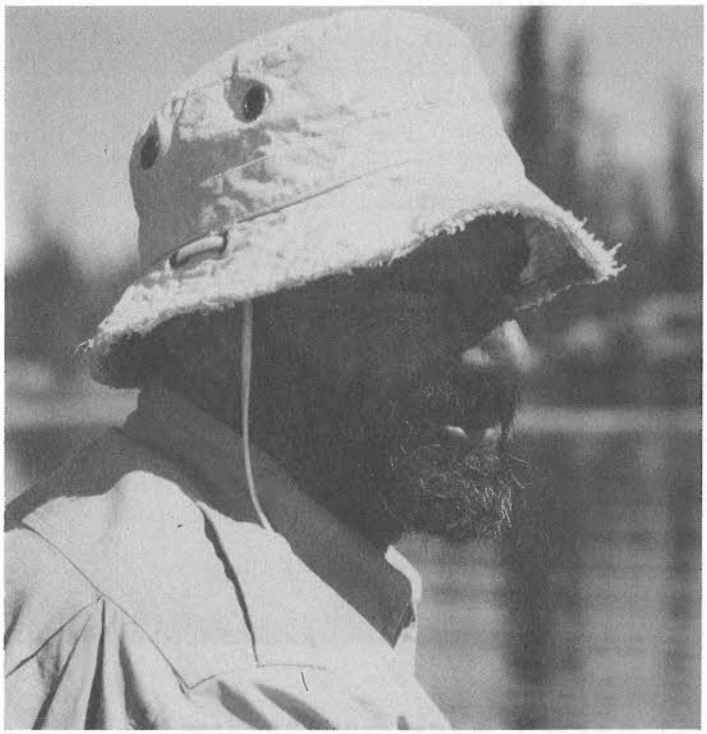
But the trip did not go as planned. Nine days after we had started, my partner collapsed, totally exhausted. (The breakdown apparently was caused by a bleeding ulcer.) Two days later he flew out from Plummer's Lodge at Taltheilet Narrows back to Yellowknife and convalescence. After a slight hesitation I continued on alone. On June 25th I reached Pike's Portage, at the east end of Great Slave Lake, continued north via Artillery, Clinton-Colden, and Aylmer Lakes, over to the Back River, over again to the Western River, and finally arrived at Bathurst Inlet Lodge on July 18th, some 1,050 canoe-kilometres from Yellowknife.

Three days later, and with fresh supplies, I continued westward along the arctic coast, and on the evening of August 4th arrived in Kugluktuk (formerly called Coppermine), my new end point. Before reaching Kugluktuk I had already decided to conclude my trip there — to not attempt the uphill route back south,

ascending the Coppermine River, portaging to Great Bear Lake, and returning via the Camsell and Marian Rivers to Great Slave Lake. It was a prudent decision, influenced in part by my concern for the approaching colder weather, being alone, and my homesickness for family.

The following article briefly describes the Great Slave Lake portion of the trip, or the first 19 days of my 59-day venture. The Great Slave Lake part was unique in that we were attempting it during spring break-up and I knew there would be much ice to deal with.

But first allow me to share some background information on the geography and history of the area, on our equipment and supplies, as well as some reflections on my state of mind and the topic of ice and "canoeing" across it.



George Grinnell

Geography

Great Slave is an alluring lake. I could easily spend several enjoyable summers paddling its shores and poking in and around its many islands and passages.

It is the second-largest lake lying entirely in Canada (after Great Bear Lake) and tenth largest in the world. The lake area comprises about 11,000 square miles (28,500 sq km). It is also the deepest lake in Canada, at 2,015 ft (614 m).

The great Mackenzie River begins its course to the Arctic Ocean where it drains the lake at the western extremity. The main discharge into the lake is the Slave River, near Fort Resolution, which carries the waters of the Peace River from the Rocky Mountains. Another main tributary from the south is the Hay River. Other rivers drain into it as well, including the Yellowknife, Snare, Marian, Emile, Beaulieu, Snowdrift, Taltson, and Lockhart.

The eastern end of the lake is the most varied I think, and so the most interesting. The south and east shores of the lake cut into the granite edge of the Canadian Shield. To the north and northeast the interior plateau is some 700 feet above the lake. Thus the drainage into Great Slave can be quite steep. Some years ago I had come down the 650-feet gorge of the Lockhart canyons in its 25-mile run from Artillery Lake to Great Slave (see *Nastawgan*, Summer 1987). In places the imposing interior plateau approaches to within a few miles of the lake, providing striking vertical cliffs. This pronounced edge is known as the McDonald Fault. Pethei Peninsula, which separates McLeod Bay from the main body and defines Taltheilet Narrows, is another fascinating place.

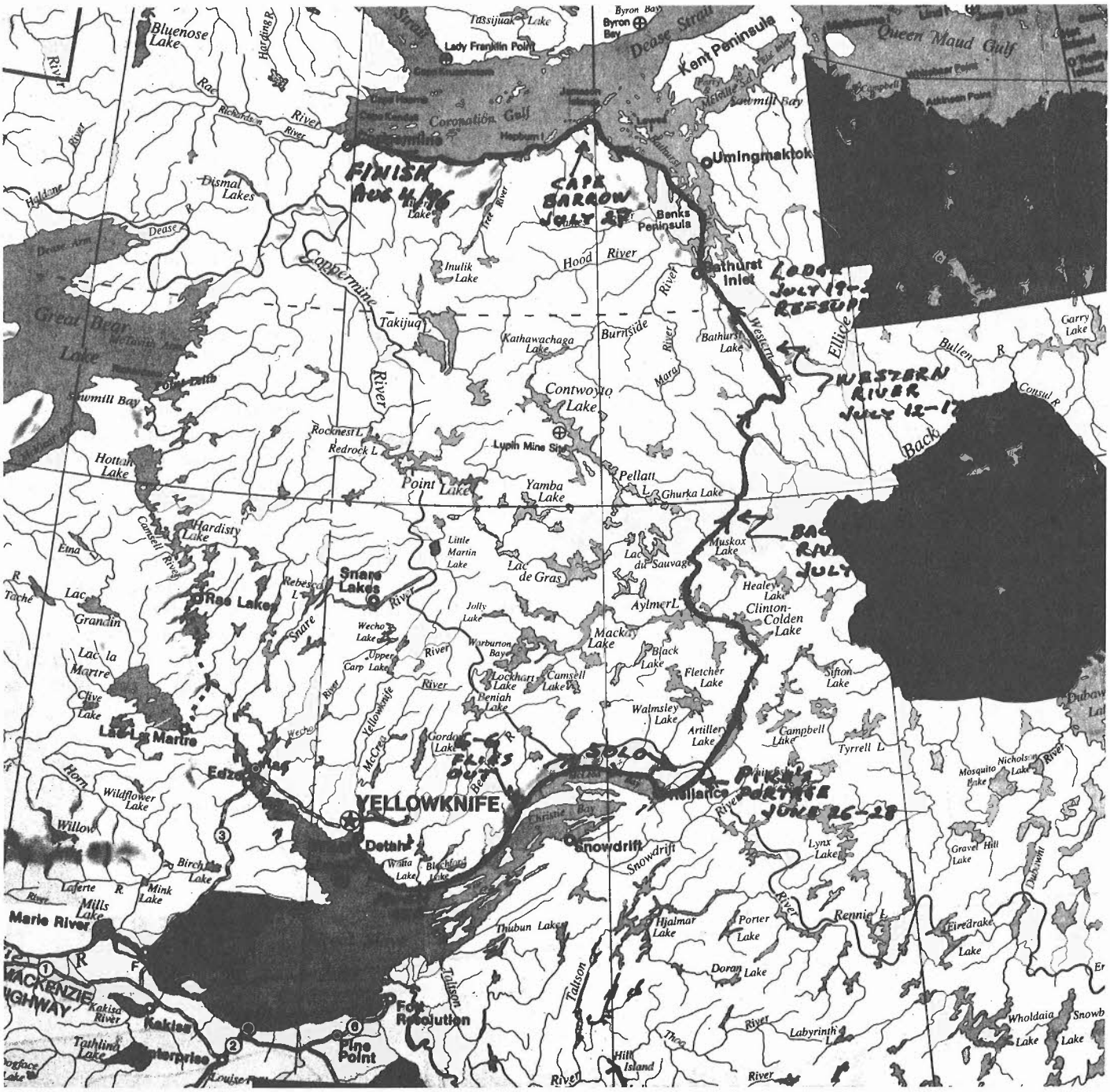
History

Samuel Hearne was the first white man to visit and see this general area. In 1770–72, he made his epic overland journey from Churchill on Hudson's Bay to Bloody Falls near the Arctic Ocean and back again. He first gazed on what we today call Great Slave Lake on December 24, 1771. He named it after the Slavey Indians, a major group of Athapaskan-speaking (or Dene) people living in the boreal forest region of the western Canadian Subarctic. Hearne's remarkable overland journey to the Arctic Ocean in a northwest direction demonstrated that there was no hope for a low-latitude North West Passage from the Atlantic to the Far East.

Following the formation of the North West Company, the exploration of the north accelerated. The fur trade, which began at this time, continued to dominate the economy of the area almost up to WW II. In 1786 the first trading post was established on Great Slave Lake, east of the Slave River delta. Soon after, people like Alexander Mackenzie (1789), Philip Turnor, Peter Fidler and Malcolm Ross (1791) visited the area.

John Franklin came in 1820 with his officers; John Richardson, George Back, and Robert Hood. The latter died during the trek back south from the Arctic Ocean and the other three barely survived. In 1833 George Back returned to search for John Ross' missing expedition in the high arctic and during the next summer descended the river that now bears his name, but was then known as the Thlew-ee-choh, or the Great Fish River. His survey maps of the river remained the only ones available up to 1948. My own solo journey followed much of Back's route down to Beechy Lake. I arrived at Beechy Lake on July 9th, while Back was there on July 13th.

After the third Franklin expedition to the Arctic (1845–47) went missing, many water and some land searches were mounted over the following 33 years. Of particular interest to me was the almost unknown one by James Anderson, an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company. He started from Fort Resolution, crossed Great Slave Lake, descended the Back River, searched the Chantrey Inlet area, and returned. To my mind, that was an exceptional travel feat for one season and for



that day. They too had to deal with much ice in June. Unfortunately, today the only public account of this venture is found in the Canadian Field-Naturalist magazines of May 1940 through to March 1941. But it is my understanding that Professor Barr at the University of Saskatchewan is presently editing Anderson's journals and they should be available in the near future.

Anderson actually started from Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie River on May 28th, 1855, with two canoes and 10 men. It was June 20th when he finally reached Fort Resolution on the south shore of Great Slave Lake, only some 310 miles from his start at Simpson. On June 28th he camped at the NE end of Taltheilet Narrows (a strait which does not freeze during the winter). By July 11 he reached the Back River and on July 16 was at Beechy Lake. The Arctic Ocean was reached on July 30 and a month later, on September 3rd, he was back in Fort Simpson.

The more common ascent today from Great Slave Lake into the Barrens is just east of the Lockhart River. This portage route to Artillery Lake was first described by Warburton Pike in his journey of 1890. It is now referred to as Pike's Portage. Anderson had used "Mountain Portage," further west, to get to the Barrens.

Pike reached Beechy Lake on the Back River on July 23rd and he did not continue north to the Arctic Ocean.

Many other individuals came in the ensuing years; people like Munn, J. W. Tyrrell, Preble, Hanbury, Radford and Street, Camsell, Hornby, Blanchet, etc. (Space limitations do not allow to elaborate here.)

In 1899 Robert Bell had conducted the first survey of the area and described its mineral potential, but only in 1934 was gold discovered. Next year the town of Yellowknife was established and in 1960 the all-weather road was completed.

June 10. Setting up camp on the ice

Background Reflections

The genesis for this trip with George Grinnell to the Arctic Ocean and back can be traced to his own tragic experience in 1955 on the Dubawnt River with Arthur Moffatt. After the January 1995 WCA Symposium he undertook to write the story of that event and I agreed to help publish it. During the course of the many faxes we exchanged while *A Death on the Barrens* was being written, the notion of canoeing in the Barrens together slowly emerged. While George had been on other canoe and kayak trips since 1955 and had hiked further north, on Baffin Island, he had never revisited the Barrens or canoed there since 1955. Going back into the Barrens appealed to him — and going north with him appealed to me.

I turned 56 this past August and George Grinnell is some six years older. Both of us are conscious of our slowly diminishing stamina. Thus it seemed best we do something like this sooner rather than later. While I am still in relatively good health, I no longer have the energy or recovery power of my youth, and during the winter I tend to put on weight and become flabby. The only compensating factor is that perhaps I am a bit wiser and more experienced than I was twenty years ago.

So today I am more apprehensive about getting myself into dangerous and extreme situations. As I age I have become more conservative, more careful, in what I commit myself to. I no longer possess the physical resources of a younger me, and I try to use my experience, and "an ounce of prevention" instead of relying on quick reflexes and pure strength as a "pound of cure."

I am still a good "plodder," however. I can put one foot in front of the other on a long steady grind on a good portage trail — but I no longer have the agility to skip across wet rocks while carrying a canoe. I no longer want to test my survival ability by running an intimidating rapid. I no longer care to be as casual in expending my energies in futile efforts. And so today I am more inclined to paddle long hours on a calm day or evening and not paddle at all if the weather looks unstable and threatening. I'm more inclined to stop early at the end of a normal day if faced with a rapid, or the possibility of a dump, or even the need to make a marginal decision late in the day. I have convinced myself that plodding is alright when tired. Dealing with risk is not.

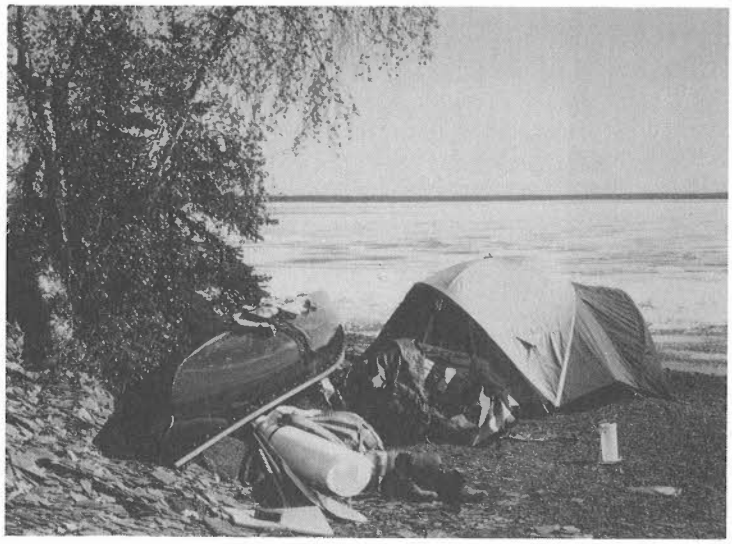
Thus I have come to embrace a varied and flexible paddling schedule on my long trips. There are advantages to doing so. One expends less energy for the same distance and I think it makes for a safer overall trip. But it also means that one is faced with more decisions and uncertainty about when to stop and start than a rigid nine-to-five routine implies. Perhaps if the conditions are stable, then a schedule makes sense. If the conditions vary considerably, then a varied schedule is preferred.

June 12. Lining with ropes along the shore

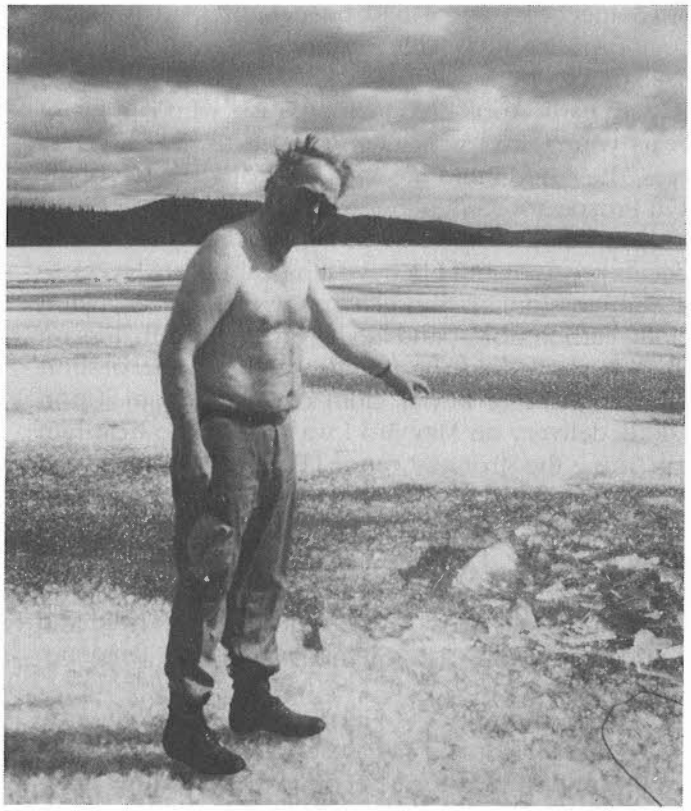
June canoeing and ice

In terms of weather alone, I think that perhaps the best time in the far north or sub-arctic for canoeing would be May, June, July, and perhaps the first half of August. The problem of course is that in the Arctic most of the water is still in its solid state during May and June. The larger lakes in particular will be the last to melt and therefore are the limiting factor in extending the paddling season into June. But the sun is warm, the air is crisp and fresh, and the black flies and mosquitoes are minimal or non-existent that early in the season. In terms of weather it is the ideal time to enjoy the north. The summer solstice, the longest day of the year in the northern regions, is on June 21. Thereafter begins the slow swing back to more and more night and eventually to maximum darkness and the cold grip of winter. Thus the conundrum. The ice-free months of late August and September are not the ideal months for weather or the blessed warmth of the sun. Unfortunately much of the best weather is consumed in melting the winter ice.

What to do? Why not try and extend "canoeing" into June? Why not travel across the solid surface of a frozen lake pulling a canoe? The going can be easy, (given the right ice conditions) and the route is of course flat. In fact I believe the risks for any serious mishap in such travel are minimal. At least they are less than the risks of paddling in late August or September. On the ice, the canoe is an island of security and safety, only an arms length away, should the ice turn rotten and fail. And there is little chance of being overwhelmed and swamped by waves on a frozen lake. Waves, in my opinion, are a far more threatening risk in open water than a brief swim in icy waters next to a canoe on a warm sunny day in June. That is not to say that there are no problems in traversing frozen lakes in June. As my narrative will attest, there are new and unique problems. A minor one is that it requires more effort to drag a laden canoe across ice and slush than to paddle it in open water.



June 13. A fine campsite but impassible ice



June 13. Author pointing to swimming hole

Historical and traditional canoe travel did not embrace traversing frozen or semi-frozen lakes at break-up. But that was an era of fragile birch-bark or canvas-covered canoes. Such traditional materials would not stand up to the extended abrasion of solid ice or repeated impact with it. Modern plastics and aluminum will. Therein lies the key difference between what was possible back then and what is possible today.

But even water will wear down solid granite if given enough time. Thus I was concerned that prolonged dragging of a loaded plastic canoe the 400-kilometre length of Great Slave Lake might wear away its bottom. As an insurance policy I brought along a 4' x 8' sheet of thin polyethelene plastic to drape around the bottom in case we began to wear away the canoe material. It rolled into a managable size. But this precaution proved unnecessary. It was my later running of shallow rapids and dragging across rocks that scraped most of the material off the canoe bottom, not the ice on Great Slave Lake.

The Canoe and Food

Early in the planning for the trip I had decided that my tried and trusty old 18-ft Grumman was too shallow and too small. It did not have enough carrying capacity for seven weeks of food for two people. It is quite shallow and I like my spray cover to snap flat across the gunnels, not bulge with a heap of gear above the gunnels. This self-imposed constraint is a nuisance at times but provides for a lower and safer centre of gravity and minimizes wind resistance.

Some years ago I had been impressed with the large-capacity Russ Miller canoe that Karl Hartwick used on our 1982 Wakwayowkastic River trip to James Bay. In early April 1996 I called Russ, who is now 79 years young, and was most relieved to hear him say "yes," he could build me a super-strong version of his 17ft Prospector design in four weeks. And he did.

I'm not an expert in describing his construction details precisely but I believe it had about six layers — a combination of fibreglass, polyester cloth, nylon cloth, carbon fibres, and kevlar on the bottom, less on the sides. In addition he added an extra number of short and long ribs of kevlar cloth over Styrofoam. Upon taking delivery on May 3rd I was pleased to hear him say "this is the strongest canoe I have ever made." Total weight was in the area of 75 pounds. By the end of the summer I was talking to it like an old and dependable friend. I liked it. I trusted it. It may not have the fastest lines around but for sturdiness and all-round comfort — an important consideration for my 56-year-old and 240-pound body — it is a remarkable canoe. I'm grateful to Russ.

Our food was packed in three lots. One lot for the start, another for the first resupply at Bathurst Inlet Lodge, and a third for a second resupply in Coppermine. The boxes for the two resupplies were left with Boyd Warner at Bathurst Services in Yellowknife. There was a bit more than four pounds of food per day for both of us. Thus in total we had over 400 pounds of food for the trip. The breakfasts and suppers were packed into daily rations. I always try to do this beforehand, as it minimizes uncertainty about consumption rates and reserves during the trip. It also minimizes fussing-about with food during the trip and so leaves more time to hike or to enjoy the wondrous landscape. We had a fishing rod but no guns. I did bring my bear-guard pepper spray and a small EPIRB unit as an emergency rescue beacon of last resort. Fortunately neither had to be used.

The Trip across Great Slave Lake

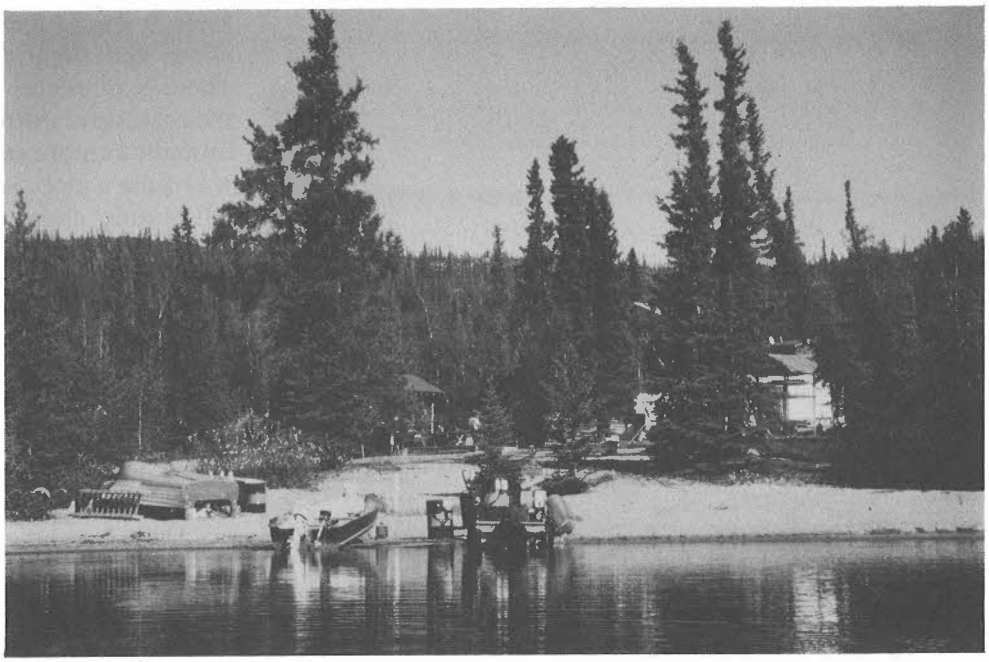
Day 1 — June 7 — 15 km (all distances from Yellowknife): The canoe packing was disorganized on this our first day in the water. We had too many loose items. A short paddle south from the dock in Yellowknife to the start of ice in Yellowknife Bay on Great Slave Lake. Camped at 6:30 p.m. on an island. Good weather and feeling great to be back in the north and in a canoe again.

Day 2 — June 8 — 40 km: Paddled south and east, along the inshore side of the many islands hereabouts — there was more open water there. After lunch we ran into some bad ice in an open bay. It was difficult to paddle through it but not strong enough to stand or sledge on. Camped 5 p.m. on a point a short distance further along, amongst the Jackfish Islands.

Day 3 — June 9 — 72 km: Away by 8 a.m. but had to come back a few hours later when we realized we had not packed the tent bag in the canoe. Most embarrassing. Some easy shore ice that could be rammed through. Lunch on an island near a tree with an active eagle's nest. A fine day. Camped near Matonabee Point at 6:15 p.m.

Day 4 — June 10 — 105 km: After Gros Cap we turned east into Hearne Channel and the ice became more extensive and solid. Along the exposed rocky shoreline we had to pull the canoe by hand over the ice jams from shore using ropes. Slow going. Once we reached the Caribou Islands the ice was thick enough to start our "sledging." A hot sun and much intense glare off the ice beat down on us. We completely covered our faces and everything else for protection. With me in front and George behind we pulled/pushed our way along the ice at a fair clip on the hard, white crust. That evening we camped right on the ice itself at 7 p.m. about a kilometre from shore. Could find no wood on the ice so cooked with our gas stove.

June 14. Ice ready to go



June 24. Olesen's Hoarefrost River homestead

Day 5 — June 11 — 139 km: Started hauling along the ice again at 7:30 a.m., this time using the polyethylene pad under the canoe to protect it. It is of marginal value. In crossing Francois Bay we ran into some bad ice. At one point we had to race across 100 yards of ice so rotten our feet broke through the ice on every step, pulling and pushing, and not daring to stop. After lunch, in passing large Blanchet Island, we headed closer to shore and returned to paddling along the open lead next to shore. Camped on an ice-chocked point at 6:45 p.m.

Day 6 — June 12 — 170 km: The initial going along the ice-packed shore was slow. It improved after McKinley Point and we had lunch in a small bay, on top of a high rock. After lunch we continued paddling, lining, ice-breaking, skating, and walking across the ice. Camped at 7:30 p.m. on a small island between Narrow Island and the shore. The ice was moving to and fro in our channel.

Day 7 — June 13 — 192 km (actually at 182 km from Yellowknife — there is a map notation error): Slow going with the ice a major hindrance. Some paddling, with some skating/racing across marginal ice. I fell through while hauling in front at one point. Totally soaked but it was a warm day and no harm was done. In fact I felt refreshed and re-invigorated by the dunk. The ice was pretty broken-up in this area. Stopped at 2 p.m., just after lunch, camped on a shale-covered point, next to a small bay, across from distant Etthen Island. The shoreline has a vertical rock face, with loose piles of pressure ice at the foot and there was rotten, tight ice further offshore, which we tried but could not paddle through. There seemed little we could do but wait. An attractive tiny bay, with the remains of a fishing camp at its head and even a small, old grave, were explored. (Later I heard there once was a small mine inland.) A chipmunk chewed up our lunch pack and got some bread.

Day 8 — June 14 — 192 km: Same campsite. In the morning we broke camp and tried to haul via ropes around the loose shore-ice and when that failed, to paddle through the thick rotten-ice, but to no avail. We retreated back to camp, to look for some alternative. We took an extended afternoon hike along the shore. There was bad ice as far as we could see. That evening the ice began to move and it looked hopeful.

Day 9 — June 15 — 224 km: There was a breeze and the ice was moving southwest. It looked clear ahead. We managed to reach a small island only a mile from our campsite before the wind stopped us. George seemed quite exhausted. We stayed here for two and a half hours, resting, and then paddled on, with the full spray cover over the canoe to keep out the water. Lunch at Sachowia point and then a steady paddle until 7:30 p.m., camping a few miles south of Taltheilet Narrows. The afternoon and evening were calm. George collapsed while setting up the tent. This was quite alarming for me.

Day 10 — June 16 — 235 km: George and I had a long chat in the morning and we were in no hurry to get away. He feared he had a bleeding ulcer. We then slowly paddled to Plummer's Lodge at the Narrows. The season had not opened yet and the staff were most friendly to us. We were invited in to have lunch. George had no appetite but I enjoyed it immensely. After lunch I paddled George and myself a few miles further north along Pethei Peninsula and we camped at 2 p.m. within sight of a massive, white ice-field, stretching as far as the eye could see northward into McLeod Bay. George immediately crawled into the sack and passed out.

June 25. Start of Pike's Portage

Day 11 — June 17 — 235 km: Same campsite. George slept most of the day and had no interest in eating. It was chilly and wet until the afternoon, when it cleared. I washed and did some laundry and wondered what we could or should do about the situation.

Day 12 — June 18 — 235 km: After more discussion in the morning, George and I agreed that it was best for him to fly out from Plummer's. Ahead of us was more ice, much uncertainty, and then Pike's Portage up to the height of land. It would not be easy. George was quite certain by now he had a bleeding ulcer and from past experience knew he would be weak for two months or more. We paddled back to Plummer's and on arriving, by lucky coincidence, within 15 minutes of landing George was on an Otter flying back to Yellowknife. It was a bit windy for solo paddling and I moped about and spent the day exploring the Lodge area. There is an interesting old Chipewayan cemetery near the east end of the runway. Late in the afternoon a DC-3 brought in more staff from the other camps and there was quite a mob. Supper was a superb chicken roast. I left shortly after. With the wind and current in the narrows against me, I barely managed to get away. An hour later I landed on a granite ledge at 9:15 p.m., on the north shore, as the wind and waves picked up. It was a great campsite, but I felt very alone and despondent. It would take a few days to get used to being alone. I started my journal writing in earnest, as it would be my lone friend and companion in the days ahead.

Day 13 — June 19 — 258 km: I was determined to work myself hard physically to keep from becoming depressed about being alone. Away against the wind, I reached the offshore island and started to line along its shore, yard by yard over the bad ice. At the north end of the island I found strong ice heading NW and began to haul the canoe on top of it, being careful to be within hand reach of the canoe at all times as I did so. This was easier, more steady work than lining along a rocky, irregular shoreline. I had lunch on the ice. Then more hauling, some paddling, hauling, lining, etc. over and over again. The lining was depressing when I had to laboriously circumnavigate some bay, which would only take a few minutes to paddle in open, calm water. I stopped at 8:30 p.m., camped on a ledge across from Sosan Island. Quite pleased with progress on my first day alone, given the travelling conditions.

Day 14 — June 20 — 283 km: A twelve-hour day on the ice and water. Being alone added considerable overhead in making or breaking camp, cooking on a fire, and moving the canoe. Much lining, being stuck

July 4. Wind-bound at north end of Aylmer Lake

on rocks, mushy ice in places, etc. At times I raced across ice pans that sank as I passed over them. But I made 25 km and was pleased. My journal entry, at 10 p.m., reads: "I shall be in real good shape if I can keep up the work output."

Day 15 — June 21 — 310 km: The 6 a.m. entry reads: "I'm sore, my knees ache, my fingers ache and I'm truly doubtful about why I'm here. It is 44 deg F inside the tent. The ice conditions continue to look grim." Luck was with me, however, as I found a big lead of open water most of the way across Thompson Landing Bay. Other spots were quite messy and slow. At times it became very discouraging. One new technique I employed was to sit facing forward in the front seat and to use the bow of the canoe as a ramming wedge to push apart ice floes in front. I don't think canoes are designed for this activity. Being close to the ramming end of the canoe I could also hop out or use my feet on the ice to push. Normally, when paddling in open water, I sit backwards in the bow seat facing the stern, with as much weight as possible away from me, at the other end, to balance the canoe. My canoe has only two thwarts, one in the middle and one in front of the stern seat, and none in the bow section. Thus I have the freedom to sit "backwards" comfortably in the bow seat and paddle solo. But it is a large canoe for solo paddling, very prone to being pushed sideways by the wind.

Day 16 — June 22 — 330 km: By lunchtime, after 5 hours of strenuous work, I had only made 5 km of forward progress. This was very discouraging. Early in the morning I fell through the ice, trying to drag the canoe across some bad ice. I hauled myself out of the cold water along the gunnel and then crawled along the canoe to the other end, where the ice was strong enough to stand on. I was most worried about getting the full length of the canoe stuck in bad ice. If only one end was in bad ice I could manage. But the cold swim gave me something to think about and reminded me that I had to be very careful. By the afternoon conditions improved, in particular after the Barnston River. At this point the shoreline is heading due east. I stopped at 7:30 p.m. near Bigstone Point.

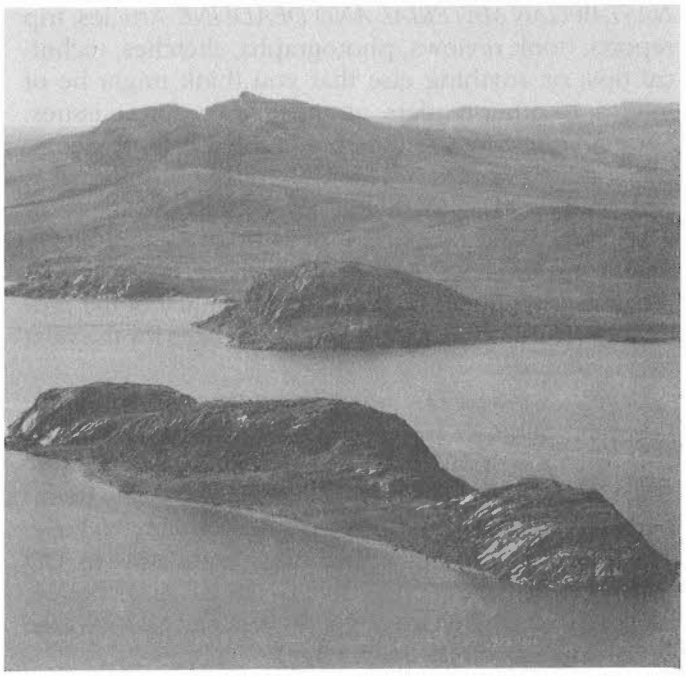
Day 17 — June 23 — 370 km: I was away by 7:45 a.m. and it was an ideal day, calm and warm. Much more "blue water" surrounded me amongst the ice pans and by mid-morning I had no more ice problems. By early evening I was at the Hoarfrost River homestead of Dave and Kristen Olesen. As I paddled in Dave flew over me in his Husky, going off for evening "work" for some mining camps north of us. Kristen and Andy, an exploration geologist who was based here for the summer, and some 35 hungry husky dogs howling for supper welcomed me. A great feeling to be here and to see people again.

Day 18 — June 24 — 370 km: Still at the Olesen's. What a wonderful and relaxing day it was. Great weather, great scenery, great company, great hospitality, great sauna, etc. ... I reorganized my packs and left a box of superfluous food for the Olesen's. I assumed a generous 35 days of food would

be ample to reach Bathurst Inlet Lodge and my next resupply point.

Day 19 — June 25 — 405 km: An easy relaxing day. I paddled over to Reliance in a lazy arc across open water — it was dead calm. Roger, the trapper, was away and so I missed meeting him for the second time. It reminded me of our trip some years ago from Wollaston Lake to Great Slave when we came down the Lockhart River from Artillery. I stopped at the Lodge and left a small pack of unnecessary items to be flown back to Yellowknife when convenient. I was down to three heavy loads for the portaging to Artillery Lake, which was some 35 km away via Pike's Portage and about 665 feet higher in elevation. Camped at the start of Pike's Portage. It will be a slow, tough haul for me, with all my gear, up to the Barrens.

Days 20 – 41: the Barrens



July 19. Bathurst Inlet

Day 42 — July 18: I reached Bathurst Inlet Lodge on the Arctic Ocean, not having seen a person since leaving Great Slave Lake, some 23 days earlier.

Day 59 — August 4: Late in the evening, and with a storm coming in, I reached Kugluktuk (Coppermine), some 1,550 canoe-kilometres from Yellowknife. I quickly set up the tent and got inside, feeling relaxed, relieved, and already a bit despondent. My wilderness canoeing was over for another summer.

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The WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization made up of individuals interested in wilderness travel, mainly by canoe and kayak, but also including backpacking and winter trips on both skis and snowshoes. The club publishes a quarterly journal, *Nastawgan*, to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas of interest to wilderness travellers, organizes an extensive program of trips for members, runs a few basic workshops, and is involved in environmental issues relevant to wilderness canoeing.

EDITORIAL

My thanks to those members who so quickly responded to my plea for material and submitted some fine articles. Many of these appear in this issue or will be published in later issues of *Nastawgan*. Please keep up the good work and send me your stories and other material; only *your* contributions will ensure a healthy future for our journal.

NEWS BRIEFS

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

issue:		*deadline date*:
Spring 1997		26 January
Summer 1997		27 April

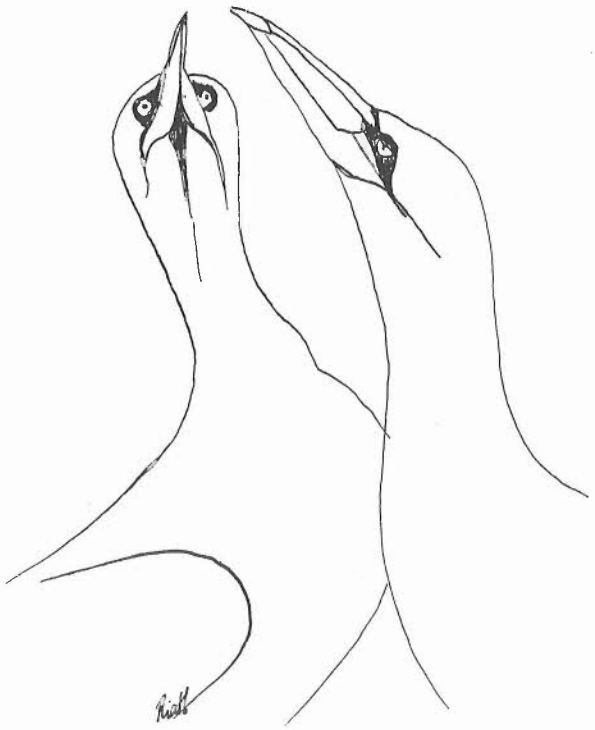
WCA MEMBERSHIP LISTS are available to any members who wish one for personal, non-commercial use. The list can be ordered as hardcopy or on a 3½ in. DD computer diskette. Send a five-dollar bill (no cheque, please!) to Cash Belden at the WCA postal address (see WCA Contacts on the back page).

HOME FOR CANOEING The Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association (CRCA) is continuing its "Home for Canoeing" campaign to build an Outdoor education / Environmental Learning Centre at which the Association's office will be located. It will also serve as a centre for outdoor and environmental education, slide shows / seminars / guest speakers on canoeing/kayaking and the outdoors, a "Wall of Fame" area to pay tribute to great Canadians who have made outstanding contributions to canoeing and kayaking, a place to find information about paddling in Canada, and much more. Donations sent to the CRCA — designated for the "Home for Canoeing" campaign — will receive charitable donations tax receipts and will be recognized in perpetuity at the new "Home for Canoeing" as well as in Kanawa Magazine. Contact: CRCA, P.O. Box 398, 446 Main Street West, Merrickville, Ontario, K0G 1N0; ph. (613) 269-2910; fax (613) 269-2908; E-mail: staff@crca.ca Web site: http://www.crca.ca/

MAINE CANOE SYMPOSIUM will take place at Winona Camps, Moose Pond, Bridgton, Maine, on 6 – 8 July 1997. For information contact Jerry Kocher at (617) 237-1956 or at E-mail Jerry-Kocher@msn.com

PARTNERS WANTED

We are looking for independent trippers to share fly in/out and trip logistics on either the Horton or the Anderson Rivers near Inuvik, approximately 1–31 July, 1998. Call Frank Knaapen or Jay Neilson: weekends (705) 776-2653, home Mo-Fr (416) 690-4016 or (819) 689-2307, or write Box 90, Bonfield, Ontario, P0H 1E0.



SHOWS, MEETINGS, AND SUCH ...

CANOEING AND WILDERNESS SYMPOSIUM

The twelfth canoeing and Wilderness Symposium (sponsored by the WCA) this year is about **Historic Canoes and Historic Travels**. The aim of this annual get-together is to share an appreciation of our wilderness. This takes the form of about 18 presentations from individuals who represent a broad mosaic of experiences and views.

WHEN? Friday evening, 31 January 1997, from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., and all day Saturday, 1 February, from 9:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

WHERE? In Toronto, at Monarch Park Collegiate auditorium, One Hanson Street, near Coxwell and Danforth, with reserved seating for about 750.

HOW? Registration form and information should have been received by now by all names on the mailing list from: WCA Symposium, Box 211, Station P, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2S7

CONTACT? George Luste, (416) 534-9313 at home, (416) 531-8873 via fax, (416) 978-7132 at work.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SPORTS SHOW

This is a new show, featuring more than 30 sports-related categories (including paddle sports), over 300 exhibitors, three days of seminars, and several inter-active features such as a 50-foot demonstration pool. It will take place from 21 to 23 February 1997 at the International Centre, 6900 Airport Road, Mississauga, Ontario (corner of Airport Road and Derry Road). For more information contact National Event Management, 115 Apple Creek Blvd., Suite 12, Markham, Ontario, L3R 6C9; tel. (905) 477-2677 or 1-800-891-4859; fax (905) 477-7872; e-mail: fredcox@pathcom.com

The WCA is going to be participating/exhibiting in this show for the first time. We have an excellent booth location (#553) near both the pool and the entrance. Anyone wishing to help man (woman? person? ed.) the booth, especially on Friday the 21st, please contact Paul Hamilton at (905) 877-8778 as soon as possible.

WATERWALKER FILM FESTIVAL

This popular film and video festival will take place on 28 February and 1 March 1997 in the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa. The films and videos shown are all about various paddling activities including canoe tripping, kayaking, and sea kayaking. For more information contact the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, P.O. Box 398, 446 Main Street West, Merrickville, Ontario, K0G 1N0; ph. (613) 269-2910; fax (613) 269-2908; e-mail: staff@crca.ca Web site: http://www.crca.ca/

TORONTO SPORTSMEN'S SHOW

Although this show still takes place in Toronto in March 1997, the WCA will **not** be having a booth there because this (primarily) hunting and fishing show is sagging in popularity with the WCA members, and to organize the manning of the booth for ten days is a burden.

CANOE EXPO 1997

On 11 to 13 April 1997, Canoe Ontario, (416) 426-7170, will again present its annual canoe/kayak consumer show and educational exhibition, as always in the Etobicoke Olympium, 590 Rathburn Road, Etobicoke, Ontario.

The WCA will again have a booth at this show and we are looking for volunteers to help man the booth. Please contact as soon as possible Paul Hamilton at (905) 877-8778.

WCA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This important meeting will be held at Canoe Expo (see above) on Sunday, 13 April 1997, in the Main Seminar Lounge. Doors will be open at 8:30 a.m. for refreshments and conversation and the meeting will start at 9:00 a.m. and end at 10:00 a.m. Enter via the main entrance and walk up the stairs where someone will collect a $5.00 fee for entry into Canoe Expo after our get-together. (The regular admission fee for adults is $8.00.) In addition to this discount from the organizer, Canoe Ontario are offering the room at a nominal fee balanced by a revenue guarantee. In other words, more than 50 people need to show up for the meeting, otherwise the room cost will rise to offset any shortfall in attendance. The WCA Board has taken this approach as a way of increasing the value of coming to the AGM. Thus you are provided with a quick summary of what is happening with the club's organization, while saving a few dollars in the process.

EASTERN ONTARIO AND WESTERN QUEBEC CANOE AND KAYAK SHOW

This increasingly important and informative show will be held in Ottawa at the Civic Centre on 25 to 27 April 1997. The organizers, the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, present a wide array of equipment manufacturers, outfitters, tour companies, a range of speakers, seminars, workshops, and a demonstration pool. Tickets for the show are available at the door or in advance from the CRCA (inquire about discounts): P.O. Box 398, 446 Main Street West, Merrickville, Ontario, K0G 1N0; ph. (613) 269-2910; fax (613) 269-2908; e-mail: staff@crca.ca Web site: http://www.crca.ca/

CANOEING WITH DAD

In the early seventies, when I was twenty-eight, my Dad and I went on our first canoe trip. We went to Long Lake, north of Peterborough, where he had taken our Scout troop to teach us the rudiments of camping. It would be a three-day, casual, first-time-alone-with-Dad trip. I looked forward to it.

As the first day drew to a close, I realized my father must be nervous. How else to explain why he hadn't stopped talking since early morning? It really got on my nerves. Several times I hinted that he enjoy the sounds of nature, but he didn't take the hint.

I wondered where the masterful and distant man I had grown up with (or,more accurately, without), was? He was a high school English teacher, educated, respectable, a kind and energetic man, who taught stories and inhabited a world larger than our town, the man who directed at least one play every year of his career; I had acted in five of them. He had a broad mind and a good imagination and always seemed to be hobnobbing with the consequential people in our small town. He served in the church, in Scouts, on many committees. He was really far too busy for his own family.

The next day we went on a side trip through a few back lakes, and he kept up the chatter. I carried the canoe and packs because he had a bad back, the ostensible reason I had been seconded into taking him canoeing. The day was not arduous, but suddenly he said, "I'm tired," and he lay down, passed out, and slept for an hour. That scared me. Later that same day, he stepped into the canoe, it slid away from shore and he landed in the water. It was a mistake he never would have made years ago.

On that first trip, I realized how little I knew my father. He surprised me in many ways. He had funny habits and ideas, curious blind spots, and ingenious ways of solving problems. Since then we have gone on a canoe trip every year for twenty-four years. It took many trips, many trials, many conversations before we got to know each other. He still wanted to be in charge but he couldn't be the boss any more. He learned to trust my judgement. We have gotten drunk together, gotten lost together, swum together, been windbound together, rained-out together, traded tall tales and life philosophies, shared our disappointments and some victories around a hundred campfires. We have picnicked, picked berries, picked our noses, traded recipes, and criticized each other with the care and concern that only good friends have for each other.

We went on a five-day trip down the Magnetawan River when he was seventy, and, one day, we got stuck on a long portage late in the evening. We had to run the rapids to get out before dark, which we did, but we became trapped above a couple of steep ledges that might have dumped us and all our gear into the river. Had I been with a capable person my own age, it would have been no problem, but I couldn't take a chance on dumping a seventy-year-old man with heart and back problems into a raging river at night. I could see he was exhausted. After much planning, in the last rays of light, we depended on his skill in the stern to place us exactly where we wanted to go so we could pull out below the first ledge.

He steered us accurately alright, but I lost my balance and tipped the canoe. Luckily we got to shore before we were swept over the next two ledges. He proved that his nerves were steady, his skill sound, his energy up. He handled it like a trouper. I remember shouting to him over the roar of the rapids: "I hope I'm as good as you when I'm seventy!" When we reached camp half an hour later, he said, "I'm tired," and laid down on the ground and slept, just as he had done on our first trip. This time I wasn't worried about him, I was proud of him.

My father is seventy-eight now. The two of us took my eleven-year-old daughter canoeing for four days this summer. She had long conversations with him the way I never did with him at that age, or with my grandfathers. He taught her a lot of camp skills that I had to learn while he was training our Scout troop. We camped on an island, we had a whole lake to ourselves, and we ate supper on the shore as the sun set. She loved the experience, and I'm looking forward to the next twenty years.

Randy Brown

RESTRINGING THE REELS

Fishing equipment takes a beating on wilderness trips. Poles get stepped on, reels malfunction, rod tips break. You also have to add in the loss factor. Been on several wilderness canoeing trips where fishing opportunities have been drastically reduced because of fishing gear losses. Over time have found that carrying three sets of fishing gear improves the odds of being able to fish the entire trip. Knowledge of probability theory is important to someone who likes to fish a lot.

Fishing is not as important to the buddies. They don't have quite the same passion for it. There have been some complaints from the buddies when the second duffle bag hauled over a portage is composed of a tackle box, extra fishing poles, and a landing net. "Your personal gear takes up twice as much space as everyone else's," the buddies say.

You can use several different strategies to overcome the resistance of the buddies to this extra gear. One is to expound on the potential survival value in carrying extra fishing gear. This is the "We won't starve" argument. Another tactic is to swear as to it's absolute necessity for sanity reasons. This is the "Fishing is therapy" answer. A third strategy is to volunteer to carry extra loads over portages to make up for the weight of the fishing gear. This is the "We each carry our own personal bags" response.

Depending on how many wilderness canoe trips the buddies have been on, you may have to use one or more strategies to get the extra fishing gear included in the trip equipment list. In worst cases where you are met by determined resistence from experienced buddies, threaten to jettison food to lighten the loads. It's a last desperate measure that just might work.

Can't understand why the buddies don't enjoy fishing more. The very essence of wilderness canoeing puts you in locations with excellent fishing. Portages keep boats with motors out, and float planes can't land on river stretches. It adds up to a real possibility of a big fish taking your lure. Even for fishermen not blessed with the best of skills. Maybe you can't count on big fish every wilderness canoe trip, but you are travelling in country where you have a reasonable chance. And what a high. To have a fish tugging on the line. To have a long battle with a big pike or trout. To have the fish close to shore and to marvel at the size and beauty of it.

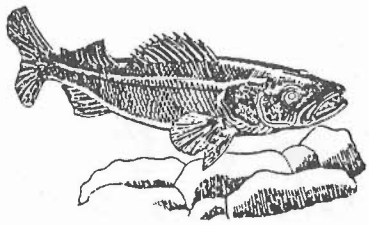
Oh, the big fish are always let go. For two reasons. It takes many years for a fish to grow to a large size up north. Not enough food to support rapid growth. Fish that have overcome all the obstacles to grow that big deserve the right to rule the domain and repopulate the species.

The second reason is more personal. I like to know that big fish are still out there. It makes the winter easier to bear knowing the promise that summer has to offer.

Late November now. Almost the end of the year. Restringing the reels. New line goes on the reels every year. The next fish might be the fish of a lifetime. It's out there, you know.

Restringing the reels promises something else too. It's a commitment that there's going to be another wilderness canoe trip. Next year.

Greg Went



THE RUNNING OF THE WCA

With over 700 members and no paid staff, the WCA runs on the commitment and energy of volunteers. This is the first in a series of short articles, which will highlight most of the roles that are performed "in the background," enabling the club to function with a minimum of administration and virtually no overhead costs.

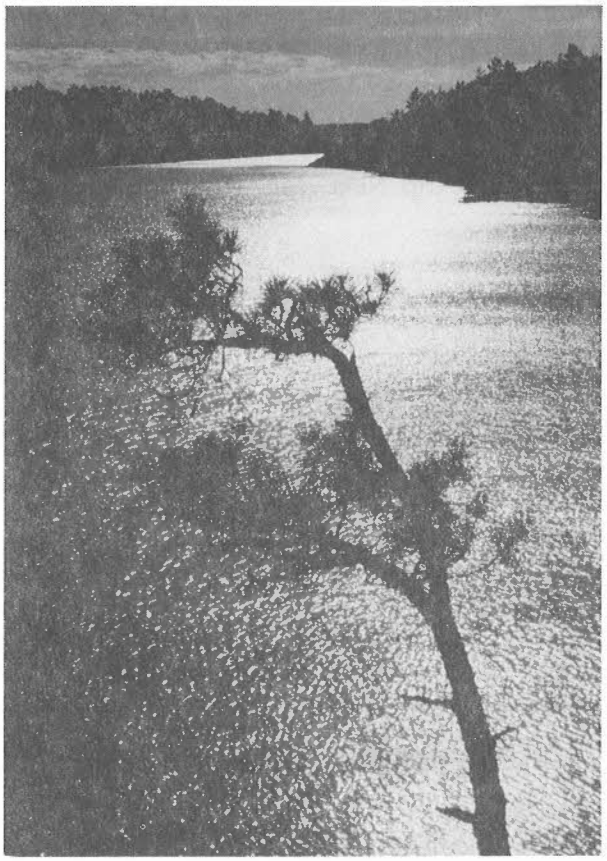
The Mail Collector

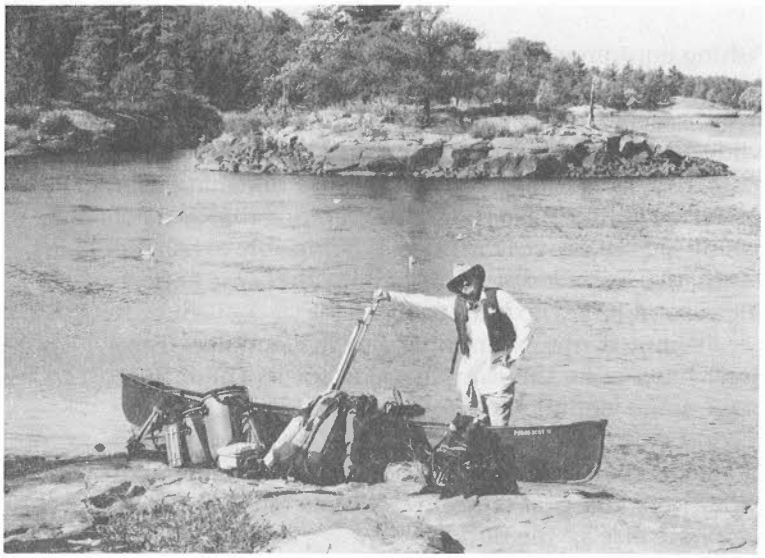
In the wilds of Toronto, the mail collector portages to the post office on a regular basis to collect about 1,000 pieces of mail a year. Most of it relates to membership while others are routed to the Board or the various committee chairpersons.

The Treasurer

Essentially, the treasurer keeps track of the financial transactions of the club. Such duties include: paying the bills, handling investments, recording revenues, depositing funds and keeping track of all financial outlays, plus reconciling the bank statements. In addition, the treasurer provides the Board with information on the club's financial status and prepares year-end statements for audit and presentation to the Annual General Meeting.

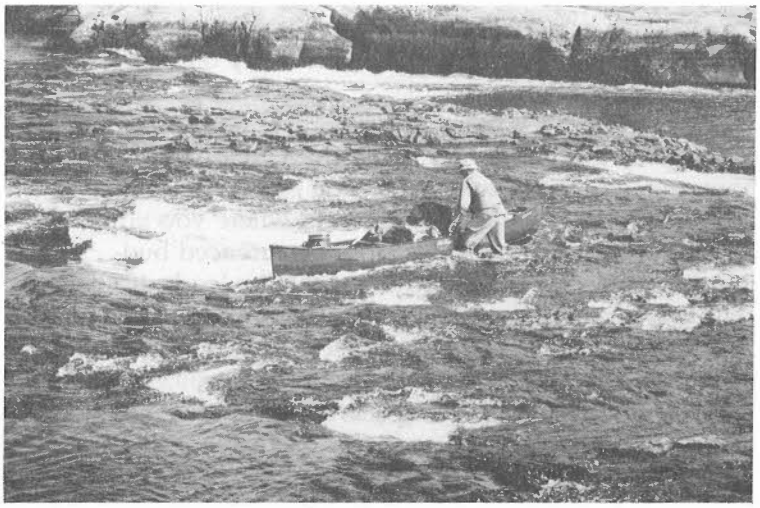
The Board, on behalf of the membership, would like to acknowledge ROB BUTLER who currently takes care of both aforementioned roles. He has capably and responsibly handled the treasurer's function for almost 20 years. Rob is one of the key people in keeping the club on a sound financial footing and has provided his counsel to many a WCA chairperson.

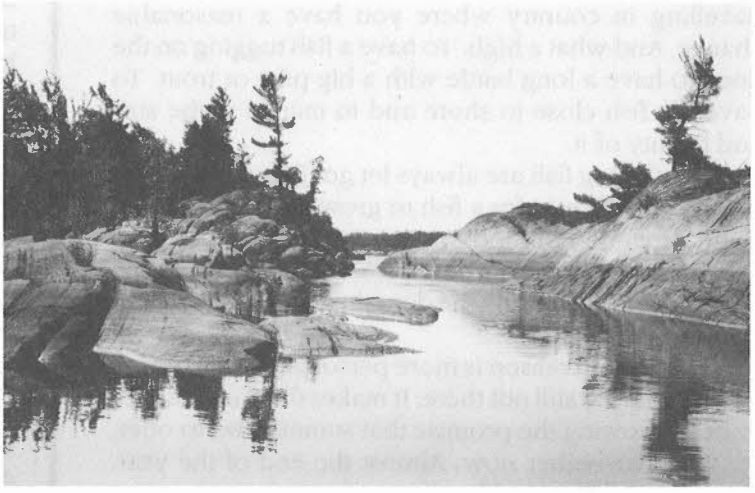


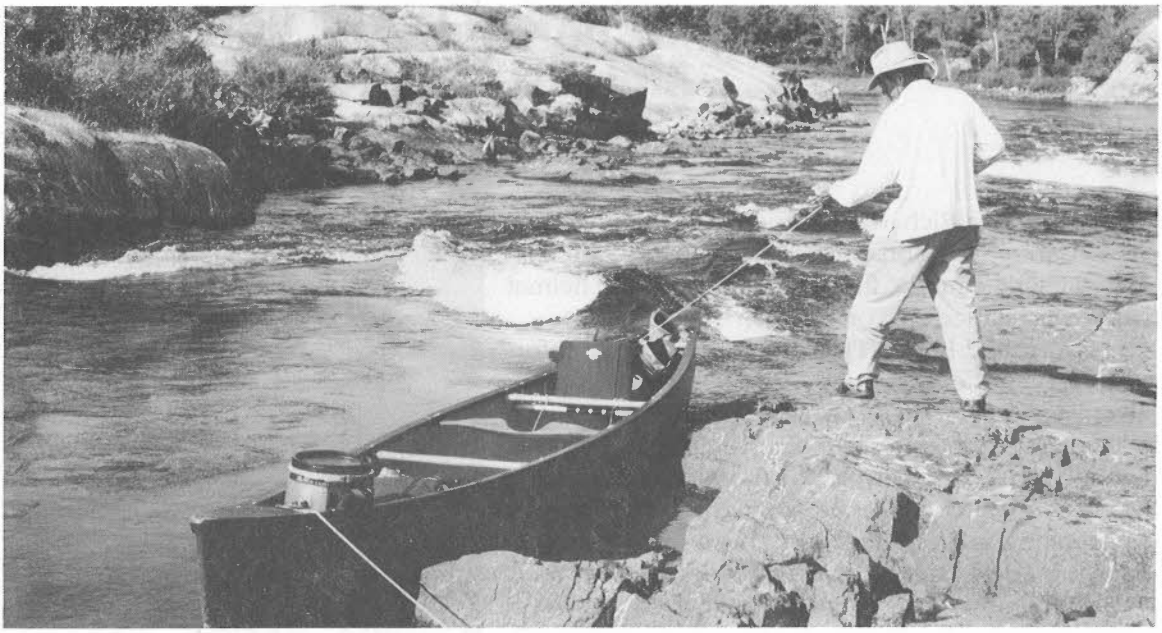


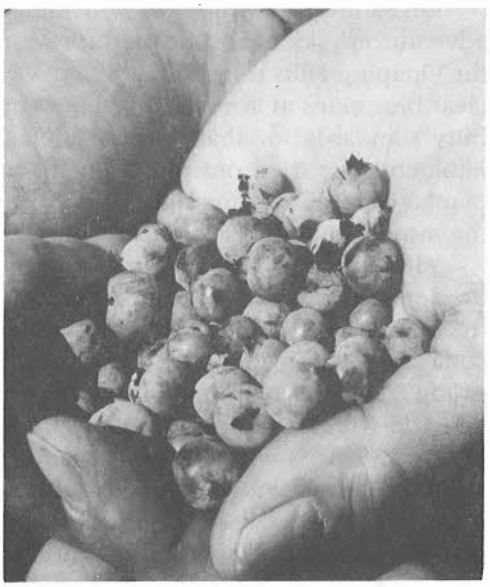
FRENCH RIVER

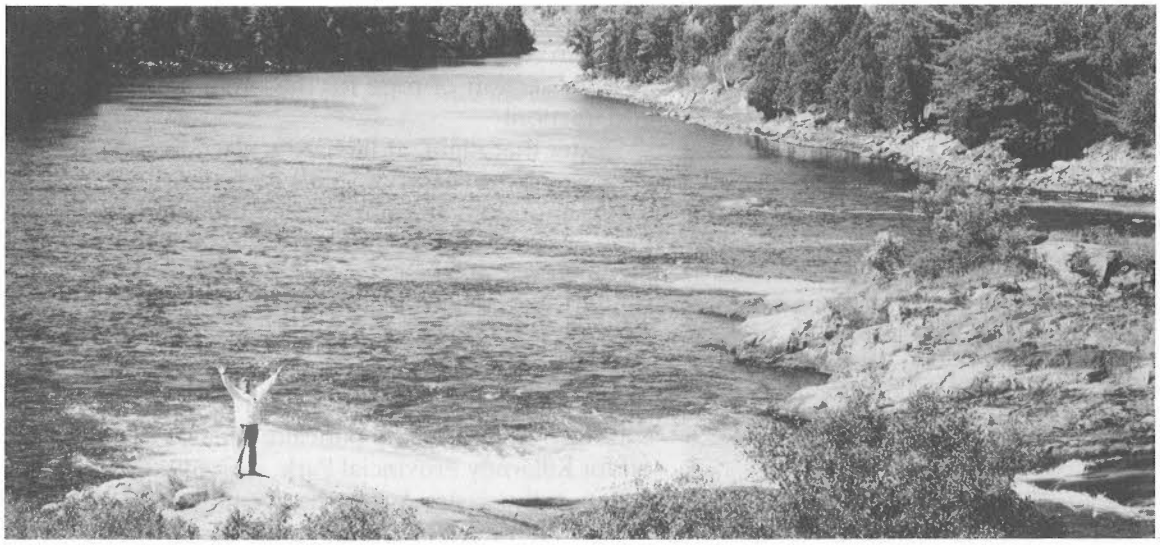
Mike Van Winkle and Toni Harting











BACK COUNTRY SKIING IN THE ONAPING HILLS AND KILLARNEY PARK

Article: Mike Wevrick. Photos: Mike Wevrick and Sara Seager

When I saw that Richard Culpeper was planning to go cross-country skiing on downhill skis I just thought that he was a little strange. It wasn't until I saw the helmet that I really started to worry ...

I had called him in December '93 for more information about the 27 February 1994 Killarney High trip advertised in *Nastawgan*. What he sent me made me a little nervous. Sentences like "Even helicopter or snowmobile rescue is infeasible for the more challenging legs of our route" made me wonder whether he was exaggerating to discourage less able people from participating. (He wasn't.) However, I suppressed my fears and, with fellow WCA member Sara Seager, drove up from Toronto to Sudbury on Friday night, where we were welcomed into Richard's home.

On Saturday morning we were joined by four other adventurous skiers and headed for Mount Smokey in the Onaping Hills north of Sudbury. We set out under clear blue skies at about -20C, almost tropical by Sudbury standards for that winter. After skiing in for a kilometre, we tried out our telemark turns (and face plants) on a power line right-of-way, then headed up the mountain along an old fire tower access trail.

After enjoying the view from the top (several hundred metres above Blezard Valley), three of us backtracked down the trail, while the remaining four did some tree skiing in the powder near the top. "Tree skiing" refers to attempting to ski down an untracked hill side without hitting too many trees, rocks, fallen logs, etc. This is where Richard's equipment came in handy. With downhill skis, releasable telemark bindings, heavy boots, helmet, and kneepads, he set off down the hill at full speed. Sara and I followed in the rear, a little more cautiously. Unlike Sara, I had missed Richard's WCA telemark clinic the previous weekend, so I was happy just to arrive at the bottom with nothing worse than a few bruises.

After climbing up and then skiing down another part of the hill, we came to the top of a lovely river valley formed by the Nelson River. The slope into it looked very inviting for the first few hundred metres, but then it dropped abruptly into a near-cliff covered in trees, so we headed back up the mountain and down our original trail.

When we got back down to the bottom of the access trail, Richard said "OK, time to rope up!" For a moment I thought of rock climbing, and looked at Richard in confusion, half expecting him to pull harnesses and climbing ropes out of his knapsack. Actually he was referring to the loops of rope he had given us earlier. Next time you are climbing a hill in loose snow, try this: take a metre-long section of four-to-six-millimetre-diameter rope, wrap it around your hand to make several loops, and tie the ends together. Slip the loops down one of your skis, then clamp them between your boot and your binding. Do the same with another section of rope for the other ski. They really add traction!

Later that night, at Richard's place in Sudbury, we discovered the secret of Sara's endurance. We cooked a truly enormous amount of pasta and sauce for dinner. Richard and I and Richard's father ate about half of it between us; most of the rest disappeared into Sara. While I would never deny the importance of carbo-loading, this approach seemed a little extreme. On the other hand, it seems to work!

On Sunday we arose even earlier than we had on Saturday. After a hearty pancake breakfast we headed off for Killarney Provincial Park, along with eight other skiing enthusiasts. Again the weather was cold and clear. Killarney is just as beautiful in winter as it is in

summer, and we had a perfect day for seeing it. We skied north along the Baie Fine hiking trail to a beaver pond in the slot between Gulch Hill and the Killarney Ridge, where we ate lunch. Several people offered Richard sandwiches, as he had brought only a box of TimBits doughnut balls. (While Sara's approach to nutrition is merely a little extreme, Richard's seems to defy rational analysis entirely.)

After lunch, three of us returned to the trailhead, while the rest skied across the pond and began the climb up Gulch Hill. Although most of us took our skis off towards the top and carried them up the rocks, the climb was fairly easy. The view of Georgian Bay, George Lake, and other parts of the park was truly spectacular.

We came down by a different route, with the telemark experts testing their skills and the rest proceeding more cautiously and hiking down where necessary. At one point we had to climb down a small crevice, but got back to the main trail near Lumsden Lake with no more serious problems than a bruised knee and a broken pole. (Kneepads and metal poles are very useful for this sort of skiing!) Back at the parking lot, we said our goodbyes and headed for home.

PERSONAL GLIMPSES: 40 YEARS LATER

George Drought

1956 — Canada, the new land — I had been here a week and there were trees everywhere. I wanted a view of the land but the trees were on top of the hills too. I pushed the canoe forward looking for the spot where I could see Canada. How naive I was. I paddled on, apprehensive, cautious, definitely a little scared, down this long winding river where every bend revealed more and ever more trees. Finally the creek appeared that was shown on my map. I paddled to it, the bow swinging slightly out of control, beached the canoe and shouldered my "ruck sack." There was a lake shown on the map about three miles up the creek and I set off toward it leaving my canoe hidden in the forest. I tripped over logs, scratched my arms, smacked at mosquitos, and worried about "a hundred little things." I thought of going back but I wanted to reach the lake. Maybe, there, there would be a view to satisfy my naive perceptions. Though it must be admitted that by this time I was beginning to realize that this might not be so.

It was late when I arrived and I was tired and hot. The thought of a swim was good but the shoreline was a tangle of logs and brush. A small promontory extended into the lake over to the right, and it looked clear enough to pitch my tent. I went over and worked at settling in for the night, my first alone in the Canadian bush. I felt fear again as night closed around and every noise magnified a hundred times. Every snapping twig and every rustling sound made the hair on the back of my neck stand on end.

It must have been 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning when I heard a blood-chilling wail. I froze, then quietly reached for my axe. I shivered all through as the eerie sound came again, and clasping my axe tightly in one hand, I undid the tent with the other. I slipped out and peered into the early morning mist. All I could see were faint hazy forms and a bird on the lake. A beautiful bird with a long bill and a magnificent black and white neck. I had never seen one but it looked like a Great Northern Diver such as we had in the north of Scotland and Scandinavia. Its bill opened and the sound came again, curdling across the water. My hair still stood on end but I put the axe down.

I had so much to learn.

1996 — Canada, this ancient land — The river raged over the rocks and I sat drinking the sights and sounds. The bush was rich with them. The early thrushes and warblers sang their melodies, the pines moaned in the breeze, my coffee bubbled on the fire. I studied the rapid carefully. "Set up, back paddle, slide right a touch, a tight eddy turn left, and then ferry over to the right." I was alone, with just my Labrador for company, but it looked safe enough to run. I was wearing my wetsuit but I would still have to be cautious.

I carefully doused the fire, cleaned the campsite, and carried my tightly waterproofed pack over the portage. Walking back I took one more look at the rapid. There were no dangerous holes and there was a calm pool at the bottom. I climbed into the canoe, called my dog, adjusted my thigh straps, licked my lips, and pushed off. With my dog wagging her tail in the bow we slipped down the rapid exactly as planned. Well not quite, we took in a couple of cups of water.

For several days I had been on the river savoring the wildness of it. It felt like home but I knew that behind the skyline the land was ravaged and clear cut. The evenings were peaceful, an occasional shower, a small fire crackling, and my dog curled up beside me. The mosquitos would buzz around but they did not bother me. My notebook would rustle on my knees as I wrote my thoughts and observations. Details on the rapids that I had run and walked around that day, and thoughts on the land. One of the largest countries in the world and potentially the final wilderness in the world. Yet we destroy it in our greed for money. Strangely, we could probably be even wealthier by making it the final refuge in the world.

We have so much to learn.

HAWKROCK RIVER

Dave Bober

A little stab of envy plagues my heart whenever I read about those individuals able to make a month or longer dream come true in the Northwest Territories. Reading Herb Pohl's "North of Great Slave Lake" in the Spring '95 issue of *Nastawgan* left me drooling for the second instalment; and my friend, Ralph Zaffrann, keeps me agitated with his exploits near or above the tree line.

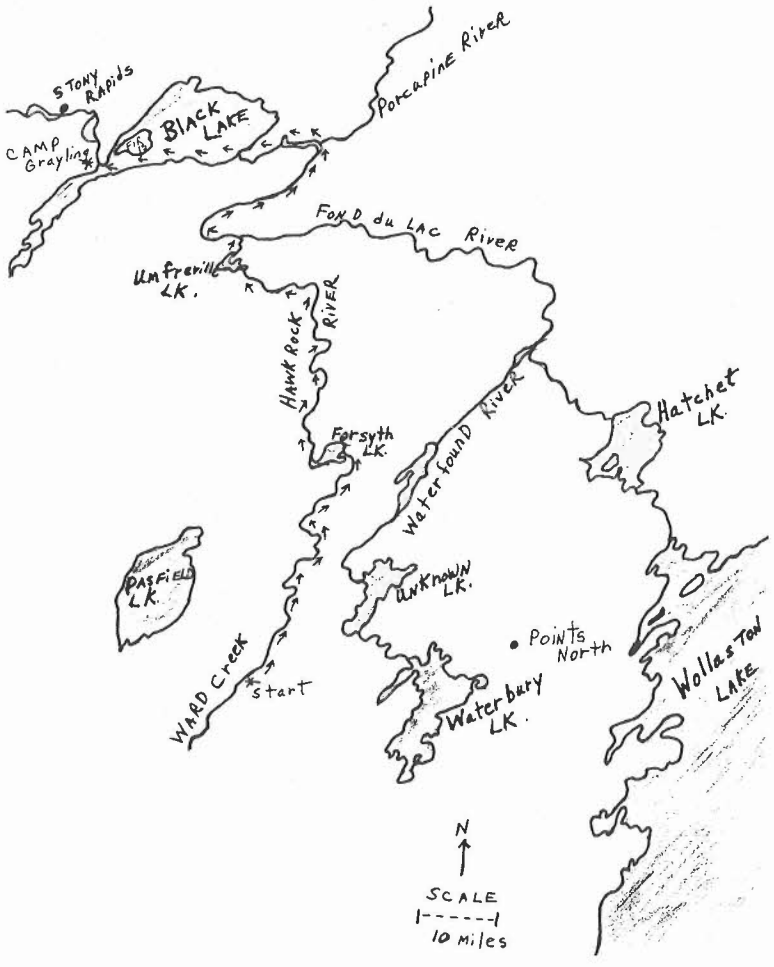
But to my delight, I have attached myself to a small informal group known as the Saskatchewan Wilderness Paddlers, and the last four years we have enjoyed some great two- or three-week June trips. Even in Saskatchewan, June can be challenged by ice, but sometimes we beat the black flies — ester camping minus those tormentors equals heaven.

Canoe traffic in Saskatchewan, north of the Churchill River, is slight and there are still rivers that have not been recreationally paddled, although every navigable stream has certainly been travelled by the Natives and trappers trying to wrestle a living from the bush.

Bill Jeffery, our trip leader, often enjoys a birds-eye view from a plane as he services several northern communities as a cross-country ski instructor for "Ski Fit North," a program designed for Native youth. Bill is constantly on the alert for prospective routes, often talking with the Native elders. The rest of us put our order in early: 15 to 20 days canoeing, great whitewater, and under $500 bucks. The Hawkrock and Porcupine Rivers would fill our extravagant order to a T and 2 June 1994 found the four of us (Bill, Joan Jeffery, Daryl Sexsmith, and myself) bouncing up gravel Highway 905 to Points North Landing, west of Wollaston Lake. We were so eager to hit the river that the long, dusty drive hardly fazed us and with Bill at the wheel we really smoked that road.

Points North, a haphazard conglomeration of make-do buildings and hangars, is a freight forwarding depot for several Native communities between Black Lake and Uranium City, as well as for mining interests and fly-in fishing lodges in both Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories.

We were on a roll and within 15 minutes of reaching Points North we were airborne in a Single Otter for the 28-mile hop into Ward Creek, the Hawkrock headwaters. From the air a significant amount of ice smiled at us from Waterbury Lake and our first glimpse of Ward Creek told us it was, indeed, a tiny stream. By 9:30 p.m. camp had been established on a small nameless lake surrounded by young jack pine and a toast offered to health and the river. The bright blue sky, lack of bugs, and tranquillity was almost too much for the senses — only the same morning we had been rushing through bustling Prince Albert and now we were camped in paradise! Sleep came almost instantly; even the nighthawks, loons, and murmur of rapids could not keep my mind focused.



By 6 a.m. everyone was wide awake — June was busting out all over — who could linger in the sack? Early June tripping does possess an invigorating appeal: the newness of life, from the tiny fresh leaflets on the scrub birch to the flurry of waterfowl activity, and a sky that is so blue and clear that you can't help but hum a song in appreciation of being alive with good friends in such a pristine country. Each morning is pure anticipation and it seems the human body and spirit are charged with potent energy, even as the lengthening days rush toward the summer solstice.

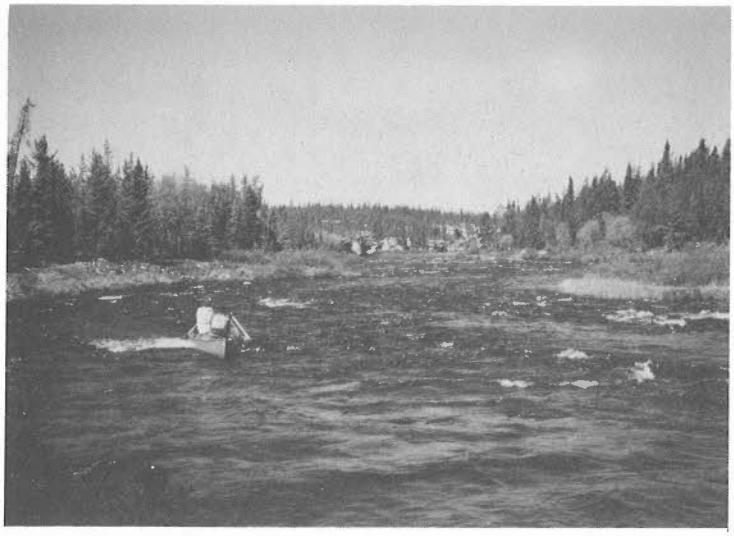
The high water of spring was a bonus and our apprehension of finding enough water in Ward Creek soon evaporated as

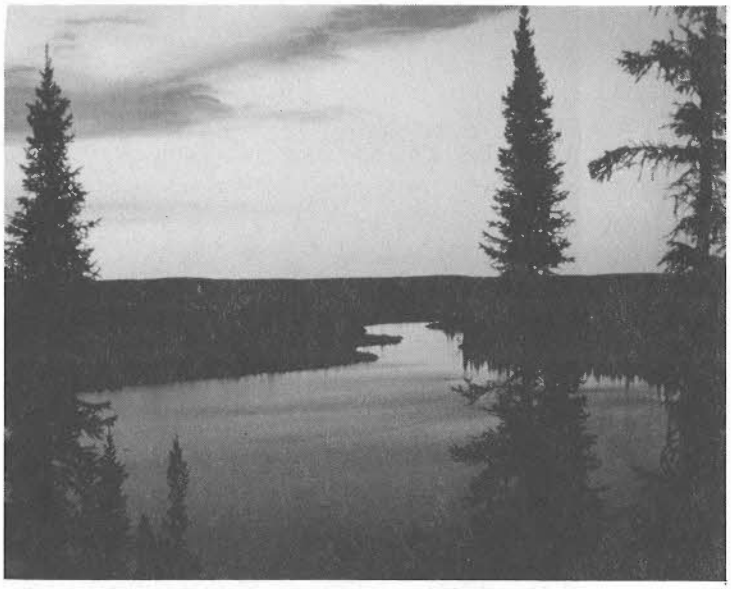
we ran several small rapids, interspersed by sections of shallow, braided stream. Sand was king here and it was evident that a person could, without undue effort, portage into several other watersheds through the semi-open jack pine forest. The fish population appeared healthy and we enjoyed the diversion of observing river white fish, jacks, and red suckers streaking through the crystal-clear water. The forty miles of Ward Creek held no surprises for us and we thoroughly appreciated two laid-back days, soaking up rays and running easy rapids. But a water level six inches or a foot lower would spell drag city so we considered ourselves blessed. The whole region had been burnt off perhaps 40 years ago but had regenerated to an attractive state and more recent fires had sprouted six- to ten-foot-high pine from which the breeze was blowing off loads of yellow pollen. Geese, ducts, eagles, and a few kingfisher let us know that we were invading their nesting domains.

Our first bear encounter must have been a coincidence as a stiff breeze was blowing and we were downwind. We had just crawled into the canoes after a lunch stop when a bear came running by full tilt, his sensitive nose making him put on the brakes. He tore up our buried campfire with gusto, allowing us ample time for a photo session.

A near-perfect tail wind was too good to pass up so the canoes were lashed together and a sail was rigged from a nylon tarp and two spruce poles. In a little over an hour the seven-mile expanse of Forsyth Lake fairly flew by as we relaxed in the glorious sunshine.

Exiting Forsyth, we were now in the Hawkrock River proper and the right thing to do was to unrig the sail before we entered the first rapid. This was accomplished in the nick of time but Daryl and I still managed to ground out on a rock forcing me to execute a "jump outa the canoe" manoeuvre. This place smelled "fishy" so we cast out for a lurker, hoping for a fresh fish supper. But the fish emerged the victor and a canoe went down! Darryl and I saw it all happen and it was indeed as Will Rogers once said: "Everything is funny so long as it happens to someone else." Bill had hooked





a giant jack and Joan didn't really want to be in the same canoe when the big boy was landed. So obliging Bill worked the canoe over against the shoreline but when Joan hastily stepped out she slipped and somehow the boat tipped over, Bill falling out and dropping his rod. Lunging after the disappearing rod, a mortified Bill managed to retrieve it minus the leader, lure, and lucky fish. Just another monster that got away.

Camp that evening was pitched on a rocky ester spline 60 feet above the river, affording a scenic view in several directions that I could not pass up for a sunset photo. From an almost scarcity of insect life, it appeared that the hordes of newly hatched mosquitoes did not want me to get that picture, and my determination to play the masochist resulted in me missing the second exciting mishap of the day. Joan was sacked out, Bill was somewhere off in the pines, and Daryl was reclining near the campfire when a smallish bear ran right through camp and almost over a tent. Daryl's cry of alarm did not disturb the slumbering Joan and from my distance I heard only a faint call. Later, I could not shake my lingering suspicion that Bill was actually down in the bush rousing up a critter for revenge. You know, some fishermen really take an angling loss as a serious blow to the ego.

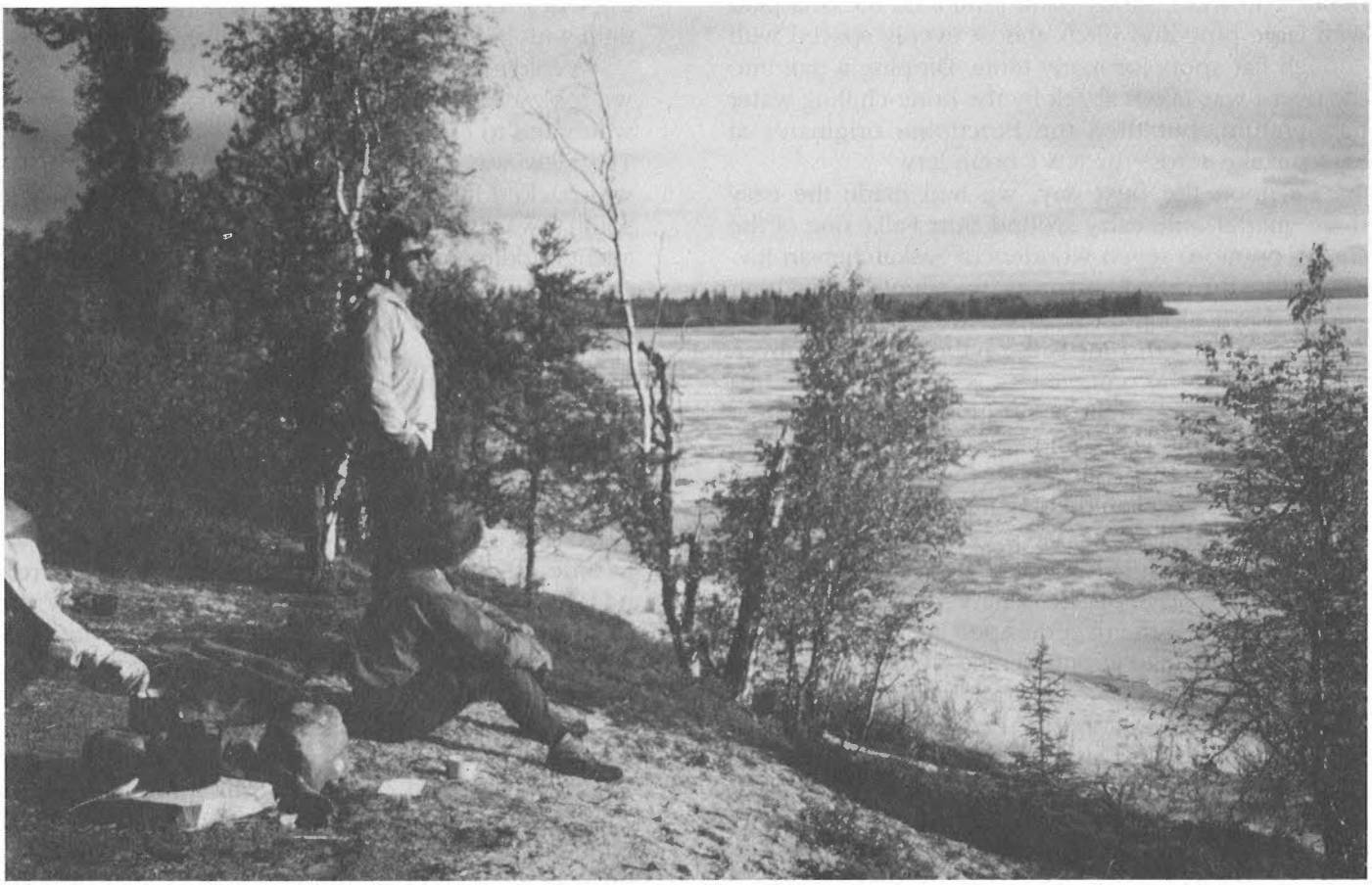
The next few days we were challenged by a small river coming into its own with shallow rapid after rapid as the country picked up relief. Most rapids were S-shaped with rocky fan-outs at the bottom; standing up in the canoe was the standard procedure for scouting for the deepest channels. This was a joy ride if there ever was one, as we had expected some portaging. The very warm weather brought out the scourge in legions and when the wind wasn't blowing, the black flies were feasting. An active eagle's nest gave us opportunity with the camera and the cheery tune of the song sparrow was always welcome. Almost continuous fast water made for easy cruising and we found ourselves camping early with time to fish or hike after supper. At one lovely campsite, Joan redeemed herself — she and

Jill each returned from the fishing hole with two three-pound pickerel. Along with Daryl's impeccable lima beans, those fried fish were a feast fit for royalty.

The next day brought its own reward — the majestic Hawkrock Cliffs. Now we knew how this river got its name, but we wondered how many people had experienced the privilege of standing on top of these remarkable 40 to 80 foot dolomite cliffs and looking over, in all directions, a country that has, from what we had seen, no recent human visitation, not even a trapper's cabin or old portage trail. These whitish dolomite cliffs had a grandeur unlike the usual granite formations usually seen in the Shield, their softer texture erodible by wind and water, giving them a castle-like appearance that seemed so starkly out of place in this land of sand and pine.

As we approached another location, two otters slipped gracefully into the river, which was framed on both sides by sheer cliffs. Fortunately, most of these cliff areas contained only fast water and we were able to drift through with cliff swallows darting above our heads. Our lunch spot was on top a flat 40-foot cliff from which we could comfortably sit and dangle our legs over the edge — what a feeling of elation and freedom. With warm sunshine on his back Bill decided to try for a swim despite it being only the 8th of June. It was tempting but my plunge could be measured in micro seconds. An eagle flying over seemed to put his benediction on this lovely place.

The intense high-pressure system continued to hold and the next few days grew hotter, kicking up brisk winds by midday. At a camp pitched on a low granite shelf, the nasty wind blew a tent into the lake but a nimble grab by Joan spared the nylon. The country had turned quite hilly and the rapids longer and more challenging, a few over a half mile long and very shallow, reminding us that in low water this little river would not be a picnic. Both canoes dipped a gunnel once in a while, but we had no major problems, enjoying the adrenalin rush to the max. Below the longest rapid a little stream comes in from the east at which junction we found the rotted remains of a wall tent and home-made sled. Only a few hundred yards up that inlet stream is a lovely sandy shored lake, the home of the newly constructed Hawkrock Fishing Lodge, owned by Allan Serhan, a shirttail relative of mine. We had hoped to meet Allan at his camp but were well ahead of schedule and Allan would not fly in until the next day, so we continued on. The topography had become almost mountain like from our vantage point on the river with hills in all directions rising up to 300 feet: and another sign of progress was soon passed, a microwave communication tower on top of a commanding hill.



Our last day on the Hawkrock provided our greatest thrills as we found ourselves in waters approaching class 3. A relentless sun had no mercy on exposed skin and the glare coming off the whitewater, without sunglasses, was overwhelming. The first rapid looked benign from the top so we bombed down to find ourselves bouncing around in roller-coaster three-foot waves. Although we got off easy, this one earned the first class 3 rating — we should have scouted from shore. Caution was now the order of the hour, but we were all hoping to appease our vanity and conclude the Hawkrock without a portage; maybe it was just the hot sun and the almost impenetrable jungle along these last few rapids. The rapid at the outlet of Umfreville Lake was the heaviest — long, twisty, big waves, and menacing rocks. We scouted from shore, ran a portion, and then outed again and emerged victorious, sky side up!

During our lunch break we tried for the elusive grayling and Bill scored a hit. The grayling are great fighters but we all agreed that a fresh-caught pickerel is queen in the skillet. The last major rapid before reaching the Fond du Lac was short but a little tricky. After scouting and some debate, we went for a front ferry below the big rock on the left side to set up for the chute below the big rocks on river right. Another half mile and the Hawkrock was history — 110 miles and 31 sets of rapids without a portage left us with a natural high that would last for a long time.

Bill and Joan had paddled the Fond du Lac in '93, a low-water year, and remarked that they could hardly recognize the Hawkrock outlet as the water level was so much higher. Indeed the Fond du Lac at this location was an impressive northern river, dwarfing the little Hawkrock many times over. A strong current brought us to North Rapids, a long series of grade 3 and 4 ledges that can easily be snuck down along the extreme right side. A marvellous campsite on a low granite cliff was too good to pass up so we pitched the tents and decided to go for a swim. The river was surprisingly warm and Bill and I had a blast letting the strong current give us a free ride for a couple of hundred yards and then kick us back towards shore in an eddy. The devil had been on our tail during the day, first a "water devil" that nearly knocked the canoe over, and later a "pollen devil" — a weird sight, the bright sunshine catching a swirling jack pine pollen cloud at a perfect angle. The sun went down in an orange haze, the smoke of distant forest fires drifting south.

Our second day on the Fond du Lac was again a scorcher; three sets of rapids, including impressive Perching Rapids, and another series of grade 3 and 4 ledges were easily negotiated by sneaking river left. The third rapid, the so-called "Death Ledges" (according to a previous traveller), was also an easy rapid but in certain water levels the many ledges and big rollers could spell trouble.

Our camp at the Porcupine River junction was obviously a perennial favorite of the Natives, numerous

bone fragments attesting to many successful caribou hunts. The wide, sandy bank reminded me of a park with large pine and birch almost evenly spaced with enough flat spots for many tents. Dipping a pail into the river I was taken aback by the bone-chilling water temperature, but then the Porcupine originates at Selwyn Lake across the NWT boundary.

By noon the next day, we had made the easy three-quarter mile carry around Burr Falls, one of the (in my opinion) seven wonders of Saskatchewan Rivers. Before the toil of portaging, we spent over an hour hiking down along these awesome falls that rival or surpass the Smoothstone Falls on the Clearwater River. Take note that the portage trail is well above the first fast water on river right or north side. If you run the preliminary rapid you could be in mega trouble if you miss the granite island just above the first big drop; and in high water you could be sitting on that little island for a long time. Finishing the portage in blistering heat we lingered over lunch at the bottom of the last drop of Burr, also a place of rare beauty.

Within a mile the river dumped into Black Lake, an immense open lake about 40 miles long and 15 miles wide that we had been forewarned about. But we were caught off guard; getting ice bound on 10 June was NOT in our plans! The air temperature dropped 20 degrees C in a few miles as we met floating ice cubes, then loose pack ice. Looking for leads, we managed to find a way to the south shore and a camping site. Although we were two days ahead of schedule, the last breath of winter had us in its grip and now we would have to sit. That night I was awakened several times by a moaning noise which proved to be the grinding of ice chunks, Black Lake gnashing its teeth. The next morning was a "no go" day as the ice pack had us socked in tight with big chunks pushed up on the beach.

A cold northerly flow had developed overnight and we took a two-mile hike along the shoreline to keep warm and to check out the view from a jutting point. The view was not encouraging, the impenetrable ice was packed in for a long ways, both to the west and south towards Fir Island. The remainder of the day was spent huddled under the nylon tarp, reading, relaxing, and eating. By late afternoon it was wickedly cold — I had every piece of clothing on that I had in my pack and was still chilly. But a mere gale and ice did not stop us from celebrating Jill and Joan's 20th wedding anniversary.

During the night the wind did a number on the ice and by early morning the extent of the pack had been greatly reduced. We considered our options and decided to portage a mile along the shoreline to the east in order to reach open water. By 8 a.m. we were free, paddling with vigor, absolutely amazed at how the storm and wind had wiped out the huge ice mass — actually, it seemed that the only ice on the whole lake was jammed up against last nights camp.

With a rising wind, Bill and Joan raised a solo sail, but Daryl and I paddled hard to keep warm. By early afternoon, we had completed our traverse of Black Lake and 170 miles of superb canoeing, arriving at Ed and Margy White's Camp Grayling Lodge. After a day off we were heading north in a Beaver float plane to Selwyn Lake for a nine-day trip down the Porcupine River, but I'll save that story for another time.

CAUTION: ARMED ROBBERY IN THE NORTH

Bob McCoubry

If I had ever had illusions about honesty in the North, they were shattered a year ago. I had saved for years for my final two trips, and for the first of them (1995) a long flight had brought us to a fishing lodge in northern Manitoba where my two canoes had supposedly been wintering. We found that my best canoe had been stolen, probably via snowmobile. Other lesser items had also been taken. But those thefts didn't prepare me for the treatment in the summer just past.

We had flown commercial air to Tadoule Lake native settlement from where we were to charter north. The charter plane became delayed, and we (two of us) had to tent for the night in the "yard" (actually 50 yards off in the bush) of a friend. I had had little sleep for two nights, had been baked in 95-degree heat, and frazzled by logistics frustrations and uncertainties. My old dog had been terribly mistreated by an airline employee and had suffered from the scorching heat during the long wait at Tadoule. She lay in my tent dying, and I lay 20% awake trying to keep her alive.

At 1:45 a.m. two youthful Chipewyans (I understand they prefer to be called Dene) woke me out of my exhausted semi-sleep by poking the business ends of their rifles at me. Using phrases they had learned from violent U.S. TV entertainment, they offered me the choice of having my head blown off or giving them my money. Brave hunters, those youth, and smart. Why bother hunting caribou, fox, or beaver like their predecessors when they can surprise an unsuspecting, worn-out, sleeping, and defenceless person, rob him, and then probably become the heroes of the village. The defenceless are easy pickings for brave hunters. Those successful beginners will now want more, so will their friends. (Yes, the RCMP investigated. They had a suspect, but no-one in the village would talk.)

Robbery isn't confined to one lawless village in that region. I hear that in another village the inhabitants must leave one adult in their home at all times to guard against the rampant thievery.

Obviously, caution would be good advice for canoe travellers in the area — especially Americans who are not allowed firearms in Canada (except rifles as "Animal Protection Devices," and how would a Canadian judge define "animal"?). Canoers in the far bush are probably still pretty safe — the brave hunters would have to work too hard to get at them. But a village is another matter, and really a hopeless one. Even if one carried an APD and used it, what of the consequences of having used it?! There are more of them than you, and there are no law officers to cool a situation down. And Americans who shoot could find themselves in a Canadian prison, too. All an American can really do is:

1. Stay away from native villages and encampments (the RCMP seemed to think that wise). If you *must* go to one, then:
2. Don't stay more than a couple of hours, and especially not overnight.
3. Don't be expected in the village.
4. Travel with a large group and stay close together.
5. If you don't carry an APD, then consider carrying just its case (weighted). The sight of the case might deter.
6. Don't buy anything. If you hire a ride, pay with pocket change and American cigarettes. *Don't* show that you have a wallet.
7. If a robbery is attempted, consider paying up. Better to lose your money (and respect for the natives) than your life. Most natives (so far) probably want the former, not the latter — as long as you co-operate.

Remembering Samuel Hearne's experiences long ago and remembering the nearly fatal encounter that occurred some years ago to my family in another region (our charter plane came just in time to save us), last summer's armed robbery doesn't seem so bad. But a serious damper was put on my last trip North, and even now when I hear something outside my tent, I psyche out. I wouldn't want this to happen to fellow canoe travellers, so I'm cautioning. And I'm waiting for the report to come in advising of the theft of my final canoe that I couldn't get to last summer.

Although this gruesome report of a highly traumatizing experience was written by an American for American readers, it carries a serious warning for all of us travelling the North. Most people in our canoe country are honest and can be trusted, but there are always some criminal individuals who spoil it for the rest by trying to rip off unsuspecting visitors. So, indeed, be cautioned! Editor.

NO MORE SWEAT

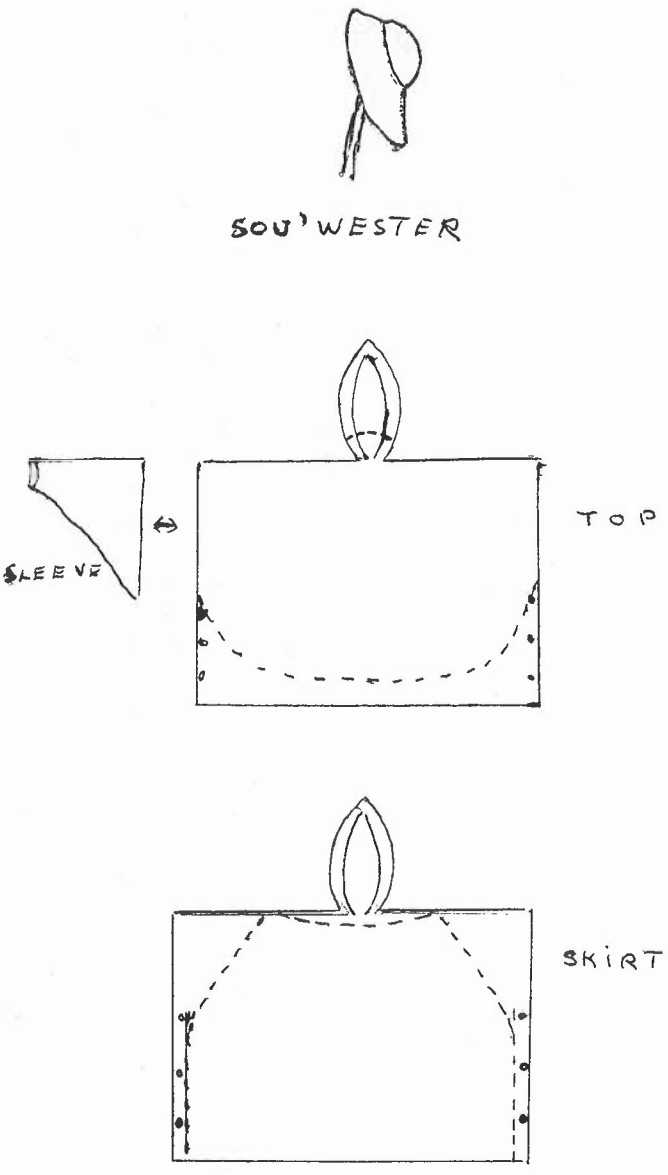
Claire Muller

One of the biggest battles the tripper has, is against rain. You can wear a raincoat with a hood. But the water gets around the hood and runs down the neck. It runs inside the sleeve of the high paddling arm. It soaks the legs. Or you can sport a poncho. Again the water gets in. Or you can don a rain suit, especially the Gore-Tex kind. Again the water gets inside the hood and the high paddling arm. No matter what the manufacturers say, a mysterious dampness creeps onto the shoulders around the torso and on the bottom. Pretty soon, no matter what you wear, chilly misery takes over. Oh, woe was us. Now, perhaps, woe no longer. Maybe, just maybe, I have designed a garment which will beat the water from overhead. To wit:

Depending upon your size, procure two or more ponchos (I'm using the plastic kind, not the heavy rubber variety), a light-weight (again, not rubber) sou'wester, two pairs of athletes' wrist sweat bands, ½" wide (or wider) elastic, and a piece of cord. Lay the first poncho on the floor and at the top end cut a hole big enough to pull up or down over your clothed body. (A very big frame might require another poncho here). Cut the sides as in the drawing. Pin these side cuts together, double-fold (like a French seam). On the ironing board, and *under* a piece of aluminum foil, seal each seam slowly and carefully with a warm iron. The seam must be thoroughly glued together without melting. Cut a piece of elastic the circumference of your waist (with clothes on) and sew the ends together, giving you an elastic circle. Fold the top (the big hole) of your poncho over the elastic (folding the raw edge under) so that the elastic rides in a tunnel bigger than itself. Again, seal the pinned edge with the iron, using the foil, and removing the pins as you go. If you wear rubber boots, you should now have a skirt which hangs below the tops of the boots and which fits firmly but loosely around your waist. Lay out the second poncho as you did the first. Cut off most of the hood, but not all (see broken line in drawing). Cut the poncho in a big arc as illustrated. (The bottom edge should hang well below your waist, but do get rid of unnecessary excess). Now you need to pin the side seems together part way up, and then add the sleeves. (I had plenty of material left over from which to make these). Be sure to practise with a newspaper pattern first at this stage, because it is vital that the sleeves be long enough and have a roomy 'bat wing' flair where they join the main body of the top. Again use French seams as you join up edges. For the cuffs, repeat as you did the waist band, using ½" elastic. Fold over the bit of hood you didn't cut away, and pin, so that you have an open-ended tunnel. Seal this turned-under edge. Thread the cord through this.

Now get dressed. Put on your boots, the skirt, the top, your sou'wester, and on each wrist a sweatband, pulling the garment over top. You should now be ready for any downpour while canoeing or on the trail. (For myself, I have to wring out the sweat bands at intervals in very heavy rain, as I haven't solved this one yet, but the second pair are nice to change into when in camp). Also you may find the cord around the neck a nuisance, but if you don't do it up, the garment slides down at the back too far, below the brim of the hat.

For me, this little Creation by Claire is not just a boon, it is a godsend. It ain't patented, so do make improvements, and do let me know how ye fare. I have to be gentle with the seams and the material generally, but I haven't had a rip yet, I HARDLY SWEAT AT ALL, and I seem to stay dry, DRY, folks, DRY, in the darndest downpours. Huzzah.



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.

21 December **COPELAND FOREST XC SKIING**
Rob Butler, (416) 487-2282, book before 14 December.

Near Horseshoe Valley but without the smell of snow-making equipment. We will meet at 9:30 a.m. at Granny's Restaurant in Craighurst at the junction of Highway 93 and Horseshoe Valley Road. Phone on day to check snow.

Late December **WINTER CAMPING**
Howard Sayles, (416) 921-5321, book before 14 December.

Warm tent camping for a period to be determined between 20 December and 1 January. The organizer will provide a winter tent heated by a woodburning stove. Campers need winter sleeping bags and pads and other winter camping equipment including skis or snowshoes for daytime explorations. Call Howard to discuss the finer points of one of the best ways to celebrate the festive season. Limit four warmly dressed campers.

18 January **SKIING ON THE 5-WINDS TRAIL**
Karl Schimek, (705) 487-0172, book before 10 January. Phone before 9:00 p.m. These trails are not groomed. For advanced or good intermediates. Location will be decided depending on snow conditions of the day. Limit five good skiers.

8-9 February **ALGONQUIN PARK WINTER CAMPING**
Herb Pohl, (905) 637-7632, book before 10 January.

We will set up a base camp a short distance from Highway 60. From there we will go out on day trips to explore the neighborhood and beyond. The organizer provides a heated tent as a place to cook, partake of meals, and some socializing in the evening. He will also provide pots and pans for cooking. Everything else the participants are expected to bring, including shelter as not all will have room in the organizer's tent. Each participant is also expected to provide and prepare own breakfast and one supper of the carnivorous variety. Limit six reasonably fit persons. People may also join for the weekend-part of the outing only.

22–23 February **ALGONQUIN SKI TOUR**
Karl Schimek, (705) 487-0172, book before 15 February. Phone before 9:00 p.m.

An overnight ski trip over lakes and portage trails in Algonquin Park. Total distance is about 35 km. Participants should be in condition to ski two full days with a backpack. Limit four fit skiers.

2 March **OAKVILLE CREEK**
Tim Gill, (416) 447-2063, book before 24 February.

Water levels are always unpredictable. A late thaw or a heavy rain can mean fast water. Early thaw and no rain makes for a shallow run. Plan for fast, cold water and possible sweepers. Oakville Creek can be a long day's paddle if the conditions are bad. Put-in and take-out depend on weather. Limit six canoes.

16 March **BRONTE CREEK**
Harrison Jolly, (905) 689-1733, book before 9 March.

A narrow creek similar to Oakville Creek. Cold water, tight manoeuvring, and the possibility of sweepers blocking the river. Experienced canoeists in outfitted boats. Limit six canoes.

28 March **MOIRA RIVER**
John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 21 March.

We will meet at Chisholm's Mill in the morning and run down the river from here to Latta. In the afternoon we will run the more difficult Lost Channel section. Wet or dry suits, helmets, and properly installed air bags are required. Limit six boats with advanced crews.

28 March **OAKVILLE CREEK**
Mike Jones, (905) 270-3256, book before 21 March.

Water levels are always unpredictable. A late thaw or a heavy rain can mean fast water. Early thaw and no rain makes for a shallow run. Plan for fast cold water and possible sweepers. Oakville Creek can be a long day's paddle if the conditions are bad. Put-in and take-out depend on weather. Limit six canoes.

29 or 30 March **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**
Barry Godden, (416) 440-4208, book before 22 March.

From Streetsville to the Golf Course. Cold, fast-moving water. The Credit can provide some exciting challenges. Intermediate paddlers and properly equipped boats. Wet suits or dry suits required. Limit six canoes.

6 April **BRONTE CREEK**
Harrison Jolly, (905) 689-1733, book before 30 March.

A narrow creek similar to Oakville Creek. Cold water, tight manoeuvring, and the possibility of sweepers blocking the river. Experienced canoeists in outfitted boats. Limit six canoes.

12 April **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**
Gerry Yellowlees,(905) 607-0608, book before 5 April.

From Streetsville to the Golf Course. Cold, fast-moving water. Although the level should be dropping, the Credit can still provide some challenges. Intermediate paddlers in properly equipped boats. Kayakers welcome. Cold-weather gear and change of clothes required. Limit five boats.

12–13 April **BEAVER CREEK and UPPER BLACK**
Barry Godden, (416) 440-4208, book before 12 April.

Saturday's run follows Beaver Creek down to Fiddler's Rapids. Sunday the Upper Black River. Both of these require advanced paddling skills. Limit five canoes properly outfitted for cold whitewater. Dry suits or wet suits required.

1–20 April **SALMON and MOIRA RIVERS**
Glenn Spence, (613) 475-4176, book before 12 April.

Just north of Belleville, these two rivers offer exciting whitewater and fine scenery. The Salmon is the more gentle one but has some ledges to practise your skills. The Moira has larger rapids possibly up to class 3. This is one of southern Ontario's finest spring rivers. Intermediate paddlers welcome. Limit six canoes.

26–27 April **UPPER MADAWASKA and OPEONGO RIVERS**
John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 19 April.

Two days of whitewater excitement for advanced paddlers. Saturday we will paddle the Upper Madawaska, which is a fast-flowing pool-and-drop river with quiet stretches inter-

spersed with some very serious rapids. All rapids can, and some must, be portaged. On Sunday we will move to the Opeongo, which contains long stretches of continuous riffles plus several significant drops. Portaging is more difficult here and in high water this can make for quite a strenuous trip. Wet suits or dry suits, helmets, and fully outfitted whitewater boats with good floatation are a must. Limit six canoes.

10–11 May **MADAWASKA and OPEONGO RIVERS**
Frank Knaapen or Jay Neilson, weekends (705) 776-2653, home Mo–Fr (416) 690-4016 or (819) 689-2307.

In high water these rivers require advanced whitewater equipment, dry/wet suits and airbags are a must.

10–11 May **NORTHEAST GEORGIAN BAY**
John Winters, (705) 382-2057, book before 28 April.

This will be an intermediate trip from Key River. Cold weather gear recommended. Limit four canoes.

10–11 May **UPPER MAGNETAWAN RIVER**
Tim Gill, (416) 447-2063, book before 5 May.

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

17–19 May **FRENCH RIVER**
John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 10 May.

From our beautiful campsite on The Ladder we will play at Blue Chute, Big Pine, The Ladder, and Upper (Little) Parisien. Suitable for all skill levels. Wet suits, helmets, and floatation are required. Limit six canoes.

23–25 May **TEMAGAMI RIVER**
Frank Knaapen or Jay Neilson, weekends (705) 776-2653, home Mo–Fr (416) 690-4016 or (819) 689-2307.

We will be running the Temagami River the long weekend hoping for some whitewater and bug-free weather. Whitewater equipment is required as no scouting is done.

24–25 May **PALMER RAPIDS INTERMEDIATE WHITEWATER CLINIC**
John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 17 May.

This tandem and solo clinic is designed for those who have previous whitewater experience and want to further develop their skills. The emphasis will be on having fun and playing in whitewater. We will practise surfing, jet ferries, and eddy turns across a strong current differential. Participants should have an ABS canoe outfitted with thigh straps and full floatation. Helmets and wet suits are required. Limit five canoes.

24 May **BASIC FLATWATER WORKSHOP**
Doug Ashton, (519) 654-0336, book before 17 May.

This workshop is being offered to new members who wish to develop their basic paddling skills. We will discuss and practise strokes, portaging, and canoe safety as it relates to flatwater paddling. The day will be paced to allow for plenty of practise time. Participants will be expected to provide a suitable canoe, PFDs, and paddles. Registration is limited to twelve current members.

7–11 June **SAND RIVER**
Frank Knaapen or Jay Neilson, weekends (705) 776-2653, home Mo–Fr (416) 690-4016 or (819) 689-2307.

We will be running the Sand River in beautiful Lake Superior Park. The train leaves Frater (two hours north of Sault St. Marie) on Saturday at approx. 1 p.m. This is a well-maintained wilderness river with lots of variety, including winding marshes and long advanced whitewater sections.

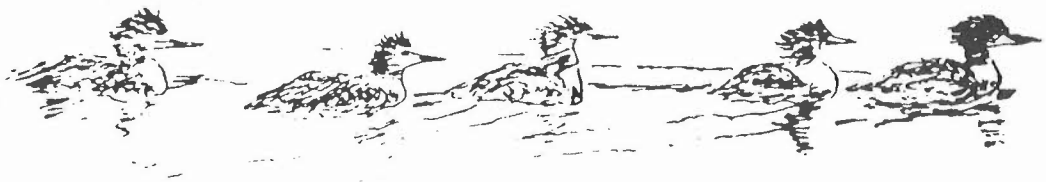
A MIGHTY BIG CREEK

I recently paddled a section of the Big Creek, located just west of the Grand River in southwestern Ontario. The creek empties into Lake Erie at Long Point after meandering through some lush Carolinian forest. The bird life is abundant. We also saw a number of trout in the fairly clear waters.

We used as our guide the *Canoe Routes of Ontario* book. I had found it quite conservative in its descriptions of routes but this time it was way off base. Their route rating must have been written by someone who had never paddled the rlver. The route between Delhi and Long Polnt was classed as an easy flatwater trip of 40 km. Although the route was flatwater, I would hardly call it an easy one. My paddling partner that day, Rob Butler, estimated that we had to negotiate about a hundred fallen trees and log jams. Two paddlers in another canoe that had started the trip with us at Delhi pinned their canoe against a log early In the day, and after freeing it decided that they wouldn't continue. The road distance between Delhi and Long Point is around 60 km, so that with all of the meandering of the creek, I think that the trip is at least 80 km long.

We didn't make it to Long Point that day by canoe. Soon I plan to, but I'll start much further down the river.

Mike Jones



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,

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

CANOE FOR SALE Wood and canvas 16 ft Chestnut, good condition, $950. Greg Brown, RR.1, Heathcote, Ontario, N0H 1N0; (519) 599-3288.

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, P.O. Box 398, 446 Main Street West, Merrickville, Ontario, K0G 1N0; ph. (613) 269-2910; fax (613) 269-2908; E-mail: staff@crca.ca Web site: http://www.crca.ca/

HERITAGE RIVERS CALENDAR Plan your next adventure with the full-color, large-format 1997 Canadian Heritage Rivers Calendar — produced by the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association in co-operation with the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. Thirteen of Canada's most spectacular Heritage Rivers are featured with a short description of each river. Cost $10.95 plus $2.00 p&h and 7% GST. Contact the CRCA, see previous item.

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NORTHERN BOOKS Used, scarce, and select new books on northern, arctica, 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.

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

Where it is ...

. . . in this issue

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 Rusciolelli
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
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COMPUTER RECORDS
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Wilderness Canoe Association membership application

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

PRINT CLEARLY! Date:_____

Name(s):_____

Address: _____

_____

City:_____ Prov._____

Postal Code:_____

❑ New member Member # if renewal:_____

❑ Single ❑ Family

Phone Number(s):

(_____)_____(h)

(_____)_____(w)

Ext._____

* This membership is valid for one year.

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

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