



1 August -- Thelon Canyon portage

STRANDED ON THE THELON

Dan McGuire

Introduction

In the summer of 1988, our group of four people, all members of the same extended family from Ancaster, Ontario, had a rather harrowing experience on the Thelon River. This is the story of what happened when we swamped in the Thelon Canyon and lost most of our gear, clothing, and food, as well as both canoes (two well-used aluminum Grumman rentals without spray covers, one about 18 feet long and the other 17 feet or so).

Our group (twin brothers Reg and Dan, Reg's son Danny, and Dan's son Gord) has extensive tripping experience, having travelled the Atwood-Albany, Ogoki, Winisk, Atwapiskat and other rivers. While on the water on our trips, we all carry a variety of "stuff"

on our belts and in the sewn-in pockets of our floater jackets, including a variety of Swiss Army knives, Leatherman tools, small binoculars, and an auto-focus camera in a baggie inside a belt pouch. This arrangement works wonderfully well when one comes upon unexpected photo opportunities. It works somewhat less well when one goes swimming without first disrobing, as we did on the Thelon. Since the camera was an auto-focus, not an underwater, model, it continued to advance the film but evidently could not adjust focus, defaulting to its shortest focal distance, which explains the grossly out-of-focus shots after the swamping.

Because we had flown from Yellowknife and gassed up at Fort Reliance to start the trip at Jim Lake,

and only intended to paddle a portion of the river, we naturally had organized a pick-up for three weeks later downriver at Lookout Point. This is a normal arrangement for us on fly-in trips and, considering we are a group of Type A personalities not known to be late for anything, it generally works well. It does beg the question of what happens if you run into difficulty during the trip, a situation we thought we had covered by the rental of an ELT from the outfitter who flew us in. We didn't count on it going to the bottom with our canoes.

However, once the appointed time to pick us up came and went, our families in Ancaster, after talking to the outfitter, called the Search and Rescue guys. In 1981 we had had an unfortunate experience on the Kazan River that required their intervention when a float plane rolled over with us on board (see *Nastawgan*, winter 1981), so the procedure was distressingly familiar to them.

Day 11 — Monday 1 August.

These notes will not be very long because, as Tyrell would have said: "The men are largely used up."

At 10:30 a.m. we landed at the portage for the Thelon Canyon on the right bank across from the near end of a big island in the centre with the breakers visible ahead. We then proceeded to put in a very tough day, brutal labor on very rough up-and-down terrain. At 2:00 p.m. we crossed a ravine, which at least provided us with our first drink, and at 3:45 p.m. decided to make some sandwiches out in the open with stormclouds whistling by. Naturally the edge of one of them hit us as we were trying to eat, and we huddled under a tarp which wouldn't stay up. We kept slogging until 5:30 p.m., exhausted and stumbling on rocks, so we put up camp where the map shows the portage ends.

Now the depressing part. There is a ledge in the river about 500 yards downstream which appeared impassable, big standing waves shore to shore. It looked like another long grunt tomorrow if we decided to portage again. The 18-foot canoe could not be carried in this wind by one man. Gord had done so for much of the morning with Danny under the 17-footer, but the canoes were uncontrollable sails much of the time, creating a sideways crab-like motion to make wide arcs in the general direction of travel.

Day 12 — Tuesday 2 August — stranded day one.

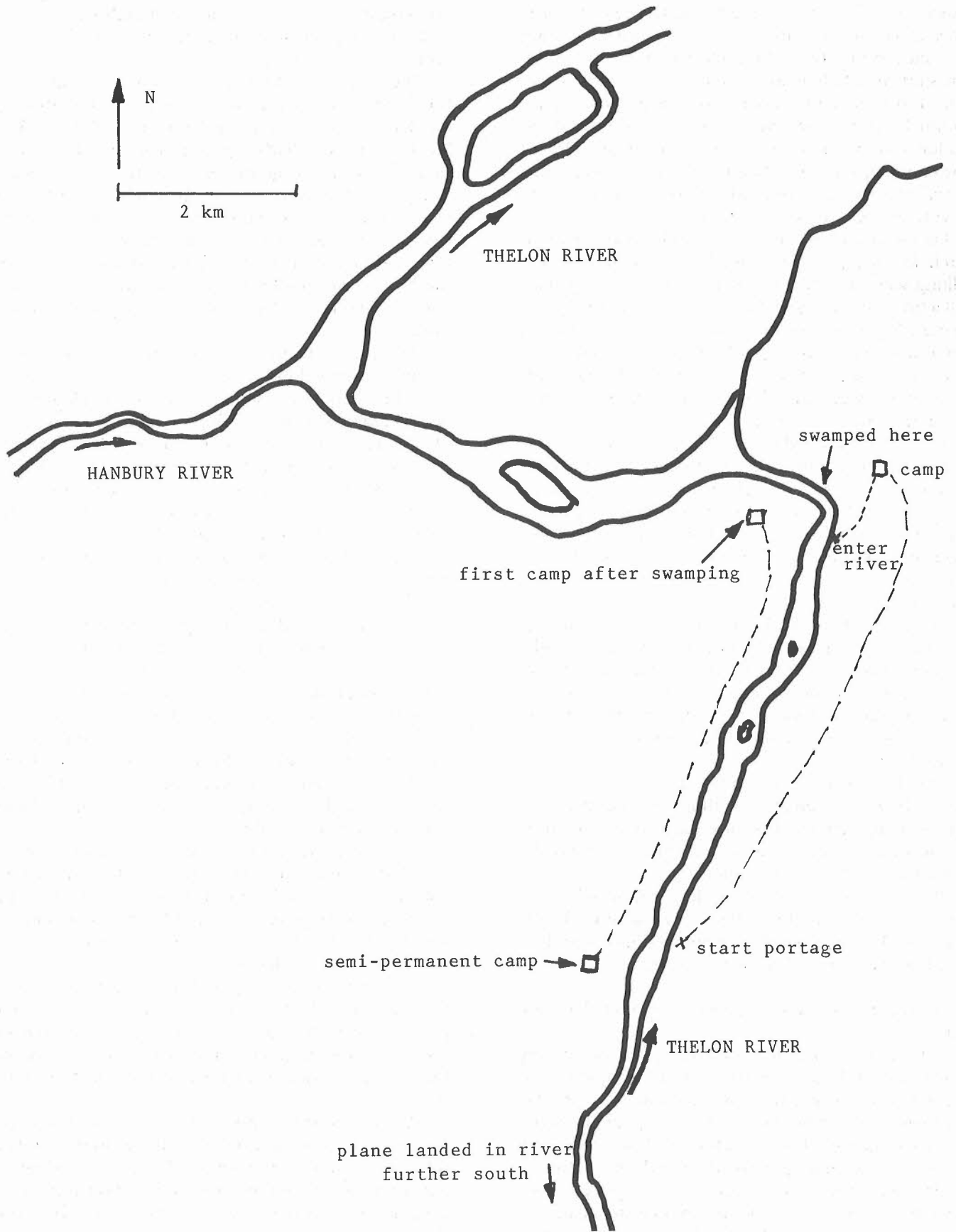
At 4:30 p.m. I finally sat down to try and explain the events of the day. We had scouted the rapids, a ledge really, from above, from half-way down the canyon wall, and also at water level and decided there was a chute near the far shore that was runnable. We moved the equipment to the top of the trail down the canyon (presumably made by other canoeists), skidded the canoes down the very steep incline to the water, loaded up, and pushed off at 10:00 a.m. As always we were careful to place the packs with the

second tent and spare pot in one canoe and the grub box and big tent in the other. Each pack carried about one-quarter of the spare food and everything was double dry-proofed.

We lined and then paddled upstream as far as possible, Reg and Gord in the lead with Danny and I close behind as we had decided. After ferrying across the river we turned downstream. Gord and I stood up in the bows of the canoes to locate the V and my heart rate doubled: it looked like trouble. The first canoe hit the V just where we wanted but Danny and I were shocked at how far right the others were being swept as we paddled furiously to try to overcome the centrifugal effect and get to smooth water on our left. We saw the heads of the paddlers ahead of us appearing and disappearing in the rollers and then Danny shouted: "They're down... they're in the water!" We tried with all our might to go left but there were enormous cross-chop waves we couldn't ignore. In fact I was trying to keep the frontal waves out of the canoe with my body but to no avail; when I looked down there was six inches of water under my knees. The canoe slowly sank under us, just submarined. We rolled out to the left, the waves were deep, furious, and frigid. I saw Danny go in but didn't see him again for a few moments when he came into view towing the grub box. I could not seem to get myself toward the shore struggling with a crawl stroke, then on my back, taking in more water than I have ever swallowed before. When I was about 50 feet from the left river bank I saw Gord on shore but no sign of Reg; I was sure he was still in the water ahead of me and lost since I had seen his orange floater jacket go over the ledge.

I saw the corner approaching fast and I knew that if I was swept around it I wouldn't survive. I called to Gord for help, hoping I would get close enough for him to grab me but I was being swept downstream much faster than he could scramble over the piled-up rocks on shore. Danny was just upstream and in-shore from me, towing the grub box and encouraging me. I did get my feet down several times but was instantly bowled over by the force of the current, so I finally put my head down and did a few overhand strokes until my knees hit bottom and I crawled to a smooth rock and lay there with just my upper body out of the water. Gord came running up, helped me to sit, and wrapped his arms around me. I asked him where Reg was and he said Reg was on shore okay. I looked at him and said: "You wouldn't lie to me, would you?" He shook his head and we held each other for a few moments.

[*Reg:* When we went in the water I could see the packs floating from the still upright canoe so I swam for and grabbed the closest pack and held on. Gord grabbed the back of my jacket with both hands and pulled and kicked us to shore. When we saw that everyone was alive and on the same side of the river, Danny and I went up the cliff face to the top to see if we could find any other material we might salvage, but everything else was gone.]



We took a few minutes to get organized, then scaled the bluff and started looking for shelter as the sky was full of dark clouds, and indeed we did get two showers during the afternoon. Everyone had two layers on their lower body (counting the rain pants) and three layers on top, so we stripped to one and put everything on bushes to dry. Basically each person had a T-shirt, army shirt, and their floater jacket or vest for their upper body, and jeans and rubber boots for the lower part. Not much. At our last campsite we had discussed the problems we would face if we hit shore in any kind of capsized and anyone lost their footwear. Looking at this blasted-rock moonscape I didn't know what we would do with one or more barefoot guys.

Danny and Gord decided to walk downstream to search for any packs that might have come ashore, walking with their bare feet in rubber boots. Reg and I built a fireplace and got a fire going with the Bic lighter since the Zippo was useless. We put some water on to heat and when the boys got back about an hour later we made soup and tea. Everyone's first thought was how glad we were that all four of us were here, alive, and on the same side of the river.

We collected wood for the fire and set about making a lean-to shelter from the tarps we got from the grub box and the one on top of the pack. Gord engineered the shelter; luckily we had salvaged 50 feet of nylon cord. And we made a very small but serviceable cover, which we soon tried out to duck a passing shower, although we were lucky this time that the main storm passed north of us.

To suggest that we all felt badly about deciding to run those rapids is understating the situation greatly. Although thankful for our survival, it was hard to believe we had done what we adamantly said we wouldn't: going into water we should have stayed away from. A tough mistake for experienced and cautious canoeists.

Our boys had been utterly fantastic, I wouldn't want to be have been there without either of them. As well as saving Reg with his pack and also the grub box, they went into survival mode immediately and really took charge at the worst moment.

Reg had an impressive black eye from when his glasses were punched into his face by a wave. It was 9:12 p.m., the sun was getting near the horizon, and we were battenning down for the first night.

Days 14 and 15— 4 and 5 August — stranded day three and four.

After a war council we broke camp, not a very difficult job, and left at 10:00 a.m., heading upstream to find a new campsite, since we determined yesterday that there was nowhere to land a float plane between us and the Hanbury River, and the rapids were too swift for fishing. Swimming across the rapids at the foot of the Hanbury was not seriously contemplated since none of us wanted to go into that frigid water again. We went inland a bit to avoid a cliff climb and immediately

ran into a slough-like lake which became two little lakes we skirted in marshy going. We kept slogging all morning as the conditions got more difficult and the weather deteriorated. We bushwhacked through everything from spruce bush to head-high willow fields and knee-high grass in soggy marshes filled with unseen hummocks. Tough work.

Right at noon the rain started as we took a rest break out on the shore after pushing our way through the densest willow tangle and most incredible horde of black flies anyone had ever seen, an indescribable mass hitting at you like grains of sand in a desert storm. Everyone's feet were sore in the rubber boots, especially Gord with his injured foot. The cold rain was a steady drizzle out of a bleak sky and we were soaked through to the skin. We trudged the packs slowly down the shore over a jumble of rocks and then inland a few yards to an esker and into a thin spruce grove, our new home.

We were wet and shivering as we set to the task of putting up some kind of shelter for the night. The 8 x 10 ft. blue tarp was used as a roof suspended from a waist-high ridge pole, and the two much smaller pieces of orange plastic used as an end wall and entrance door. Sometime before dark three of us crawled inside, wet and shaking, while Gord stayed outside a few more hours, doing some chores or just sitting with his back against a tree, staring into space, dazed.

The fire started reluctantly; we stripped to our T-shirts and began trying to dry our upper-body clothing, but there was only room at the fire pit for one person at a time, and holding up a garment blocked the heat from the others. After a couple of hours Reg went outside to organize some more firewood in a hard, cold, constant drizzle. At the same time we got him to bring in a large, flat stone which became the top of our fireplace, almost making it into a stove. Danny organized a dinner of watered-down macaroni; the hot food and liquid was greatly appreciated. It made us feel that we would outlast a long and miserable night, a fitting conclusion to this terrible day.

The night passed very slowly. Everyone sat up, huddled against each other, nothing to lean against, cold and exhausted. Reg and I took turns at the firepit, wearing a garbage bag to avoid the water sluicing in, and feeding the fire with wood that first had to be somewhat dried in the pit.

At dawn we all staggered outside, barely able to walk, and marched up and down the ridge like some poor p.o.w.'s, then put some porridge on an outside fire and just managed to eat it before another shower hit. The five-minute showers became a feature of the day.

We rebuilt the camp to provide more room, put spruce boughs on the floor, built the grub box and the reflector oven into an extended front wall, and generally improved our lot including rebuilding and repositioning the fireplace. Reg and I had had only two or three hours of sleep since we got to shore three days

ago, so we squeezed into the mummy bag together and crashed for a couple of hours.

While we were sleeping Gord and Danny went fishing and got two grayling, then later in the afternoon Gord got and managed to land a 12-pound lake trout. Our spirits were greatly buoyed by this bonanza. We all noted how different the feeling and approach to hunting and fishing is when you're doing it out of necessity for food. No instinct of sympathy for the underdog comes into play at all. Although we were fortunate enough in the circumstances to salvage enough food for about 2 1/2 days normal eating, our plan was to try to get one good meal into each person per day, plus lots of hot water.

At 10:30 p.m., after each of us had eaten a quarter of the lake trout, we baked the two grayling on the grill in the firepit to save for later. It was the end of writing by natural light coming through the blue tarp, the firelight was now a help. Our last check around showed a cool evening heading toward a 40F night with the wind at the moment out of the northwest.

Day 16 — Saturday 6 August — stranded day five.

A much more comfortable and therefore shorter night. We each got a couple of hours sleep in the bag, Reg and I together, so we emerged for the first time around 7:00 a.m. quite coherent and co-ordinated as compared to yesterday when we were so stiff and exhausted we were barely able to stand. Also yesterday morning we were all somewhat punchy and disoriented, a condition which was improved substantially

by putting down more food. We decided to backtrack to the pool downstream where we had lunch two days ago to assess the possibilities of a float plane being able to land and take off from there. Then either today or tomorrow, depending on weather, we'd send a scouting party upstream about four miles to a widening in the river Gord remembered and thought was the only one available.

We spent the morning in two pursuits. Reg and Danny, after helping collect rocks from the rubble heap half-way to shore for our morning ritual of "home improvements," acquired a large number of standing dead trees for fuel. Gord and I rebuilt the fireplace and first rock wall and also added a second wall. It was tough work, particularly since we had the end of the lean-to down and there were showers every half hour. However, the place looked better each time we worked on it.

It's worth noting that, while the bugs were often atrocious, we rarely used any of the insect repellent, probably because it didn't seem to help much. And even with Reg and me in the mummy bag and him turned toward the fire, he was very cold by the end of our turn, which could be 2 1/2 hours long. The result of trying to sleep on permafrost, I suppose.

We were still eating the bread bought in Yellowknife just over two weeks ago and soaked in the river; we had half a slice each for lunch. The small piece of ham was turning bad in spots, but we just cut off the green parts and cooked the rest, then ate it with pleasure.



The "hovel" we constructed of a 5' x 7' tarp, branches, rocks, and a reflector oven.

We were discussing the canoe swamping and determined that the river at that time and place was not passable by uncovered canoes. The enormous cross-chop meant you were going to take water in on every second wave and from trough to crest they were well over our heads, perhaps due to the extra 18 inches of water in the river that was mentioned when we were at Lynx Lake. I will never forget the sight of the first canoe going up and down through enormous rollers, at times only the tops of the paddlers' heads visible.

Basically the river surprised us with the size and fury of the water action, so first we should not have been there, and second, we should never have been in that rapid two canoes at the same time. But it was done now.

We did five or six rod hours today without any luck, but had to stay at it. We had lots of firewood for the night, partly because Reg sharpened and set the saw using two pliers and a file from the Leatherman and Swiss Army knives. The home improvements included putting moss in the chinks of the stone walls which were now at waist height.

Six nights to go before we should be rescued according to the plans made before the trip.

Day 18 — Monday 8 August — stranded day seven

Only four more nights to go, hopefully.

Even standing up all night (the rocks were too cold to sit on for more than a few minutes), we felt more refreshed than when hunkering in the "hovel." We'd seen a robin around camp a couple of times, and it now put in an appearance at breakfast. We admired the courage of a bird that could be picking worms in balmy Ancaster instead.

The sun stayed out for an uninterrupted half hour so we washed our faces and hair. The river was frigid but it felt good to be clean on at least part of your body. We were a pretty grubby group. By 1:00 p.m. there was a little breeze and the sun really felt warm for the first time. Perfect conditions for black flies and mosquitoes and we were being tormented badly.

We were all getting punchy from sleep deprivation. It was hard to concentrate and sometimes one found himself drowsing while standing on his feet. At times today the black flies were so intense it was difficult to see, which unfortunately caused everyone to be edgy and uptight on a day with the best weather we'd had till now. Danny took his boots off (which cleared out an area about 30 feet downwind) to discover a heavy, mud-like ring around his ankles, made up of the bodies of dead bugs.

It was a clear day but naturally it rained all evening. We hunkered in the lean-to, quietly planning what we would do and eat when we got out of here.

Day 19 — Tuesday 9 August — stranded day eight.

At 3:45 a.m. the sky had completely cleared from the north and it was cold, deepening to frigid between 4:00 and 5:00. It was easily possible to see your breath.

Three more days before pick-up day, we hoped. We spent a lot of time discussing how the search for us might be conducted when they discovered we were not at Lookout Point. We were very aware, to understate it, that we be ready to attract the attention of the plane whichever direction it might come from.

We were getting pretty slim now, our belts were all in the last notch with plenty of room to spare. We were hungry most of the time and seemed to all have a deep muscle ache in places such as between the shoulder blades, probably from the fatigue and hunger.

Gord and I went fishing in the grayling pool; the walk was getting longer each time. Gord hooked a grayling and then an incredible thing happened. When the fish was a few feet from shore there was a thud on the line and it was taken to the bottom and tangled in some willows. I ran over to help and saw the back of a huge laker attempting to devour the hooked grayling, thrashing around so that he even came partly up on shore. Gord grabbed a rock and I the line, but just as Gord was throwing his rock the trout broke the line and took off with the grayling and our best lure. One of those "you had to be there" experiences.

I was really exhausted, as if I had been working hard instead of making a couple of 40-minute walks. We were all getting slowed down. I had had it with this country. We were out in the open without protection, depending on mother nature, and she turned out to be a bitch!

At noon we heard a roar and saw a single-engine plane on floats with a canoe tied on, heading south and perhaps only 500 yards away. We scrambled to the ridge, waving everything bright we had, but the plane continued on, nobody in it was watching. Having one that close is tough to take.

Danny's watch band was very tight on his arm, caused by countless bites on his wrist, which had swollen badly. Reg's face and neck were a mess and Gord said I looked like the goalie for a dart team. Gord had foot rot, a mass of spongy flesh on the ball of his right foot. But he said it was feeling better now that he had had a chance to wash his socks and take the boots off for a while.

At 7:00 p.m. we moved the fire back about 15 feet to a more protected area where we were better shielded from the chill north wind. After another day of gathering we had a pile of wood inside the lean-to and an armful within reach outside the door, and three piles outside composed of mostly dry, standing, grey wood. We hoped we wouldn't get a couple of days of rain.

Day 20 — Wednesday 10 August — stranded day nine.

Everyone was driven into the lean-to a couple of times during the night and we realized how cold, awkward, and uncomfortable the place really was. When we did get to sleep we experienced completely dreamless slumber, probably closer to passing out than sleeping.

Lovely morning, very little breeze, so the black flies



Danny and Reg

were out by 7:00 a.m. My stomach was churning slightly all the time, but a bit less this morning after the dinner of chili that was served last night. Danny was doing a great job of hoarding the food and serving the right thing to us at the right time, a good trick with his limited resources. The others didn't even inquire what food was left or up next, just trusting his judgement.

Time passed slowly today. At 3:15 p.m. we were inside waiting out a passing storm, discussing our hopes and expectations for a plane on Friday, only two days away. Our big concern if we would not get out Friday was what it would do to the folks back home who did not need one more of these episodes to deal with. We firmly believed that we would be picked up.

There were two rainbows in the sky at the same time around 4:00 p.m., the largest and brightest we had ever seen. After about 10 minutes it faded out before our eyes.

I went fishing before dinner and managed to lose our second last Mepps lure, so Gord scraped the paint off the last one to make it shinier, which he believed would work better. A caribou walked through camp from the jumble of rocks along the river, stopping to stare at the folks huddled around the fire, and then trotted off. Dinner was some macaroni with a grayling added to it, dessert a teaspoonful of strawberry jam.

At 8:30 p.m. it was clear and you could see your breath in the still air.

Day 21 — Thursday 11 August — stranded day ten.

The anniversary of our Kazan misadventure in 1981.

There were northern lights last night, quite a nice display to watch as Danny and Gord sat up and continued their philosophy-of-life discussion. By noon the day was grey and overcast, eventually driving us under cover from a five-minute special just as we were perfecting our rock-throwing from shore. Conversation

was slow, it was difficult to concentrate on much other than what might or might not happen tomorrow. The concern over what a delay would mean to the folks back home was most bothersome.

Shortly after 4:00 p.m., when Gord was eating his lunch, the rain came, looking like it would be here for a while. Talk about our homes and cottages took up a lot of our time, we all attempted to avoid discussing our discomfort or hunger. At breakfast Danny used half a cup of dry oatmeal and a lot of water to make some kind of porridge.

We were discussing the wasted opportunity this trip represented. The loss of equip-

ment and money was nothing compared to the loss of the chance to see this river to our destination, since we were all convinced that it would be the last Arctic trip for this group.

We had set up a bet on the time the plane would arrive, ranging from 4:00 p.m. Friday to 11:00 a.m. Saturday, the prize being your choice of a Swiss Army knife or a Leatherman. We agreed that we would never travel without both of these godsend again. There also was a standing ten-dollar payment up for grabs to anyone who could introduce a new topic of discussion that would keep conversation going for a full half hour but which did not include the omnipresent ones of shelter, food, and fire. So far the money was safe. It appeared that each person realized the importance of maintaining a cohesive, co-operative group, and deliberately went out of their way to avoid conflict. All in all, a good group to be stranded with.

At 7:00 p.m. we were into all our clothes, which meant pulling on the rainsuit bottoms, and tried hard to be patient through this miserable cold rain. We talked a lot now about what kind of food we'd order at the first restaurant we would see, where to get dessert, whether cake or pie or doughnuts, but mostly quietly wishing we were somewhere else. The rain was hard now, the "hovel" was leaking, the sleeping bag was rolled up since we could not afford to get it wet; we sat in a row with heads bowed under the ridge pole facing the river. We had probably been more miserable before, but nobody could readily remember when that might have been.

Danny recited "The Cremation of Sam McGee" again for us. Nicely done, something else to think about.

We were outside after midnight. While standing around the fire I fell asleep numerous times, waking to stagger around. All were quite tired.

Day 22 — Friday 12 August — stranded day eleven.

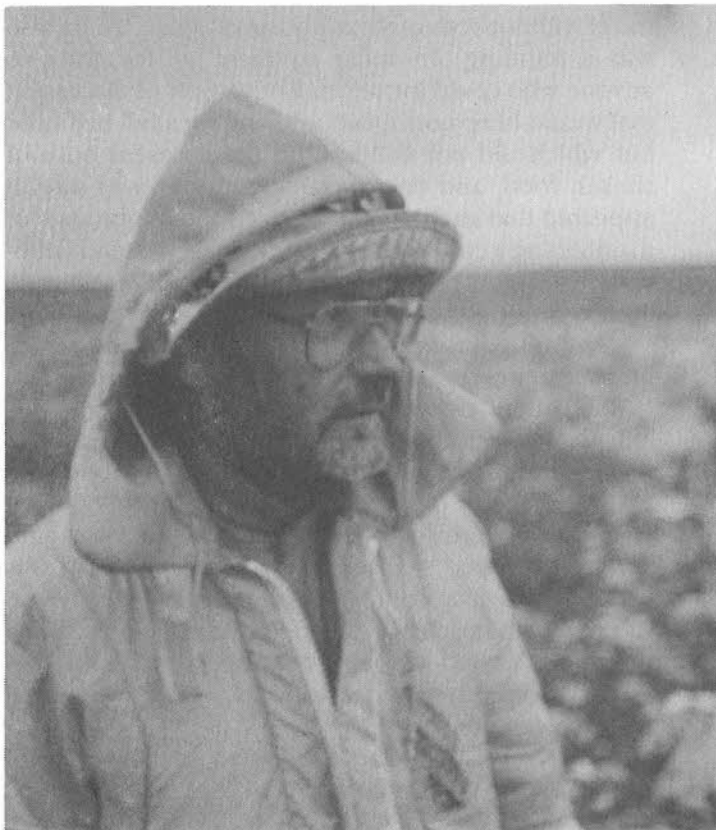
At 8:30 a.m. the sun was breaking through; it was still and wet, the black flies and mosquitoes were out in force but we didn't care because everybody hoped it would be our last morning here.

We cleaned up, even to the extent of scrubbing out the grub box and thoroughly washing all the dishes. We wanted to leave a clean camp behind, hopefully forever. By 9:45 p.m. we were packed and ready, anxious actually, to leave, just waiting until around noon to move out to a spot upriver which afforded a better landing site and a rocky ridge for an observation post. We had been busy trying to sort out the possibilities and probabilities of where and when that plane would fly.

The willow bushes were just beginning to turn yellow. A book to read or cards to play would have been a godsend. We mostly sat in silence, having exhausted every conceivable topic of discussion to the point where we could accurately guess anyone's response to any subject.

At 12:45 p.m. we heard from the point, and then saw, an aircraft flying north to south, east of us. We speculated if that was our pick-up plane it was returning from Lookout Point.

Lots of time to ponder how the Blue Jays were doing, had an election been called, was Harold Ballard still alive, things involved with our various careers. One sure thing was that taking off our boots would clear a



Dan

good-sized room. None of us could remember our ribs ever sticking out like this now that the fat was all used up. We had constant muscle ache, particularly in the shoulders, and exertion had become more difficult daily.

We found a few blueberries growing on four-inch bushes, quite tart tasting. Picked a hatful for lunch.

At 7:00 p.m. the realization that we were not going to be rescued today was sinking in and depression with it, primarily because of the realization that the folks at home were going to go through hell tonight. This really stinks!

Gord caught one small grayling and we all picked blueberries to take back to the shelter. At 7:00 p.m. our bedraggled group headed back to the "hovel," the walk we least wanted to take of any in the world. We were depressed and angry at the apparent lack of effort to find us.

Day 23 — Saturday 13 August — stranded day twelve.

An all-time-record miserable night. Gord and I took the first turn at the fire as Reg and Danny laid down for the 10:30 – 2:15 shift. At midnight it began to rain and then proceeded to pour most of the night, putting all of us on top of each other in the lean-to. We kept using the sleeping bag covered with the split garbage bag until morning anyway, even though the foot got soaked. Danny had even managed to save some food for today and served us some warm apple sauce with blueberries added, but we were not prepared to spend another day here, either physically or emotionally. A bit of bread was being saved for lunch since it represented our last remaining food.

We left at 7:00 a.m. without looking back, hoping never to see this place again, carrying the empty pack and grub box mostly to keep as souvenirs. It was soaked right in except for a narrow band in the west.

At 9:15 a.m. the ceiling had lowered to a misty grey bowl and we were very concerned about the flying conditions. The garbage bags were worn by three of us with a headhole cut out; Gord had his rainsuit. It looked like rain; if it came we would still get wet but maybe stay a little warmer. In any event we were determined not to leave this lookout spot again, come hell or very high water.

We collected four bowls of blueberries, but paid for them with hundreds of bites on the hands and arms since we had to turn over every little bush while crawling around on hands and knees.

It was not possible to stare into the southern sky any more intently than we did. Gord found a glove we had lost several days ago right at the spot where we put the grub box down; we all accepted it as a lucky omen.

At 1:00 p.m. (3:00 back home), since we were still here, Gord and I went fishing for something for dinner while Danny and Reg stayed to scan the sky and pick a few more blueberries. We were back on the ridge at 4:00 p.m., Gord having hauled five and a half grayling (one was a big minnow but we kept everything) out of

the river. I cleaned them within 30 seconds, hardly anxious at all! They were caught on our last lure, which only had two hooks left on it.

We simply could not understand the lack of airplane activity over the river, it just did not make sense to us. We had left a stone arrow, white stones on a black rock, pointing to our campsite when we left this morning.

At 4:23 p.m. a plane was heard, then sighted downstream over the rapids just above the Hanbury. At 5:45 p.m. there was nothing and we were beginning to question the wisdom of moving upstream to this landing pool since presumably they were searching downstream from the canoe visible at the bottom of the rapids. This plane came in from the north.

Reg and Danny left at 6:00 p.m. to rustle up some firewood and Gord and I followed at 6:45. We were cutting up some wood when we heard a plane and Gord saw him circling over the canyon, then turn and fly inland up the river, too high and too far away to see us standing on the ridge waving our brightest clothes such as rainsuits and jackets. Strangely we all felt encouraged by the near sighting rather than discouraged, because it proved the folks up there were searching and had focussed on this area as where the accident happened. When did the Search and Rescue people get notified?

We had been really bitten up today, our faces under the beards were burning and felt as if we had been hit by buckshot. Naturally we had fish and blueberries for dinner, not much choice but our compliments to the chef nevertheless.



Gord and lake trout

Day 23 — Sunday 14 August — stranded day thirteen.

Just after midnight Gord and I first heard and then saw very bright lights on a plane flying a grid search pattern somewhere north of us, probably at the canyon, likely looking for a signal from the missing ELT we had rented at Lynx Lake and which was now somewhere in the Thelon. The plane worked its way north and left us after at least half an hour, but it was certainly nice to know that the professionals had arrived.

We had a bit of fish from last night warmed up and some blueberries with weak milk around 8:00 a.m. and spent considerable time discussing where to set up today. There appeared to be no clearcut reference or advantage in any direction so we decided to stay put and Danny went back for the survival blanket and grub box which we had left on the ridge downstream yesterday. Gord laid out a big double-edged triangle on the rocks at shore, and Reg and I gathered wood, mostly green now, and set a fire on the ridge. All we could do was wait and hope the decision to walk upstream wouldn't haunt us.

Beautiful clear day, great flying weather. Just after 10:00 a.m. Danny got back, exhausted, so we laid the sleeping bag out on the rocks of the ridge and put him inside it.

We picked four heaping bowls of blueberries and that, with a bit of corn bread, represented both lunch and the last bit of food available to us. Waiting was interminable. We were all counting very heavily on being out of here tonight and relieving the pressure in Ancaster.

Waiting, watching, listening all day. By 5:00 p.m. not a sign of air activity; we were all seriously anxious and perplexed. What was going on? It had been one of the nicest weather days of the trip, mixed sun and cloud and enough wind from the north to keep the bugs down somewhat, but nobody was taking advantage of it.

At 5:38 p.m., on the thirteenth day after capsizing, we are all quiet in contemplation of another night being cold, tired, dirty, and hungry when Danny jumped up and yelled: "I hear a plane!" A Twin Otter CF 803 appeared out of the southern sky just below camp. What a beautiful sight!

When the doors of the plane opened after it had coasted to shore, an RCAF technician leaped out to secure the plane. An RCMP officer followed, dressed for the bush. After the usual "how are you guys doing" greeting, his next words were: "Did you know that Gretzky was traded?" Sounds like an Edmonton crew to you? The main concern was to get some food into us, so all kinds of dry rations were pitched from plane to shore where we fell upon them without a great deal of civility.

We took off about 6:30 p.m. As soon as we were in the air a message was relayed home to our people through Reliance weather station: "All four found alive and well."

We were on our way home.



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

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

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

NEWS BRIEFS

NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE Articles, trip reports, book reviews, photographs, sketches, technical tips, or anything else that you think might be of interest to other readers, are needed for future issues. Submit your contributions on 3½ in. computer disk (WordPerfect or text files preferred, but any format is welcome), by email (aharting@netcom.ca), or in type-written form; contact the editor for more information. Contributor's Guidelines are available upon request; please follow these guidelines as much as possible to increase the efficiency of the production of our journal. The deadline dates for the next two issues are:

issue: Autumn 1997 *deadline date:* 3 August
Winter 1997 19 October

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

WCA AT THE SHOWS

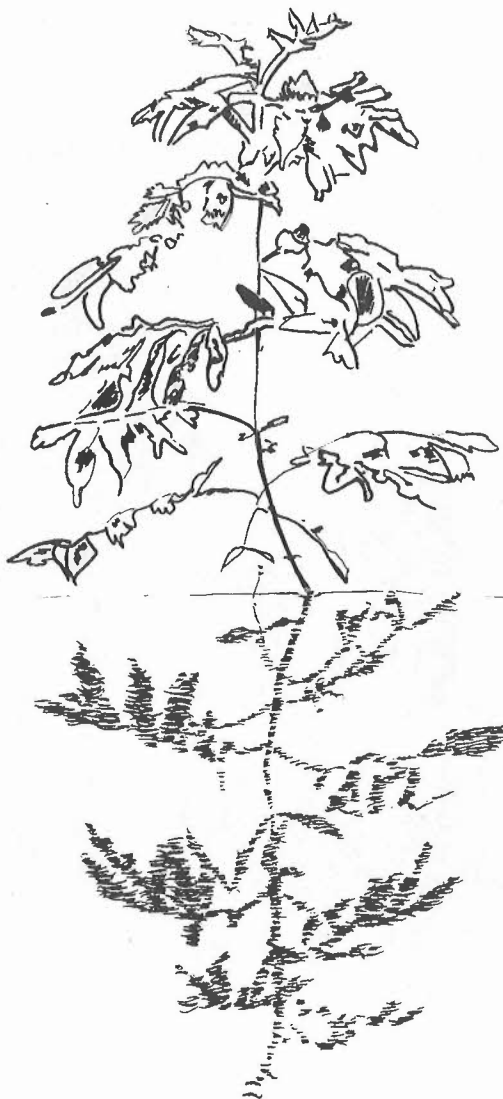
This past 21 to 23 February the new **OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SPORTS SHOW** was held at the International Centre in Mississauga, featuring not only paddle sports but many other outdoor sport activities. The Board of Directors of the WCA decided that the club should participate in this show to try a different venue. The Outdoor Show was a complete success and exposed the club to a whole new audience. The consensus of the club members that staffed the booth was that this show was very upbeat and an excellent replacement for the Toronto Sportmen's Show we don't participate in any longer.

The always popular **CANOE EXPO** was held on 11-13 April to the delight of canoeists and kayakers alike. The WCA again participated in the show as we have since its inauguration in 1992. This year the club also held its Annual General Meeting on the Sunday morning at the show. We had a very good turnout for

the meeting compared to the last few years. We were however under some time constraints because the room was booked for later in the morning by Canoe Expo, so the meeting was a little hurried.

I want to again thank all the members who staffed the booth at both shows because it's their enthusiasm which makes our presence a success.

Paul Hamilton



FALL MEETING

This year's Fall Meeting will take place at the Minden Wild Water Preserve, located on the Gull River near Minden, Ontario, on 26 to 28 September. See the registration form on the inside of the cover of this issue of *Nastawgan*.

KILLARNEY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Ontario Parks, an agency of the Ministry of Natural Resources, has initiated a review of the Killarney Provincial Park Management Plan. The purpose of the plan review will be to re-assess resource management operations and development policies in the park. It will also study adjacent areas that contain significant natural and cultural features.

The plan review will look at ways of enhancing protection within present park boundaries, and will explore options for complementary management of adjacent lands and waters. These are areas in which the park, and neighbors of the park, share values and concerns which should be discussed and addressed.

The review is organized in four stages: Background Information Collection (spring 97), Issues and Alternative Review (summer 97), Preliminary Plan Review (fall 97), Improved Management Plan Inspection (fall 98). There are opportunities for involvement at each stage.

If you want to provide input, contact John McGrath, Park Superintendent, Killarney Provincial Park, Killarney P0M 2A0; information (705) 287-2900; e-mail kershaw@gov.on.ca

SAFE WATER

Adapted from: *Water Disinfection in the Wilderness* (The Western Journal of Medicine, 122: 450-453, May 1975).

The increase in eco-tourism and wilderness travel has created a need for precautions against consumption of unsafe drinking water. Travellers' diarrhoea, i.e. Delhi belly, Montezuma's revenge, beaver fever, etc., are caused by one or more of various organisms inducing intestinal illness. The most common cause is an infection with a different serotype (subspecies) than one's own normal intestinal bacteria, *Escherichia coli*. This different bacterial subspecies is toxic to us, but not to the people (or animals) who carry it in their intestines. We get it most commonly by drinking contaminated water. It is also found in ice made with that water, in raw foods, and in unpasteurized milk or cream.

The widespread pollution in North America in many of our streams and lakes is shown by the results of Public Health testing. Many times these confirm the presence of disease-causing viruses (poliomyelitis, hepatitis, and enteroviruses), of bacteria (salmonella, shigella, typhoid, and *E coli*), and of protozoa (amoeba and giardia).

On any trip, sterilizing water by boiling is at best an inconvenience and is usually impossible. In addition, boiling may not kill the hepatitis or enteroviruses, the spores of bacteria, or the cysts of amoeba.

The use of an aqueous solution of elemental iodine is a simple, safe, easy-to-carry, rapid, and completely effective method of sterilizing water. Persons known to be iodine sensitive or who are under treatment for hypo or hyper thyroidism should not use it without approval from their physicians. These are the known possible contra-indications. The accumulation of iodine in our bodies is not a problem. It has been used copiously in hot climates; person(s) were tested

after two weeks, and did not show blood iodine determinations above normal. A published rumor that iodinated water in an aluminum canteen is dangerous is completely erroneous,

Aqueous Iodine Technique

Four grams of elemental iodine crystals (30 crystals) are put in a one-ounce glass medicine bottle (not plastic) that has a screw cap. When used as a measuring cup, this cap holds approximately three millilitres of liquid. Keep this bottle filled with water, and refill it immediately as it is used. Only the saturated FLUID is used. To ensure a saturated solution of aqueous iodine, solid iodine crystals should be evident in the bottom of the bottle. Any iodine crystals that float to the top should be discarded. (If any crystals are inadvertently swallowed they are not harmful).

One capful of the super-natant iodine solution is added to each glass (or two caps per pint, or four caps per quart, or five caps per litre) in the best water available. If the water is at room temperature it is completely sterilized of entero-viruses, of bacteria and their spores, of algae, and of protozoans and their cysts, in FIFTEEN MINUTES. If the water is near freezing, is heavily contaminated, or is turbid, allow HALF AN HOUR OR MORE for sterilization. Iodine is effective over a wide pH (acid-base) range, as well as in the presence of organic contaminants.

The four grams of iodine crystals will sterilize about 1,000 litres of water. Any pharmacy can special-order elemental iodine, but a physician's prescription is required in the United States because iodine crystals in large doses are toxic.

Thus, may your cool, clear water always be safe.

Claire Muller

A SOLO TRIP IN THE NEAR WILDERNESS

Ralph Zaffrann

The subject of the 1996 WCA symposium covered canoeing in the near wilderness. This was something I can really relate to because, ever since my early retirement almost 11 years ago I would schedule an ice-out fishing trip in Algonquin Provincial Park in the spring and a fall color trip in September. The far-flung trips I do in the summer inspire me, but the close-in trips refresh me. It's an opportunity to reconnect with the peace and silence of the wilderness.

My fall-1996 trip began with a three-day forecast that promised a low probability of rain. I chose the more vigorous of the two trips I had planned, a loop around Opeongo Lake.

The wind on Opeongo was from the ENE. Paddling north to Bates Island I recalled my conversation with a ranger about an incident that had occurred there when a couple was killed by a black bear several years ago. The ranger also said, "Oh, by the way, there have been several reports of bear sightings on the north end of Opeongo. Keep a clean camp and secure your food." Ever since a bear encounter on the Fond du Lac River in Northern Saskatchewan, that's a warning I take to heart.

North of Bates Island the lake opens to several deep bays on the east side. Big rollers from the northeast churned up the lake and slowed my forward progress. I fell short of my goal for that day, but was pleased to make it to an island halfway across the north arm.

My camp faced west and the setting sun was warm and pleasant. Looking out across the lake, there was no color to be seen. The ranger had told me that there had not yet been a frost; hence the only color was green.

Day two dawned with clear skies. The air temperature was perhaps only 15C, but it felt quite warm if one was out of the wind, with the sun beating down. Today was more of a hiking day than a canoeing day with portages from Opeongo Lake to Happy Isle Lake, Happy Isle Lake to Merchant Lake, and Merchant Lake to Big Trout Lake. It takes me two trips to cross a portage so the total land travel at the end of the day was 13,100 metres (or for a non-metric old-timer like me — 8.2 miles).

Happy Isle Lake is especially beautiful with several nice, south-facing campsites on rocky points of the north shore. Merchant Lake is not nearly as pleasant as all the campsites are on the west shore and are well shaded. However, there is one on the north shore which appears to be a sunny, sandy site.

The day was tough and the daylight in the fall all too short. I just barely got dinner and dishes done before the last of the light faded in the west.

Grey! Grey! The only color that greeted me next morning was grey. The sun at various times tried to break through the sombre sky and did so for a few short times, but then the black clouds rolled in to seal off the patch of blue and all was grey again.

It was a windless, peaceful day. The water reflected the trees and the shoreline perfectly. Occasionally, a light breeze ruffled the water, turning the sharp reflection into a shimmering, impressionistic image.

The final portage from Burnt Root Lake to Lake La Muir, while only 1,510 metres, is quite steep. Rain threatened at any moment; fortunately it held off until I had my camp established. I cooked my dinner of Spanish rice with home-

dried peas and hamburger on my gas stove under a rain tarp. Dessert was apple-cinnamon pancakes topped off with real boiled coffee. Sitting dry and content under the tarp, just watching the rain fall, is luxury to revel in.

In the west are two steep-sided hills with a valley between them. In my mind's eye I could imagine those hill-sides ablaze with color. Three loons swam by, giving me an evening concert. A magic moment.

Day four opened with a grey misty morning, but at least it was not raining. I read in the tent hoping that the sun would break through, but finally the call of nature drove me from my bed. While I was cooking breakfast the clouds did part and the sun shone brightly.

A group of 10 loons gathered in the water in front of my camp. I was surprised that they responded to my low-pitched voice with songs of their own. These usually solitary or paired birds gather in groups early in the fall to prepare for their trip south.

I was on the water by "sun time" of about 10:30 a.m.. Sun time because my "Mickey Mouse" waterproof watch (good to 30 metres) got damp and stopped running. It was a beautiful paddle day and I saw my first fall color. At intervals, maple trees leaning out over the water had donned their dress of crimson. Most striking because they were the only show in town.

The outlet of Lake la Muir, the Little Madawaska River, opens into extensive marches. I had hoped to spot a moose, but the only wildlife I saw was a merganser; I also observed several beaver houses.

My destination for the day was Hogan Lake. Along the shore is a sheer granite cliff, soaring to about 40 metres above the water. At its foot are huge blocks, which in times past had dropped from the cliff. From the side one can see that the cliff is the truncated end of a long ridge. Could the glacier have sheared off the end of this hill in that fashion?

The lake was fogged in; visibility was no more than 10 to 15 metres. I navigated south to the portage by compass bearing. The portage is a healthy 3,750 metres with a steep climb from the lake to get the adrenalin moving. Several hours later I kicked up a partridge on the shores of Big Crow Lake and my day's hike was completed.

Paddling across Big Crow Lake I sighted a hawk in a tree top along the shore. Lunch was cooked on a west-facing campsite on Little Crow Lake. It was late. The warm soup and coffee were much appreciated and re-charged my energy reserves.

While paddling up the Crow River, clouds rolled in and the grey skies prevailed again. I paddled into Proulx Lake and stayed at a gorgeous campsite on the north shore, a sand esker clothed in red pine with room for 25 tents. But I had it all to myself.

The stove I carried with me conked out, malfunctioned, was kaput. It was fortunate that it was not raining. I was able to collect enough wood from the ground to cook my dinner and breakfast. The secret is a small fire with the grill right on the burning coals. Most of the fireplaces in the park are built with the grill so high that you need a major conflagration to boil a pot of water.

It rained most of the night. I hate packing up a wet camp, but there was no help for it as it rained lightly all day, on and

off. Even worse, after portaging over to Opeongo Lake I found big, big waves rolling in from the south — the direction I had to go. I tried running into the waves but gave it up after several waves washed over the bow. I set up camp on the shore and watched the whitecaps all day and listened to the howling wind well into the night.

Next morning I rose early and began my trek down the lake before the wind came up. As the wind freshened, it fortunately had shifted to the west. Rollers from the west I could handle. Soon I was back at the dock and loading my car for the ride back home. With me I took a sense of peace and serenity.

REVIEWS

VOYAGE OF A SUMMER SUN, Canoeing the Columbia River, by Robin Cody, published by Sasquatch Books, Seattle, 1996, softcover, 320 pages, US\$14.95. Reviewed by Herb Pohl.

“The story is the Columbia River, not the canoe and me, but I’ve learned that friends can’t hear me tell about the river until they know why I was out there. This is not an adventure story, although some adventure was unavoidable, and I didn’t set out to find myself if I could help it. Nor did I launch the trip with a large point to prove. It was a voyage of discovery, and its telling is in the uncovering of surprise on a river I thought I knew. It is an attempt to put words on those occasional true chords that come when a man puts his ear to the river for a good long time. I can’t say precisely where the idea of the solo canoe trip came from. I think now it may have been simmering for over forty years in a slow, slow cooker, and the heat rose from many different sources.”

With this introduction the author begins to tell a compelling story for which an 82-day, 1200-mile canoe trip from the headwaters of the Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean provides the frame. The centre piece of the story is the river, past and present, and in particular the changes wrought during the last 200 years. It’s a story told with self-effacing humor and wonderfully descriptive metaphors by a genuine, but never strident, environmentalist. This book ranks with the best of R.M. Patterson’s and Elliott Merrick’s writing and should be in everyone’s library.

THE SHAPE OF THE CANOE, written and published by John Winters (Redwing Designs, Box 283, Burk’s Falls, ON, P0A 1C0), 1996, softcover, 84 pages, 57 illustrations, \$20.00 plus postage and handling. web :<http://www.onlink.net/~jwinters> email: jwinters@onlink.net Reviewed by Toni Harting.

Traditionally, canoes have been designed without much thought being given to scientific principles because few designers have any real understanding of theoretical hydrodynamics. Now, however, for the first time, a publication has been produced presenting the

fundamentals of hydrodynamics as they apply to canoes and canoe design. Long-time WCA member John Winters, a professional naval architect with several decades of design experience, presents us with many equations, coefficients, graphs, numbers, mathematics, and more that make this treatise a most valuable addition to the limited number of studies on the subject of canoe and kayak design.

The book is written for the many paddlers and boat builders who would like to better understand how boats perform and should not be considered a comprehensive text on the topic. The math is quite simple so people lacking a strong math background will find everything comprehensible. All you need is an inquiring mind.

BIG DRAG CREEK TO THE MACKENZIE RIVER, A Descent of the “Mountain River,” a VHS-format video produced by George Drought and published by Wilderness Bound Video Productions (43 Brodick St., Hamilton, ON, L8S 3E3, ph. (905) 528-0059, email: gdrought@interlynx.net), 1996, 27 minutes, \$34.95 plus postage and handling. Reviewed by Toni Harting.

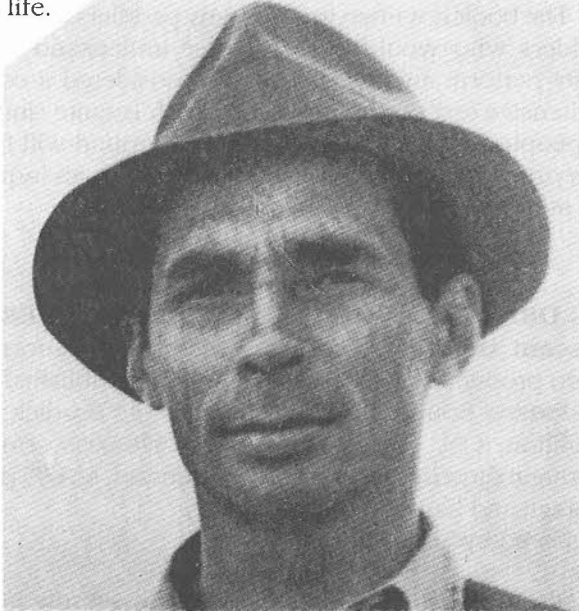
Short of actually doing the trip yourself, the most direct and efficient way to get to know a river is by looking at a film about it. In case of the remote Mountain River in the Northwest Territories that’s now possible thanks to the video filmed and produced by George Drought and Barbara Burton. They are professional canoeists with a tremendous amount of experience in travelling all over canoe country, and their exciting video does indeed tell the story of a trip down the river very well. The video shows many scenes of paddling, portaging, camp life, and exploring, as well as marvellous shots of the country, the river, and various wildlife that will warm the hearts of the viewer. The well-spoken commentary gives a lot of useful information and is never overpowering. This film should be thoroughly enjoyed by past and future travellers on the Mountain River, in fact by anybody interested in canoeing a challenging northern river. Future video projects of the production team include the Madawaska, Petawawa, Soper, and Hood Rivers.

ELLIOTT MERRICK 1905–1997

Elliott T. "Bud" Merrick died on 22 April 1997 at his rural mountain home outside Asheville, North Carolina. After a joyous weekend with his wife, son, daughter, and grandson he passed away peacefully in his sleep, a few days before his 92nd birthday.

Many of us here in Toronto first met him in late January 1989 at the WCA Wilderness Symposium on Labrador, when he reflected on his memories of Labrador life 60 years ago. It was a magical evening. It left many of us misty-eyed and ended with a prolonged standing ovation from the 700 attendees for this much-admired kindred spirit.

Elliott Merrick was strongly drawn to the beauty of a simple existence close to nature. It provided meaning and inspiration to his own life and it formed the basis of his writings. This attachment persisted throughout his life.

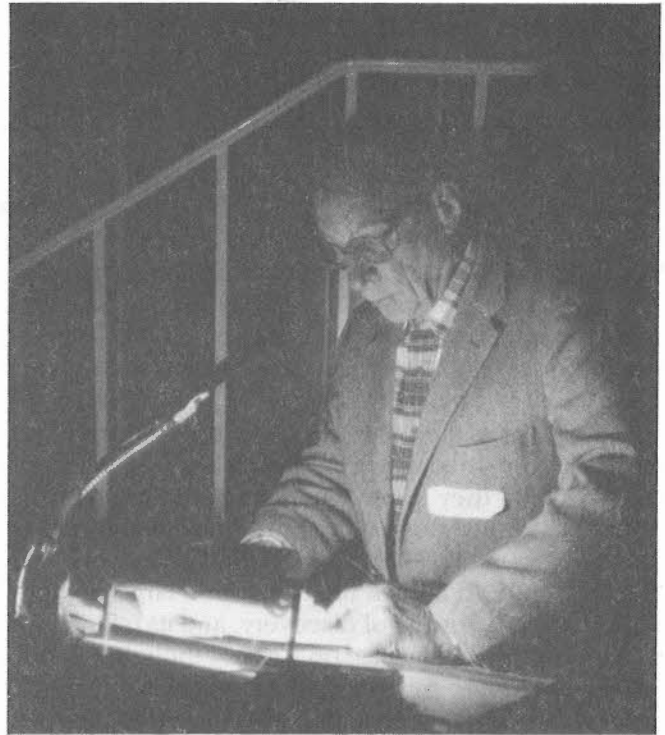


Elliott as a young man

In 1929 he volunteered with the Grenfell Mission in Labrador and stayed on for two years and three months. His encounters with the stark Labrador wilderness and its indomitable people had a profound and lasting influence on him. In a recent message to the 1997 Wilderness Paddlers Gathering at the Hulbert Outdoor Center in Vermont, he wrote:

We were changed forever by our months in the Labrador wilderness. We will never be the same.

I am thankful to have been a little part of this wilderness living. And more than all is the land, the long white lakes, the ridges and rivers, the spaces and manlessness, the spruce forests and birch hills, and the terrible beauty of it when darkness and cold are tightening like a grip of iron. Nothing in my lifetime will be more satisfying than to have glimpsed the heart of all that.



At the January-1989 Symposium

He published eight books and countless additional stories in magazines such as the *New Yorker*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers*, the *Reader's Digest*, and elsewhere. Four of the eight books reflected directly on his Labrador days. His first published book, *True North* (1933) is a diary about living in Labrador. *Frost and Fire* (1939) is a novel about a trapper's struggle for existence. *Northern Nurse* (1942) is the story of nurse Kate Austen. This was his most successful book commercially and was on the bestseller lists for months. *The Long Crossing and Other Labrador Stories* (1992) is a collection of three fiction and six non-fiction short stories. Two other books, *From This Hill Look Down* (1934) and *Green Mountain Farm* (1948), reflect on the subsistence farm years in northern Vermont where he and Kate lived during the Depression and started their family. *Ever the Wind Blows* (1939) is a fictional autobiography, and *Passing By* (1947) is a novel based on his service aboard a convoy tanker bound for England during the winter of 1944–45.

Unfortunately Elliott could not sustain his family from his writings alone and so also taught English at the University of Vermont, worked as an editor for the Office of War Information, served in the merchant marine in World War II, took another teaching position at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and joined the United States Forest Service in Asheville, where he served for 22 years as a science editor and publications officer.

After his retirement from the Forest Service he spent much of his time sailing along the eastern sea-coast with Kate and then Patricia. His last boat, acquired in 1970, was a new Camper Nicholson, a 32-foot sloop and a dream come true. And in 1994, at age 89, he crewed with his two longtime friends, Cliff and Sylvia Brock, on their 40-foot cutter *Destiny*, during an arduous 1,000-mile ocean voyage from Chesapeake Bay to Bermuda. He called this adventure his "swan song."

He was always most gracious and generous of his time to those of us who admired his writings and shared his passion for the northern wilderness. It seemed he was always ahead of me with letters in our correspondence, and like a fretful father he was genuinely concerned about the risks I was assuming when canoeing the northern Labrador coastline.

In late February of this year, my wife, Linda, and I spent two wonderful days in Asheville while we visited with him and Patricia during the day. Although physically weakening and experiencing pain, mentally he was his old self. And invariably our conversation would come around to those extraordinary recollections of his Labrador years. His voice and face sparkled with happiness as he recounted those precious memories from long ago. He was a self-confessed romantic to the end and it seemed he was profoundly pleased to be one.

He was born Elliott Tucker Merrick the 3rd in Montclair, New Jersey, on 11 May 1905. His father was president of Hoyt Metal, a branch of the National Lead Company. He graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy and then Yale University in 1927. He first tried newspaper work and then advertising and hated both. He then attempted writing. But his first book, a biography of the mountain climber Henri Russell, could not find a publisher. Frustrated, he became a deckhand aboard a freighter but quickly abandoned that notion to serve as a volunteer at the Grenfell station in Indian Harbor. He stayed on in Labrador to become the teacher of the third and fourth grades at the mission school in North West



Elliott's home in Asheville, N.C.

River. There he fell in love with Kate Austen, Dr. Harry Paddon's resident Australian nurse. They married and in the years ahead raised three children. Kate died in 1989.

He is survived by his second wife, Patricia Herring Stratton; a son, Austen, of Kansas City, Missouri; a daughter, Susan Hoover, of Wenatchee, Wisconsin; a



18 February 1997

sister, Josephine Mock, of Edwardsburg, Michigan; a brother, Addison, of Craftsbury, Vermont; a stepson, William D. Stratton, of Eugene, Oregon; six grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

It seems appropriate to conclude with Elliott's own words from the final paragraph in his first book, *True North*:

This evening the bay is very quiet. We have been sitting on a driftwood stump in the sand. A dying spruce leans out over the stillwater, looking down untroubled at itself. As though the edge of the bay were breathing, a faint shining ripple runs along the beach. Way off in the sky across the bay the tops of the mountains are glowing in the last sun. We lay our fingers in the water and dig our bare feet deeper into the sand to be closer to the earth's heart, we love it so. And a feeling of gladness and sorrow comes over the water to us like a wave; gladness that the earth is so free and wide and life-giving and generous; and sorrow that so many millions of men are unhappy, neither knowing nor caring for these things.

Simple yet eloquent words. His own life reflected a similar simplicity and eloquence. And in the words of Henry David Thoreau from *Walden* (1854):

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and to see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when it came to die, discover that I had not lived.

George Luste

AROUND PHILIP EDWARD ISLAND

Barry Dicks

What a refreshing change it was to go on a canoe trip without a single back-breaking portage. In July 96, I did a loop around Northern Georgian Bay's Philip Edward Island. This part of the Canadian Shield is located in Georgian Bay west of the French River outlets and south of Killarney Provincial Park. The island's southern shoreline is wild, beautiful, remote, and exposed to whatever weather the winds of Georgian Bay deliver. Philip Edward's northern shore is protected, steep, and a little less attractive. I had not done this trip before so it was, in every sense of the word, exploratory.

The best access point to begin and end lies within the Killarney Provincial Park boundaries, so it is necessary to obtain a parking permit at the Park office on George Lake. Leaving the office I drove west about 1.5 km towards the village of Killarney; a left turn south took me to the public launching site on the Chikanish-ing River. It has excellent launching for canoes, kayaks, and even a ramp for power boats. Although Georgian Bay is not in sight it is only an easy 0.5-km paddle away. Very soon the coast of Georgian Bay makes its presence evident with bare rock, wind-twisted pines, and the beautiful aquamarine color of its waters.

I crossed an open one kilometre of very placid water to what is named South Point on Philip Edward Island, and it was here that I began the pattern of travel that would continue all along the island's southern coastline. This region of the island disappears slowly under Georgian Bay; so the area is characterized by

countless exposed rocks, reefs, shoals, and many smaller islands with names like One Tree Island, The Long Rocks, Hawk Islands, The Foxes, and my personal favorite, Black Bill Island. Above all, the water on this shore is shallow with utterly amazing clarity. The only fishing boats I saw were distant dots on the horizon; it's definitely no place for a powerboat.

This area is best described as a rocky maze, so selecting the best route between the rocks and avoiding the reefs makes for a stimulating bit of paddling. Only once (because I was looking down into the water instead of ahead) did I end up on a shoal that seemed to come up from nowhere. For over five hours this was the kind of glorious canoeing I had. The weather conditions were even ideal, a warm sun, just the odd cloud, a calm breeze, and gentle swells coming in off Georgian Bay. Nevertheless, in the back of my mind I was constantly aware that all these benign conditions could change quickly and dramatically.

During the first day I covered 12 km of the coast; it was a very leisurely pace. Campsites were abundant with lots of bays to disappear into if one wished. However, I selected a very exposed island with a few pines and cedars to set my tent up behind. This was an unnamed island near Big Rock Bay. Like previous travellers in the area I used plenty of rocks to anchor my tent down just in case .

Further out in the Bay I could see waves breaking on exposed rocky shelves. As on almost all canoe trips,



the wind had picked up by late afternoon and continued to exert its powerful influence throughout the night. That evening the only other occupant I had encountered on my island was a mink foraging along the shoreline. Good thing too, because there were no trees tall enough to effectively hang the food pack from. On a previous trip near the French River I had received a visit from a black bear that had decided to swim out to my island campsite to feast on the wild cranberries. The most significant type of bird life here is the double-crested Cormorant. At one point in the 1960s these birds had almost totally disappeared because of toxic chemicals in the food chain. Now there are more than 38,000 pairs of nesting birds, a sure sign that environmental damage can be reversed.

On the second day the winds were a lot stronger but it was one of those rare occasions in canoeing when you are travelling with the winds and the waves. That day way-off in the distance I did see a group of eight sea kayaks but the power boats were still rare. I'm sure they wouldn't risk coming into these treacherous waters. The good news is that the coastline of Philip Edward Island is still in its natural state. Only once did I see a small collection of cottages at Bateman Island.

That day I only travelled five kilometres, choosing again to camp on an island with another breathtaking view of Georgian Bay. This campsite had a sheltered cove to pull the canoe into and to swim from. Even though the site had been used before, it was amazingly free of litter. Stopping early gave me time to set-up, swim, eat, and explore a few of the numerous back bays.

In two easy days I had travelled the whole southern coast of Philip Edward Island, something that would be impossible in less than ideal weather. Now on day three I was about to turn into Beaverstone Bay and begin my return via Collins Inlet. The minute you leave the Georgian Bay coastline the scenery changes — the area loses its pristine wilderness. As you enter Beaverstone Bay there are many cottages, a well-marked navigation channel, and heavy boat traffic. Collins Inlet is a little like Highway 401; it is a safe, sheltered, deep-water route for sailboats and big cruisers.

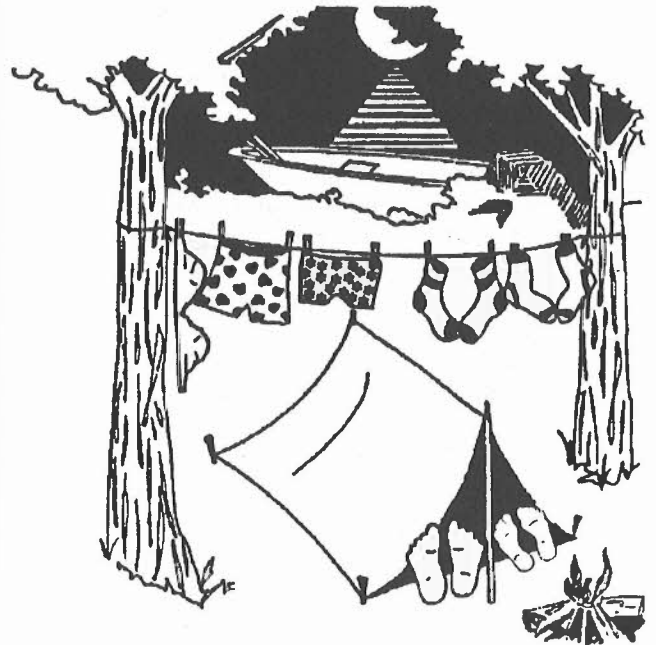
Collins Inlet is narrow, much like a river system. During my first two days I had seen very few other travellers but here I passed dozens of sailboats under power and with sails furled. Then there were the big cruisers; although I didn't keep an accurate count, several dozen of these passed me. Rarely did the big boats slow down or even show any concern for me and my canoe. I was frequently bothered by the wake they threw off. One particular boat in a major hurry set off a wake well over a metre high. I realized then that I had been much safer out on Georgian Bay.

The area around Collins Inlet does not offer many opportunities to camp as there are high cliffs over its entire length. During that afternoon, rain and thunder squalls moved into the area so I continued on the full length of the inlet, returning to the Killarney launch

site, a distance of 27 km, that day.

When I return next time if weather conditions are good, I will stay on the Georgian Bay side of Philip Edward Island much longer, perhaps even returning on that side, thus avoiding Collins Inlet altogether.

Love in a Canoe



**Come and share the wind with me
The night is full of tears
On the last portage, we'll find
Our footprints on the years**

**Come and share the night with me
Warmth on warmth in dark
When the wind shakes the tent
You are fire, I am spark**

**You are fire, I am spark
Against the tears of night
In torch and touch and sudden flame
To reach, then hold on tight**

Larry Everson

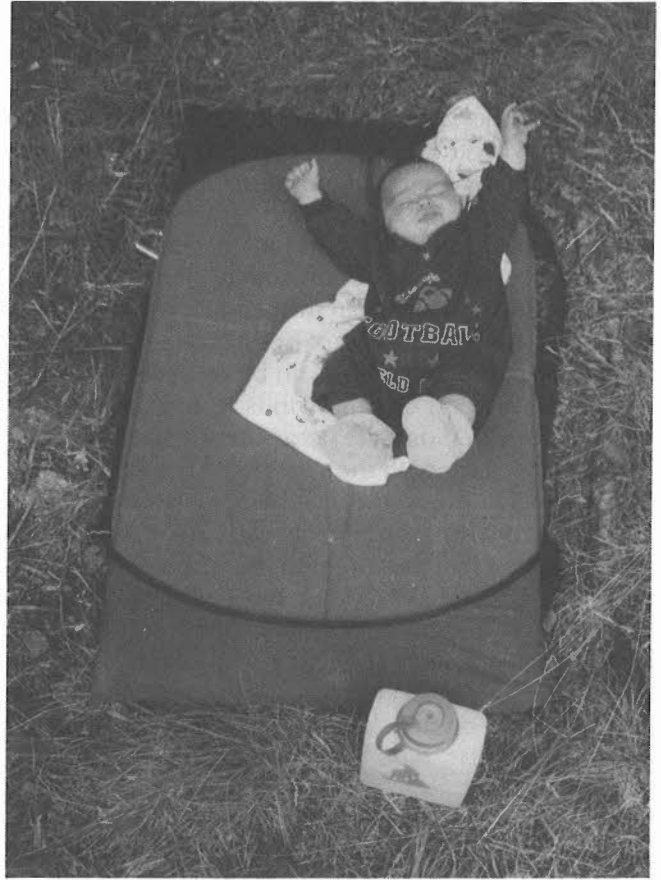
BABY'S FIRST CANOE TRIP

The arrival of Douglas in June last year meant that our plans for a trip on the Thelon would have to be postponed for a few years. But the thought of no trip at all never really crossed our minds. We would adapt to the new addition but not change entirely. An August long weekend on the Barron River in the eastern section of Algonquin Park seemed to be a good way to initiate our newcomer to the outdoors.

Pat and I had paddled this section of the river from Grand Lake to the Squirrel Rapids at the park boundary many times before. We have found it to be an ideal spring trip for WCA novices. Even with the long drive from Toronto, the trip can easily be completed over a long weekend. This time we also had a novice with us, a friend from Pennsylvania on her first canoe trip.

The presence of the baby and our guest made for an unusual paddling arrangement. Julie, our guest, and I paddled in one canoe, while Pat soloed with Douglas in his infant car seat in the centre of her canoe. The arrangement worked quite well, right down to towing the "baby" boat behind us when baby decided it was feeding time. It also had a certain romantic beauty. As Pat paddled ahead of us on Grand Lake, framed by white-clouded blue skies, calm blue lake, and pretty shorelines, I thought of what a unique mother-and-child picture they presented.

Tripping with the baby made for some adaptations to our tripping equipment. A life jacket for infants under 20 lbs had to be specially ordered from the States as we could not find one up here. The infant car seat worked great as a canoe seat. Covered by a flannel blanket, it also protected him from the sun. At the campsites, suspended from the painter between two trees, it also made for a soothing swing. A dry bag served as an odor-free container for packing out the dirty diapers. Carrying food for him was not a concern as long as Pat was kept properly hydrated.



Portaging was simply a longer exercise but otherwise not that unusual. Baby was carried across in a snugli and often needed feeding or diapering at one end of the portage. As one person tended him, the other two carried the gear. Having the third person along most definitely made the portaging easier despite the extra canoe. We shall have to get used to much slower portages next year when we shall try a longer trip without the benefit of the third adult.

Bugs were not really a problem in August. A large adult headnet worked well as a body length baby bug-suit over the portages. At the campsites Douglas napped contentedly under the two-pole bug tent we use for cooking on our more northern trips. At night he slept very comfortably in his infant-sized sleeping bag.

The relaxed schedule we always set ourselves on this river allows for a little bit of hiking and swimming once the tents are set up. Swimming in the late summer proved to be much more enjoyable than the frigid spring experiences we were used to.





As always, we took our time to savor the paddle through the Barron Canyon. This section was a trip highlight for our American friend. She knows much about the ways of native North Americans and had presented Douglas with a beautiful dream catcher made for him by a nine-year-old son of two Lakota and Blackfoot friends of hers. At the base of the Canyon we paused, made a small offering, and took away a small piece of the reddish granite that must once have been part of the canyon wall. It now hangs from Douglas' dream catcher in his room, in recollection, we hope, of his first step in a lifetime of wilderness enjoyment and appreciation.

Bryan Buttigieg

CANOEING WITH VESTA

Viki Mather

Usually around about mid-summer I get out canoeing for a few days by myself in the Temagami area. It's great to be free and independent. Going to bed with the sun, sleeping in until the sun rises again high enough to warm me through the walls of the tent. Eating when I'm hungry, travelling at a pace that's comfortable, taking plenty of time to stop and hug the trees.

As I planned my trip last year, I decided to take a passenger along. My daughter, Vesta, then was 9 1/2 and easy to travel with. I just can't imagine why I never thought of taking her on a mom-and-daughter canoe trip before.

We packed up the small tent, lots of food, and all the paraphernalia we would need for three days in the canoe. Vesta prepared her own day pack with the sorts of things I'd never take on my solo trips: TWO paperback books, a teddy bear, colored pencils, lots of paper, some bits of string, a special little box, and something mysterious crumpled up in newspaper.

My husband, Allan, gave us a ride in the motorboat to the north end of the lake, then carried the canoe over the longest of the portages on our route. Vesta carried her little day pack, my bigger day pack, and her paddle. I carried the big pack and two paddles.

We hadn't gone much more than a hundred metres or so when Vesta had to stop to pick some blueberries. I managed to convince her the berries would be better at the other end of the portage — it was far too soon to be stopping for a rest. Meanwhile, Allan was long gone with the canoe.

Just as the next lake came into view from the top of the last hill, we hit the biggest patch of blueberries and both decided it was indeed time for a break. This first taste of summer is not something easily passed by. Our taste buds satisfied, we walked the last five minutes to the lake. Vesta carried a handful of ripe berries to thank Allan for portaging our canoe. We took off on the

lake as Allan headed back on the trail.

We paddled north for an hour or so, looking for loons, hoping to see some newly hatched chicks. Loons we saw, chicks we didn't. We took one brief rest on Blueberry Point, to snack again, of course, and to admire the beauty of this cool, clear lake. After another half hour of paddling, we let the breeze push us along while we lunched in the canoe. Loons called in the distance, puffy white clouds floated along in the sky above, and the canoe rocked gently as we drifted.

After lunch we paddled along the east side of the lake, looking up at ancient cedars growing out of the cracks of the cliffs. How can they eke out an existence with just the trace of soil found in those narrow cracks? Their gnarled forms spoke much of their struggles.

We had four more portages to do that day, four more lakes to paddle. I carried the big pack, then went back for the canoe. Vesta carried the two small packs, then went back for more blueberries. Mid-summer is a delicious time to be wandering through the land.

We arrived at a most beautiful campsite late in the afternoon. A few small waterfalls, brilliantly white, drop into quiet pools below. I set up the tent while Vesta took a little swim. Just before supper we both had a marvellous swim at the bottom of one of the falls. The gentle current was filled with tiny, soft, white bubbles. Ah, a great way to relax after a long day.

We finished our simple supper of soup and macaroni and cheese just as the sky began to darken. The first drops of rain fell as the last of the dishes were dried and tucked away. What a treat to lie reading in the tent while the rain poured down. We were snug and comfortable — listening to the rain, listening to the waterfalls — warm and dry inside.

After twenty minutes, the sun came out again, so of course we had to go out to find the rainbow, which was very faint at first. We took a little walk along the

rocks at the creekside. When we looked up again, the rainbow was full, arching high in the sky as the sun set behind us. A glorious end to a glorious day.

The second day of my canoe trip with Vesta began with the sun poking out from big puffy clouds. I took a little walk along the bedrock ridges while Vesta slept in. Blue, blue, blueberries everywhere! I filled my cup with them as I wandered and explored, and ate just as many as I saved. There's something about those big, juicy berries that needs to be tasted every few minutes, if not more often. Such a bounty of beauty; I rejoice in this gift of the land.

Vesta woke before I returned, and was picking more blueberries around the tent. We took our granola to a big rock overlooking a beautiful still pond and enjoyed breakfast.

We had a swim in the sun before packing up and heading out. A two-minute paddle across the still pond brought us to the first portage of the day. Ten minutes portaging, ten minutes to paddle across the next small lake, and a second ten-minute portage brought us to another small lake.

I have paddled along this route just about every year for the past 15 years. I always love this bit of water. There is a very wide, very slow-moving creek. We drifted along, barely paddling. Below us, long, grass-like leaves waved in the current. Limy green, of almost day-glo brilliance, these long narrow leaves stretched a metre or two in length from creek bottom to just below the water's surface. I gazed into this underwater field and got lost in their dream-like dance.

Just as the creek opened out into the lake, we saw some ducks pop up from behind a boulder near shore. One, two, three, four! An adult and three little ones. I had to look through the binoculars to see they were hooded mergansers. The little ones were very cute as they dove and popped right back up like corks on the water.



After the next portage we paddled over to another rounded bedrock ridge which rises abruptly from the lake. Earlier in the year some turtles had laid their eggs in the gravelly crevices in this rock. Not too long after, a mink or a fox or some other lucky creature found these caches of eggs and had a feast. The leathery white turtle egg shells were scattered everywhere.

After lunch we had a swim and rested in the glory of the sun on the rock, then headed south again. Vesta helped paddle against the wind, and rested when we reached the lee shore.

We stopped to visit friends at an outpost camp along the way. A sprinkle of rain began just as we pulled into shore, so we tucked our packs on their porch, and went inside to chat. Vesta took this opportunity to trade the two paperbacks she'd already read for two she hadn't. It's not often we get to pick up new reading material halfway through a canoe trip.

Just as we were about to leave, a huge boom of thunder made us decide to stay a bit longer. In a few minutes, a heavy sheet of rain pelted the lake and a fierce wind blew waves crashing on shore, along with more rain. It was a nice time to not be on the lake. It only lasted ten minutes or so, then the wind completely died. It looked like a grand opportunity to make some distance down this long, narrow lake — without having to fight the south wind that had been blowing most of the day. We hesitated.

Within five minutes, another amazing thunder storm blew in. We sat back down to visit some more. It had been a great summer for thunderstorms. Their power and beauty demand attention, and respect.

Shortly after the second storm passed by, we quickly said our goodbyes and raced down the lake. The calm waters remained with us for at least three kilometres. Still, I hugged the shoreline in case another storm blew in. Which it did. This time we found a place we could pull the canoe ashore. The storm approached from the west, out of our view. I put up a tarp and set out a snack to keep us busy until the sky quieted and we could move southward again.

Slowly, slowly, the wind gained strength. I hugged the shore to minimize its effect. There was just one wide-open stretch of water we would have to cross, and I prayed the wind would die once more before we reached that bay. We watched as a huge cloud a few kilometres south of us blew across the lake. A dark-grey curtain of rain fell below it. Above our heads the clouds were getting brighter, but up ahead it was dark indeed. Thunder still rolled along in the background.

Lucky we were. After battling the wind near shore for a couple of hours and just as we rounded the corner of that big open bay I had feared, the wind died almost completely. Past this bay lay the island we'd make our camp on for the second night of our canoe trip. We paddled close to shore just before landing and were delighted to see an abundance of blueberries. Assurance of another great breakfast the next morning!

This little island has several good tent sites, and plenty of evidence that it gets used a lot. Unfortunately, we had to spend the first 15 minutes cleaning up the mess the last occupants had left behind.

Usually, I make only a tiny campfire to cook our supper, but at this site we had to make a small bonfire to clean out the firepit of paper towels and other trash it had been loaded with. I had a spare garbage bag to stuff the unburnable things, but I didn't look forward to having to carry it across the five portages we would do the next day. Still, I could not enjoy a trashy campsite, so we cleaned it all up.

Starting now with a clean site, I put up the tent while Vesta wandered off to pick blueberries. With the possibility of yet another thunderstorm on the horizon, I also set up the tarp which gave us a very fine place to live indeed.

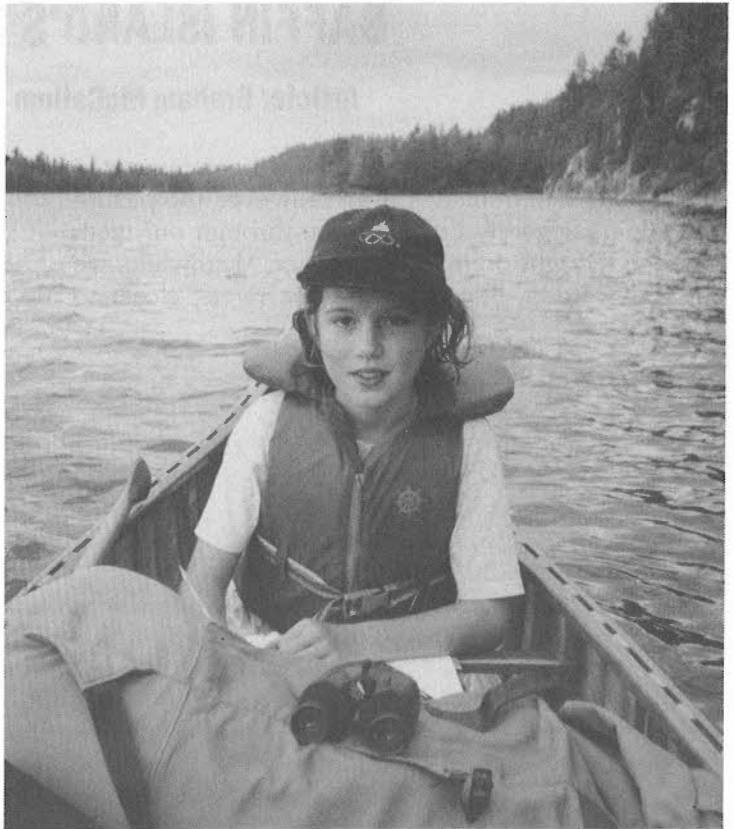
We finished dinner just as the sun went down at our backs. I heard a motor boat approaching from the north and decided to flag it down. Since they were motoring out to a road access point on this lake, I asked if they would be so kind as to take out the trash we had collected. They couldn't very well refuse could they? After all, someone had brought all that garbage in on a boat; it seemed reasonable to send it out on a boat as well.

The next day dawned sunny and warm after a few rainshowers in the night. Just what we needed to get everything dry before packing up. I did a little writing and a little reading while waiting for the sun to do its work. But mostly I marvelled at the beauty of this small island.

I sat under a most amazing old white pine. It was more than 60 centimetres in diameter where I stood to hug it. Its roots radiated at my feet as the branches radiated above my head. Despite decades of abuse at the hands of previous campers (nails and spikes hammered in, hatchet scars where someone was "target practising," roots bared by too many footsteps, one old axe hole healing on the side), this big old tree simply beamed with health and vitality. The branches above were thick and lush, whispering quietly in the morning breeze. I was reluctant to move on, but we did have a lot of water to cover that day.

Leaving the island, we paddled into a very long, wide, marshy creek. Protected by the forest all around, there was a deep silence as we paddled slowly upstream. We saw a few frogs on the yellow pond-lily pads, heard a pileated woodpecker on one of the dead trees near shore, and watched a thousand minnows scurry in schools beneath us in the water.

At one place the water ran shallow over a gravelly bottom. The current was too strong to paddle against with only five centimetres or so of water to dip the paddle into, so I got out and walked the canoe as it floated easily alongside. The gravel gradually gave way to boulders, and the deep water returned. We paddled the second part of the creek under the arching skele-



tons of cedar trees that had died when the beavers dammed the creek decades ago.

A short portage over a rise of bedrock brought us into yet another beautiful lake. Of course, a slight southwest wind rose as we paddled southwest. I had hoped to find some loons with chicks on this lake, so we picked out a small central island to have our lunch and watch and wait and look for loons to come out of hiding. No luck. Three adult loons, but no chicks.

The next leg of our journey took us up another creek; this one long and winding, with wide-open wetlands all around. We caught sight of a great blue heron ahead, and watched it as it watched us approach slowly. Still as a tree stump, the heron blended into the tall grasses. Every so often it would take a step deeper into the grass, yet always keeping an eye on us, until it disappeared from sight.

The end of the longest portage of the day earned us a good long rest and refreshing swim in the tiny lake. Ah, what a glorious summer for swimming!

In the canoe again for a short paddle across the tiny lake. Another lovely short portage ended at another tiny lake with lots of big rocks all around the shore. I had just set down the big pack when we heard a scrambling in the rocks behind us. A huge snapping turtle crashed over sticks and stones as she raced (turtle fashion) to the safety of the water. I guess we surprised her more than she surprised us.

Two more little ponds, two more portages, and we were back on our own lake again. Even though we still had another couple of hours to paddle against the wind, it sure felt good to be back home again.

BAFFIN ISLAND'S KUUJUAK RIVER

Article: Graham McCallum Photos: Dave Robinson

Our group have, for at least a decade, been interested in canoeing a barrenlands river. However, the picture of straining severely buggy coffee through our teeth kept the thought on the back burner. Meanwhile, we enjoyed warmer, relatively bug-free rivers, closer to home.



With luck, sometimes, the seemingly impossible becomes possible. At the January-1996 WCA/Luste Symposium in Toronto we picked up a flyer listing the Heritage Rivers of Canada and among them was the Kuujuak River on Baffin Island. (This used to be called the Soper River.) At the same time we read an article in *Kanawa* magazine by Max Finkelstein on a Kuujuak River canoe trip, in which he did not mention bugs. To double-check we phoned Fred Alt, the manager of First Air Charter Services in Iqaluit (previously Frobisher Bay) on Baffin Island and asked him about the bug situation. He agreed that the bugs were not a problem. Either this was right or we were going to be the victims of a giant scam by the Northwest Territories Tourist Office. As the saying goes, trust everyone but always cut the deck. We decided to go on an August-1996 trip but packed bug jackets, just in case.

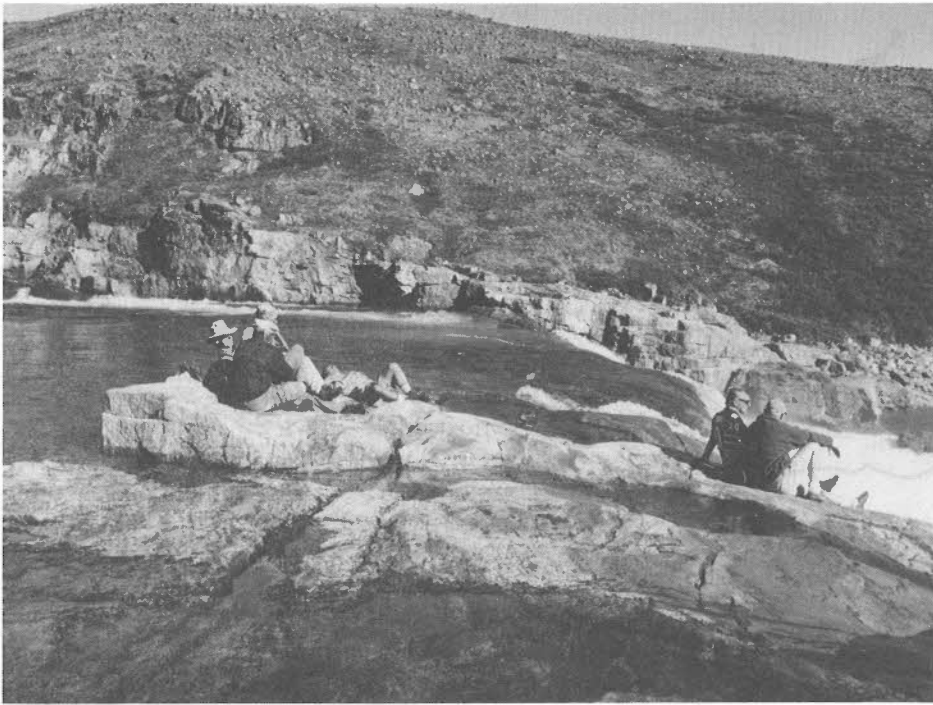
So there we were, flying high above Hudson Strait, noshing on grilled salmon and Irish coffee with not a bug in sight and heading for the "Barren Lands" at last. We landed in the rain and set out by taxi for the local campground on a hill over-

looking the airport and Iqaluit, now the capital of Nunavut.

The next morning, mid-way through our peameal bacon and scrambled eggs, we heard a loud bang, immediately followed by a sharp pain in our collective wallets. A 35-million-dollar CAF CF-18 fighter jet had failed to take off and ploughed up the field at the end of the runway. It came to rest against the jet fuel line for the airport, in a huge pall of black smoke, which was headed our way. The pilot bailed out when he realized that his baby wasn't gonna fly and fortunately he only picked up a few bruises. Shortly afterward, a Mountie in a gas mask appeared and ordered us to pack up and get in his paddy wagon. We were evacuated to the army base, since the air was dangerously polluted. It was so bad, even the smokers in the group quit for the morning. After two hours of free snacks and drinks — the beer was under lock and key — and wondering how all these people occupy their time between crashes, we were driven to the First Air charter office.

Fred then informed us that his planes only had fuel for emergencies and that Mt. Joy, our destination, was soaked in to boot. He said he would try again to fly us in the next day. We then spent a very enjoyable after-





noon walking around town, talking to all and sundry, buying fishing licences and 16 litres of stove gas. Later we learnt more about our destination, Katannilik Park, at the Visitor Centre. Then, back to the same campground in a cab.

The pollution had cleared and the rain had stopped, so things were definitely looking up but the air was crisp. It was, after all, 14 August and moving into Fall in this part of the country. Since Wanapitei Camp own the only canoes around, which can be rented for \$200 per canoe for a trip down the Kuujuak River, we had to wait until their trips ended.

Early the next morning, we were at Fred's office to hear the latest news. It was all good. Fred had worked out a deal with the Air Force to borrow some fuel and Mt. Joy was only lightly clouded. The eight of us with our gear were loaded and off by 10:30 a.m. into blue skies and no wind, landing on a gravel bar in the middle of the river 35 minutes later. This was accompanied by some feeling of relief, as only four days before a sister cargo plane of the one we were on had crashed, killing both pilots.

The Twin Otter then took off to Kimmirut (Lake Harbour), our take-out, and later returned with our canoes. They had been left at Kimmirut airport by Wanapitei, at the end of their last trip down the Kuujuak. We were told later, that during the summer a storm had badly damaged all their canoes and replacements had to be flown in from the South. Instead of ABS Old Towns and Blue Holes, as promised, what came out of the plane was one Old Town, held together with duct tape, and three yellow and purple plastic

cottage canoes with deep, wide keels. One can carefully get down a river in canoes like this but the fun and finesse largely go out the window.

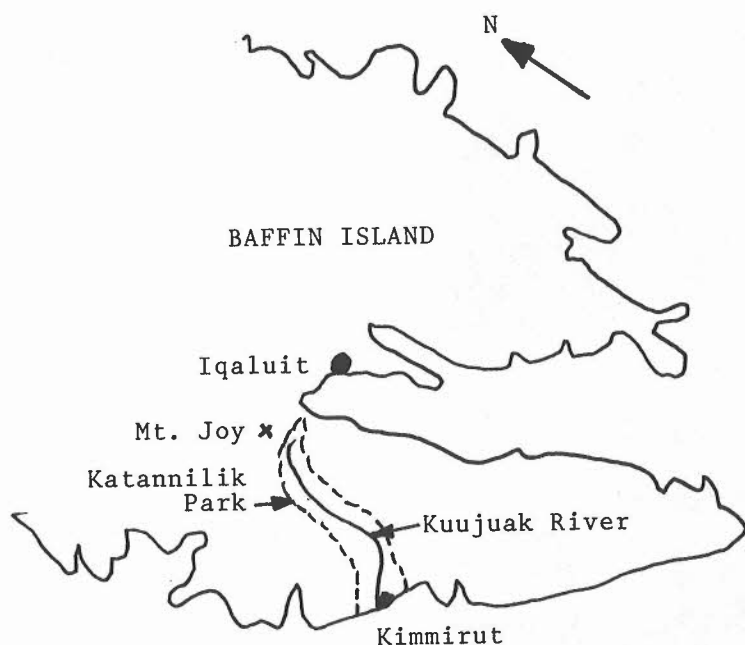
Fortunately, the Kuujuak is not a whitewater river as such. The water is freezing, of course, and the current is often strong, calling for a degree of competence, but in the low-water conditions of late August, the few rapids are clearly 1's and 2's. If there happened to be a lot of rain, it could have been a different story. All the hills rapidly shed their water into the river, which quickly rises, giving the paddler some awesome standing waves. Luckily, this didn't happen to us but if it had, the lining conditions were ideal.

For the next five days, we followed a gentle timetable. We split each day evenly between paddling and then hiking up the gentle sides of the valley, following the streams which frequently cascaded down to the river. We were invariably watched by caribou who kept a safe distance but on occasion came closer, out of curiosity. I can remember lying on a warm rock shelf, under a clear blue sky at the top of Livingstone Falls, thinking that never in my entire life have I ever



felt better. Is this the answer to the question as to why we pursue this sport?

This idyllic scenario ended at Kimmirut, where we arrived a day early, to be able to take a boat up the coast for sight-seeing and fishing. We camped on the outskirts of town and that night were hit with the mother of all storms. Of four tents, only one came through unscathed. I had rigged my Timberline with extra guy ropes, vestibules at both ends, and added material to the fly to bring it to the ground. It was all in vain,



have an expedition tent, bring a dryer.

The seas were still wild, so the boat ride was cancelled, but thanks to Robert Jaffray, the Park Manager, we saw carvers at work, bought some magnificent pieces, and enjoyed a private, traditional supper with a local Inuit family. The caribou stew was gourmet.

The skies had cleared enough to allow us to take the scheduled flight to Iqaluit at 10:30 the next morning. We left the canoes at the airport. Hopefully, these canoes will be replaced before they are hauled by snowmobile up to Mt. Joy, ready for Wanapitei's first trip next July.

On the First Air flight south, we recounted that, on the Kuujuak, the coffee needed no straining, the bug jackets stayed packed, and indeed bugs were not a problem. It seems that one does not always have to cut the deck. Fred and Max were right.

If you go:

First Air: 1-800-267-1247; Ottawa to Iqaluit, \$959 p.p.; Kimmirut to Iqaluit, \$108 p.p.; charter to Mt. Joy incl. flight for canoes, \$1450, group; Fred Alt 1-819-979-5810.

Canoes 1-705-745-8314, Wanapitei Camp Ltd.

Katannilik Park: Robert Jaffray 1-819-939-2416.

although the tent did stay up. The wind-driven rain hit the sides full on and poured in straight through the fly. We put our rain suits on, pulled the wet sleeping bags over us, and slept reasonably well, despite the horrific noise outside. By the morning, the storm had blown itself out, so we took all the wet gear into town to its only hotel and used their dryer. The moral to all this would seem to be, that if you go to the Arctic and don't



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.

All summer **HAVE PADDLE WILL TRAVEL**
Steve Bernet, (519)-837-8774, call if you feel like going paddling.

Steve is out on the water most weekends and is open to suggestions regarding whitewater locations. Limit: your imagination.

21-22 June **WHITewater COURSE AT PALMER RAPIDS**

Hugh Valliant, (416) 699-3464 (evenings), email valliant@micomtech.com (preferred), book before 14 May. Assisted by Anmarie Forsyth, Jim Morris, and Debbie Sutton. Now for the 14th season. Due to its immense popularity, the course has filled up within the first week for the past several years. Those wishing to register should phone immediately. There is a possibility, as in previous years, that a second course will be arranged.

We will meet at Palmer Rapids on the Madawaska River for an exciting and instructional weekend. The emphasis of the course is on the strokes and techniques necessary to safely negotiate a set of rapids. Palmer Rapids is considered class 2. In this controlled and structured environment where the pace is slow, there will be plenty of time to practise and perfect your strokes. You will learn how to control a canoe in moving water so that you can go where you want to go (most of the time). The river will no longer control your canoe (all of the time).

To feed your hungry appetites there will be a group BBQ on Saturday night featuring a real salad, a real steak, and real potatoes using real charcoal. A deposit of \$25 is required to secure your spot on the roster. Open to experienced flatwater, novice, or beginning whitewater paddlers. Preference will be given to those who need it. Friends are more than welcome to the Saturday night's festivities. Limit eight canoes.

28-30 June **PETAWAWA RIVER**
Paul and Diane Hamilton, (905) 877-8778, book before 21 June.

This is an exciting whitewater trip from Lake Traverse to Lake McManus. There are some challenging rapids on this route, for paddlers with skill levels of intermediate to advanced. Limit four canoes.

28-30 June **TIM RIVER**
Howard Sayles, (416) 921-5321, book before 21 June.

A three-day paddle on the Tim River in western Algonquin Park. A pleasant long weekend for those who enjoy a faster pace and have the skill to manoeuvre a canoe through tight s-turns. Limit three canoes.

20-25 July **FRENCH RIVER DELTA AND BUSTARD ISLANDS**
Richard Todd, (819) 459-1179, book before 13 July.

A generally easy trip with only a few hundred metres of portaging. Possibility of some big waves for one or two brief

periods. Incomparable scenery and unlimited opportunity for exploration. Limit nine people.

26-27 July **PALMER RAPIDS PLAY WEEKEND**
Bill Ness, (416) 321-3305, book before 21 July.

Just a relaxing summer weekend at Palmer's. A great opportunity for those who participated in the whitewater clinics here in June to return for some practice. Bring the family. The bugs will be gone and the water warm for swimming. There's a good beach for the kids. Limit eight canoes.

1-10 Aug. **ST IGNACE ISLE, ROSSPORT**
Gerry O'Farrell, (519) 822-8886, book early for planning.

A week of paddling the northern coastline of Lake Superior. Limit five canoes.

2-4 August **OTTAWA RIVER**
John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 28 July.

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

9-10 August **MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE**
Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 3 August.

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

16-24 August **GEORGIAN BAY and CENTRAL KILLARNEY PARK**

Richard Todd, (819) 459-1179, book before 8 August.

Several days exploring the inlets and islands of northern Georgian Bay will be followed by a visit to Threenarrows Lake in the centre of Killarney Park. Our route will take us through the village of Killarney, past Baie Fine, and up Kirk Creek. There will be one long portage and a handful of very short ones. Limit nine people.

30 Aug.-1 Sept. **OTTAWA RIVER**
John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 28 Aug.
See previous description (2-4 Aug.).

30 Aug.-1 Sept. **LOWER MADAWASKA RIVER**
Roger and Sandy Harris, (416) 489-8980, book before 23 Aug.

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

7 September **ELORA GORGE**
Dave Sharp, (519)-846-2586, book before 31 August.

September is generally warm and if there is rain the Gorge can have some interesting rapids. Suitable for intermediate paddlers who can manoeuvre a canoe in fast current. Limit six canoes.

28 September MISSISSAGUA RIVER

Tim Gill, (416) 447-2063, or Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 25 September.

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

5 October BURNT RIVER

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 28 September.

Between Kinmount and the village of Burnt River, the Burnt is a placid stretch of water with a few small riffles and a couple of larger scenic drops, which are easily portaged. By this time of year there should be few bugs, and the fall colors should be at their peak. This leisurely Sunday paddle makes an excellent family outing. Suitable for novices. Limit six canoes.

11-13 October PETAWAWA RIVER

Tim Gill, (416) 447-2063, book before 5 October.

The classic fall trip from Lake Traverse to Lake McManus. Some rapids, all can be portaged, most can be run by intermediate or better paddlers. Limit six turkeys.

18 October ELORA GORGE

Mike Jones, (905)-270-3256, book before 11 October.

Fun in the Gorge. The levels should rise with the fall rains and the water is cooling. Rapids are Class 2 or maybe even 3 if rain is very heavy. A chance to play in the whitewater. Limit six canoes.

25-26 October MAGNETAWAN RIVER

Tim Gill, (416) 447-2063, book before 13 October.

An exciting whitewater weekend on the Magnetawan, from Ahmic Lake to Maple Island. The trip will cover the same section on both days. The upper section contains a series of Class 2-4 rapids which can easily be portaged. Cold water equipment and floatation advantageous. Fit, intermediate, whitewater paddlers should enjoy the challenge of this historic waterway. Limit five canoes.

**THE SMILE**

I don't know how to tell you what it feels like inside. It's a great welling up of joy that starts deep in the gut and just grows and grows until your face can't contain it any more; and it surges out in the biggest smile you ever saw. Your face cracks and you find yourself smiling at work or in the shower or almost anywhere regardless of whether the time is appropriate or not. You see, you're going again. Back for another wilderness canoe trip.

It's been a year now. Winter has passed and spring right now is working its magic on the Canadian north. The river that we are going to canoe this year has been picked, and the canoeing buddy has agreed as to where and when to meet. Now it's just a matter of smiling down the days.

The Thlewiaza this year. It flows from northern Manitoba into the southern Northwest Territories. So many rivers and so little time. Should be devoting every summer day to wilderness canoeing. The time thing, always the time thing. Racing by.

Thought about the reasons for wilderness canoe trips. To see land not scarred by man. To travel by means whereby mechanical breakdowns are impossible. To have to depend on yourself. To know that sheer muscle or will power alone can win the day. To be

where the pull is not the unknown outside so much as the unknown inside.

Never had the slightest inclination to go into space or to explore ocean depths. Just can't bring myself to go to a place where I have to bring my own air. But to see rarely travelled country. Now that's a different matter.

Nothing else compares to a long canoe trip in the wilderness. The shout for joy, the exhilaration, the crying that is yours and yours alone in the depths of the Canadian wilderness. It makes the rest of the year tolerable in that for a part of the year you can live where your body, mind, and soul are one. If only it could be like that always. If only every waking moment of your life had this complete alignment of soul, mind, and body.

The only way out is to spend the three-or-four-week vacation every year on a wilderness canoe trip and pray for a passing grade on the obligations of husband and father. It's the only plan that has a chance of succeeding.

The trip is getting closer. I can tell because of the smile. It's almost constant now.

Greg Went

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

This PRODUCTS AND SERVICES section is available, free of charge and on a first-come, first-served basis, to members as well as non-members for their announcements regarding items for sale, special products, discounts, services, courses, etc. Contact the editor if more information is required.

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

- Algonquin Outfitters, RR#1, Oxtongue Lake, Dwight, Ont.
- Rockwood Outfitters, 669 Speedvale Ave. West, Guelph, Ont.
- Suntrail Outfitters, 100 Spence Str. (Hwy. 70), Hepworth, Ont.
- Smoothwater Outfitters, Temagami (Hwy. 11), Ont.

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

CANOE FOR SALE Mad River Flashback solo whitewater canoe, ABS with ash trim, fully rigged with floatbags and saddle, knows how to roll, great condition; \$1000. Eric Pelletier, (416) 932-3265.

WCA JOURNAL INDEX Hardcopy printouts of the comprehensive 1974-1996 index presenting lists of articles, trip reports, technical subjects, and more are available from the editor for \$5.00; see address etc. on the back page.

CLASSIC SOLO CANOEING Two lessons totalling four hours instructed by Becky Mason at Meech Lake. Basic or advanced. All equipment provided. Fee \$65. Contact Box 126, RR#1, Chelsea, Quebec, J0X 1N0; ph. (819) 827-4159; email redcanoe@istar.ca

COUREUR DE BOIS ADVENTURES Your canoe outfitter for the James Bay Frontier. Canoe rentals and sales, shuttle service, guiding, voyageur canoe tours, instruction, information, special events, ecotours, and more. Trips on Lake Abitibi and other lakes and on Missinaibi, Abitibi, Little Abitibi, Mattagami, Newpost, Frederick House Rivers, some fly-in rivers, and more. Contact Rick Chartier, P.O. Box 2221, Cochrane, ON, P0L 1C0; ph. (705) 272-3273; fax (705) 272-3672.

TUCKAMOR TRIPS Guided and fully outfitted wilderness adventure experiences by canoe, on foot, and on skis in Canada's near and far North and elsewhere: Reserve la Verendrye, Upper Rouge River, Back and Elice Rivers in Nunavut, Dumoine River, Bariscan River, Gros Morne National Park, Moisie River, Rideau Canal, Coulonge River, ski trips, and more. Contact Tuckamor Trips Inc. 7123 Lac Noir Road, Ste. Agathe-des-Monts, Quebec, J8C 2Z8; ph/fax (819) 326-3602; email bill@tuckamor.com

GRAND CANOE SCHOOL Improve your canoe and kayak paddling skills. The Grand Canoe School runs ORCA accredited Moving Water and Flat Water canoe courses, OWWA accredited kayak courses, canoe (or kayak) rolling clinics, and River rescue classes. All courses and classes take place in the Guelph area. The School also offers wilderness canoe trips throughout Ontario. For a brochure, please phone (519) 763-9496 or (416) 440-4208; e-mail us at canoesch@sentex.net or write to The Grand Canoe School, 17A - 218 Silvercreek Parkway N., Suite

101, Guelph, Ontario, N1H 8E8. Please visit our web page at <http://www.sentex.net/~canoesch/>

PADDLING IN OTTAWA VALLEY Valley Ventures offer full services (canoe and equipment rentals, shuttles, accommodation, trip reports) for people paddling lakes and rivers in Algonquin Park and the Dumoine, Coulogne, and Noire Rivers. ORCA programs and guided trips are also available. Contact Don Smith at Box 1115, Deep River, Ont., K0J 1P0; ph. (613) 584-2577; fax (613) 584-9016; email vent@intranet.ca

TEMAGAMI Smoothwater Outfitters offers unique wilderness trips, including Sturgeon River Fly-in, Anishinabe Celebration, Temagami Challenge, Full Moon Glory, Family Canoe Trip, Summer Camp Flashback, Old Growth Pine Celebration, Heritage Highlight Tour, and Hot Colour Bike Tour. Also ORCA courses: Canoe Tripping 1, 2, and 3 and Moving Water 3. For artists we have two workshops: Painting the Great Pines, and Visions in Paint. SO offers a full line of trip support services, including shuttles and accommodation. For full details contact Caryn Colman at Smoothwater Outfitters, Box 40, Temagami, Ont., P0H 2H0; tel. (705) 569-3539; fax (705) 569-2710; email temagami@onlink.net

WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE INC. is offering in 1997: ORCA canoe tripping level 1 and 2 leadership courses (May 16-19, June 5-8, July 17-21; custom designed courses for groups), courses for educators/human services providers, a Youth Leadership Challenge (The Algonquin Traverse, Aug 23 to Sep. 1), year-round retreats at our fully winterized house situated on a 185-acre property near Georgian Bay, weekend or longer trips using techniques based upon traditional winter camping (in the Haliburton Highlands or Algonquin, co-led by Bob Davis, an expert in this field). We also organize events in the city (potluck dinners, story telling, slide shows). For more information contact Reuben Berger at (416) 782-6710 or at 44 Park Hill Rd., Toronto, Ont., M6C 3N1.

KUKAGAMI LODGE A little log cabin by the lake ... Swimming at your doorstep ... Freshly baked, organic whole-grain bread on the table ... A place to relax away from the crowds ... Enjoy nature in the heart of the Northern Ontario forest ... Forget about the hassles of everyday living while you swim, hike, bicycle, and canoe in and around Kukagami Lake. Our lodge has no direct road access; we will bring you in by boat, you must phone to arrange pick-up times. Our dock is located about 32.5 km north of Hwy. 17 between Sudbury and North Bay, a 5 to 6-hour drive from Toronto. For more information contact Viki and Allan Mather, Kukagami Lake, RR1, Wahnapitae, Ont., P0M 3C0; ph. (705) 853-4929.

THE ADVENTURE MAP™ Chrismar Mapping Services is releasing the first titles in a new series of waterproof recreation maps designed specially for paddlers, hikers, and backpackers. The Adventure Map™ series targets National Parks, major Provincial Parks, an other popular wilderness recreation areas across Canada. Fifteen titles will be available for 1997, with many others to follow including some river maps. Prices range from \$4.95 to \$10.95 each. Free catalogue. Contact Chrismar Mapping Services, Box 1277, Uxbridge, Ontario, L9P 1H8; ph. (905) 852-6151; fax (905) 852-9474; email email@chrismar.com; Internet www.chrismar.com

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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. _____

New member Member # if renewal: _____

Single Family

Phone Number(s):

() _____ (h)

() _____ (w)

* This membership is valid for one year.

Postal Code: _____

Ext. _____

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