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The Stairs

BONAVENTURE

From the Gaspé Highlands to the Sea

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Sunday, 14 June 1998.

Through the black spruce branches on a remote Canadian hillside, I caught my first glimpse of Bonaventure Lake. It was thrilling. Our van and its canoe trailer had just arrived at a hunter's cabin in twilight, with darkness less than an hour away. At the first available moment, I dashed down a rutted path to the shoreline of the lake, about 1,350 feet above sea level. The water was chilly as I dipped in my hand. Headwaters of the Bonaventure River, the lake is nestled in a pocket of the Chic Chocs Mountains of Gaspé Peninsula, Quebec. From this wilderness lake with no other manmade intrusions of its shores, the

river surges through the lake's southern outlet to race 85 miles to the sea, Chaleur Bay, an arm of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

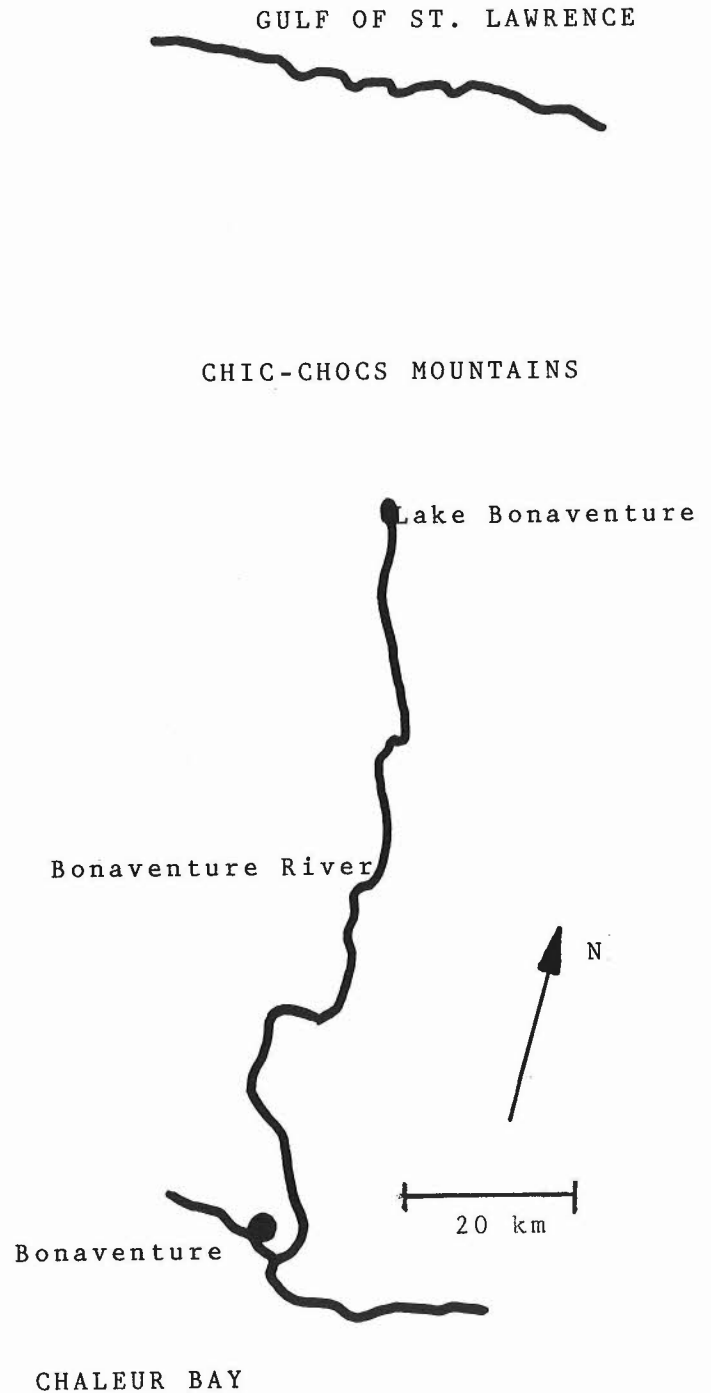
The Bonaventure River, so long it covers eight 1:50,000-scale topographical maps, is best done in June when runoff is adequate. This brief season creates an almost-continuous Class II and III rapids to the sea. Halfway through the trip comes a Class IV rapids, followed by The Stairs, a succession of ledge drops. Ranging from Class I (easy) to Class V (extremely dangerous), the Bonaventure ranks high for whitewater canoeing. No one should treat this river without respect, planning, or common sense.

I savored one last thought at lake's edge before returning to the rest of the party to help pitch tents and prepare supper. I had canoed most of the rivers in Maine, and now I was exhilarated to be in Canada, the home of the *voyageur* and the *coureur de bois*, the land of Jacques Cartier and others who explored the watery veins of North America. With his explorer's prerogative, Cartier had aptly named this beautiful region for us long ago. In 1534, he called the island off present-day Percé, *Île Bonne Aventure*. In time, the same name was applied to other Gaspé localities — the county, the town, the lake, and the river itself. Cartier's choice of a name was perfect. I was back with the early European explorers, at least in spirit, paddling the same waters in the best canoeing country in the world.

Our party quickly pitched tents on every available inch of flat land — as precious as gold — in that cramped area. Then came supper. We were four guides and nine guests: four women (one of them a guide) and nine men, ranging in age from 19 to 63. We represented many diverse professions, but all of us were river veterans, committed to canoeing and embarking on trips at the flimsiest of excuses. After saving up enough money and vacation time, we water-addicted nomads longed to break loose from stultifying responsibilities and corporate commitments to head for the river, any river. All of us appeared to be independent sorts, intent on leaving "the job" to chase rivers throughout New England, the Barrens of Canada, Iceland, and Central America, much as a shaman seeks religious faith.

For leadership, our Bonaventure "family" looked to a remarkable chief guide — Larry, a retired mechanical engineer in his late fifties. After 29 years he had abandoned the corporate ratrace. "It wasn't engineering anymore," he said. "It was committees, meetings, and politics." He was now happily reincarnated, spending up to 200 days a year in the wilderness with his paddle, fly rod, and hunting rifle. He had first descended the Bonaventure in 1983, then again in 1997. He was the only one in our party who had been down the river before. Larry would paddle solo in the lead canoe — exactly where we needed him — for the entire trip.

Twelve others would follow, some in tandem canoes, a few solo. Holding up the rear in the last canoe, Dan was the other seasoned guide, a black-bearded sled-dog musher who was also proficient in a variety of outdoor pursuits. Roger and Joan, husband and wife, cancer surgeon and paramedic, had medical skills if needed. Well travelled on the canoeing circuit, they were handsomely clad in wet suits. Jim and Marsha, from Virginia, had just been on a Rio Grande trip in the spring. Marsha generously provided a full wine dispenser for each evening meal. Neil, a college student and geology major, was following in the footsteps of his father who would be searching for dinosaur fossils in Siberia and India later on that summer. George, a commodities trader in New Jersey, was another canoeing veteran. He had Iceland experience and would be



heading with Larry during August to canoe the Snake and the Macmillan Rivers in the Yukon. Jamie, another Virginian, brought along his camcorder to record the trip. Shauna, an office administrator, also had the Yukon in her future. Dwayne and Bahia, who had first met in Nepal as Peace Corps volunteers, now lived in Maine and were licensed Maine guides. Bahia worked as a journalist while Dwayne served as a consultant to various Maine government agencies related to fish hatcheries and wetlands. I, a New Hampshire librarian and historian, had a summer-long Barrens expedition under my belt. I had first met Larry in May 1998 at a poling clinic, but many of us had crossed paths during previous paddles.

We washed our plates and silverware, slapping an occasional mosquito. It was now dark, with only a red sunset ring lingering for a minute on the mountain ridge above the lake. It had taken two days to reach our put-in, collecting people from various prearranged places in Maine. Meals were eaten on the run, and the final push took us over unpaved logging roads, where dust would stream in from a wide crack in a faulty door. We looked like bandits, handkerchiefs covering our faces.

The last ten miles on the access road tested the mettle of any driver or guide. There were no official signs. Logging roads intersected, split off, some freshly cut, going every which way. At one T-junction, Larry jumped out, compass in hand, to take a bearing. Where were we? The compass arrow indicated that we should turn left, so we went downhill to follow a drainage valley, which Larry seemed to recognize vaguely from his previous trips. The road narrowed into mere ruts as it continued down a steep hill toward a creek at the bottom, our vehicle pitching down and then vaulting up with a terrible lurch of the jackknifing trailer.

After such a saga, we were happy to head for our tents and a night's sleep. As I snuggled into my sleeping bag, a loon cried from the lake. We were at home at

Bonaventure Lake Camp.

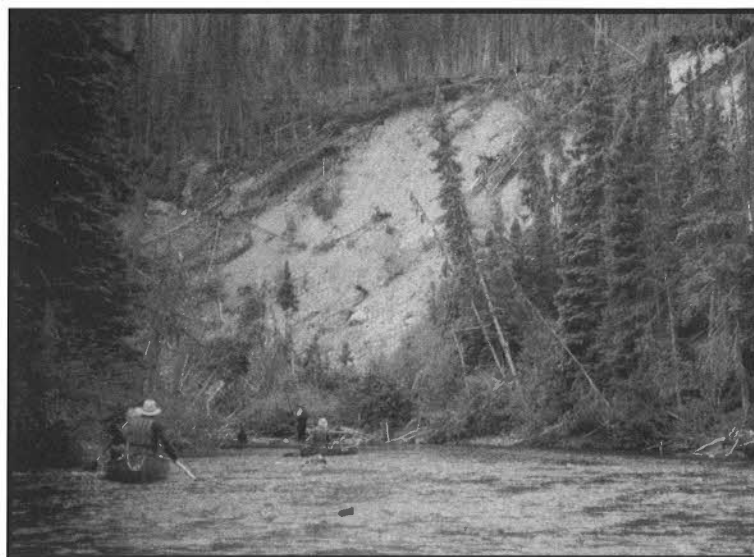
Monday, 15 June. Bonaventure Lake to Big Burn Camp.

As we broke camp and carried our packs and gear down to the lake, a fisherman and his wife arrived in a pick-up truck with a tied-down boat. Dwayne, my canoeing partner, talked to him, as I was still loading our canoe. The man's face was highly animated as he spoke. Dwayne told us later, "He said there are caribou herds only thirty miles north of here. Some of the lakes are barren of fish, but some have so many trout that they almost leap into your boat." The fellow also gave Dwayne the local Gaspé Peninsula weather report: "The weather is going to be cloudy, rainy, and unsettled for the next three days." He was right. It rained off and on, mostly at night, for the rest of the five-day trip with constant cloudy haze, swirling fog, mist, and showers. During the final day, the sun threatened to break through the clouds, but other than that, it was an ideal time to field-test rain gear, kitchen-fly tarps, and waterproof tents.

Undaunted we launched our expedition. It was idyllic paddling on the crystal-clear lake, very quiet and peaceful. The end of the lake was about two miles off, just long enough to limber up our muscles. The rapids and hard work would come later. Lush forests swept from the shore up to knobby mountain crests — broken only by the scar of clear-cutting on the uppermost elevations of the ridge beyond the southern end of the lake.

Our pale yellow canoe, an Old Town Tripper, was named *Obadiab II*, after Obadiah Hill, a Maine trapper who died in 1786 at the age of thirty-four and is buried on an island downstream from Holmes Pitch on Maine's Machias River. Hill's solitary grave in the woods, often visited by Machias River paddlers, has become something of a canoeist's shrine. Thus far, *Obe*, as I had nicknamed our canoe, was performing admirably, and with Dwayne in the stern I expected no problems.

Spring break-up



With the easy part of the trip over within the first half hour, I heard fast water ahead, the just-born, very youthful, and narrow Bonaventure racing southward, perhaps a mile of Class I to Class II rapids, moving toward Little Bonaventure Lake. The river water, like that of the lake, was characterized by an almost unreal transparency throughout the trip. Roger, poling in the stern of his canoe, and Joan, seated in the bow, broached on a rock. The abrupt stop sent him to pitching back heavily into his seat. Standing again with his pole, in an attempt to free the canoe, Roger flipped out into waist-high water. Unhurt, he resumed the work without delay.

After manoeuvring around a huge log jam, we entered Little Bonaventure Lake, a mere pond by Canadian standards. Soon, a cleared-out slash complete

(or “ice-out”) of thousands of tons of ice that a few weeks earlier had ripped through the river valley — grinding, crunching, gouging, mauling, pushing, smashing, and tearing everything apart in its surge to the sea.

Even though I have paddled several Maine rivers in spring conditions — St. John, Allagash, and Machias — I had never seen anything like this. The spectacle of destruction was evident for the rest of the trip: numerous strainers or sweepers (fallen tree trunks and branches in the water), trees leaning over the water and ready to crash, avalanche chutes, and high-bank mud slicks with exposed boulders ready to tumble down. Ducking under strainers became second nature, rather like using a limbo bar for daily exercise.

Larry had warned us that we would be entering a



Poling around a strainer

with a moose blind came into view. We landed to stretch and climbed a rickety ladder to the enclosed stand, strewn with tin cans, beer bottles, and cigarette butts. The window offered an unobstructed view across the pond to a swampy backwash area ideal for moose feeding.

Leaving the pond, we began the river trip in earnest, the start of the Class II-III rapids all the way to the sea. “We can’t scout every rapid,” Larry told us, “or we would be here for three weeks.” For the rest of the day, with time off for a pull-off-the-river, stand-up lunch stop, we battled the Bonaventure, not only the river itself but also the debris and chaos left by the break-up

burn area, ravaged by a forest fire some years earlier. Throughout the valley on both banks, ascending to the ridge line, were thousands of blackened stilt-like trees with sooty, branched crowns — sad mementos of the blaze. Everything was charred. The burn zone continued for miles, occasionally only on one side where the flames had failed to leap the river.

After the big burn zone, we slowed down and then stopped when Larry encountered difficulties ahead. A buzzing sound filled the air as Larry chainsawed through fallen logs that had blocked our route. He’d saw for ten minutes or so, then we would advance past the floating sawdust and sawn logs haphazardly

pushed aside. Dwayne and I often were knee-deep in water, dragging *Obe* over logs. As water splashed in over the gunwales, we bailed vigorously to lighten the weight.

The battle to get beyond the log jam continued through the afternoon, with precious yards gained for great physical effort. As Dwayne and I continued bailing, it became obvious that *Obe* had sprung a leak. The bailing succeeded as a stopgap measure, as we were unable to find the leak to plug the hole temporarily. When Larry had broken through the last obstacles, we paddled out, only to discover an enormous log jam that would have required days to clear out if we'd stayed on the main river channel. But we didn't. Larry directed us to a "mud portage," involving much hauling and pulling with four or more people dragging or lifting each loaded canoe over hurdles, and another team grabbing the gunwales. At last we reached a little side stream. The roundabout route to the bypass stream and back to the main channel required a half hour of strenuous labor.

Around five o'clock, we reached a gravel bar, our planned campsite for the night. To make it easier to remember this place, I named it "Big Burn Camp" in my field notes, a practice I continued throughout the expedition to fill in the blanks on the map. Campsites are not marked on the Bonaventure, even where dangerous rapids lie ahead, so canoeists simply select existing sites for camping or, if forced off the river, construct a makeshift site. This place was as good as any, with five to ten feet of gravel between the river and the soggy undergrowth. Our riverside tent city looked like townhouses, covering almost all the available space. I joked

that we ought to wear our life preservers in case the river rose during the night.

As rain began to fall, the guides set up the kitchen fly immediately, with poles at the corners. When Dwayne and I hauled up *Obe* as a canoe kitchen platform, we found damage — an eight-inch crack on the right side of the hull, a previously patched slit that had reopened enough to see daylight through it. That repair job would have to wait for morning.

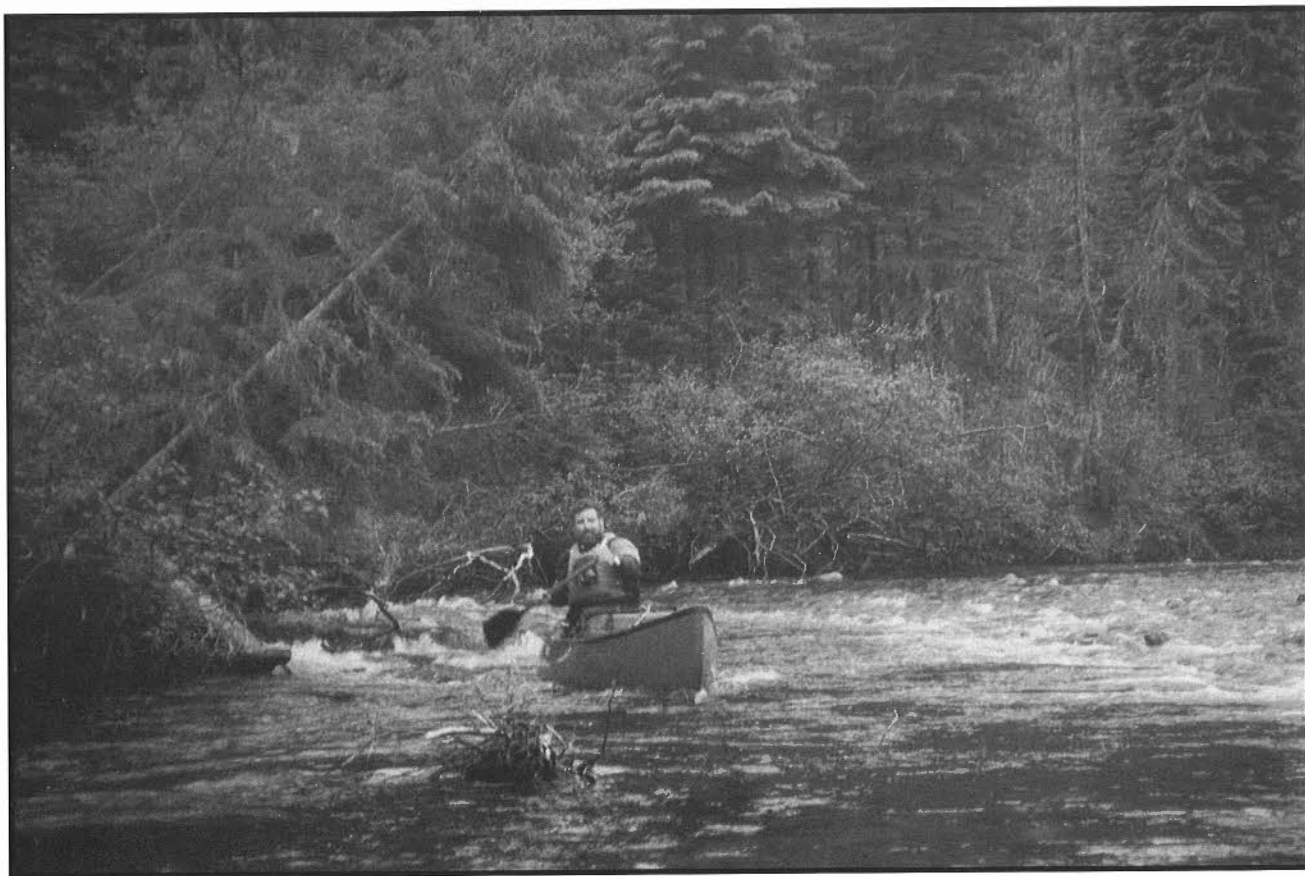
After supper, I would have enjoyed a long walk, even in the light rain, but the woods in the back were a soaking-wet, trailless thicket. We were so hemmed in that I paced back and forth on the gravel bar a half-dozen times. After an eventful and tiring day, I crawled into my sleeping bag at Big Burn Camp.

Tuesday, 16 June. Big Burn Camp to Class IV Rapids Camp.

During the night, it rained buckets, creating puddles in the gravel and in the folds of my waterproof bag, left outside. Despite the light early morning mist we rose quickly, needing no special wake-up signal to begin the usual chores. Larry was frying eggs, calling out good-naturedly to the gathering crowd: "If you don't eat it, I'll throw it out!" To the stragglers, who appeared minutes later, he joked, "You're too late, breakfast is all over." On my earlier Machias River trip, the guide preparing some hot oatmeal had remarked, "If the boys don't eat it, we'll use it to repair the canoes." That was the immediate issue for Dwayne and me this morning — how to repair *Obe* sufficiently before we paddled an inch.



Log jam



Paddling under a sweeper

After breakfast, Dwayne and the other guides concentrated on fixing *Obe*. First they tipped the canoe very close to the cooksite fire to dry it out and warm the damaged hull surface. Soon the plastic surface softened a bit and the guides applied strip after strip of duct tape to seal the crack. For the next three mornings, this process was repeated, as the constant wear-and-tear undid previous repair work.

Our expedition swung into the always fast water of the Bonaventure, and all morning we danced on the waves and whitewater. At an infrequent eddying-out opportunity (and a brief break for a candy bar), I asked Dwayne where he had picked up his poling skills. He mentioned an old Maine guide who often accompanies him on trips on the Pleasant River, which empties into the Atlantic north of Mount Desert Island. "The old fellow has had several heart attacks and surgery, leaving his heart weakened. He knows that another attack may take him at any time, but even though it might happen on a paddle, he is willing to take that risk. He says he has enjoyed his life fully as a guide and has no regrets." We talked about age restrictions on canoeing trips and agreed that the only real obstacle was the attitude of those who don't go. "I guided an 83-year-old man once," Dwayne said, "and there was nothing to it."

Lunch was on a gravel bar on river right, near an old trapper's cabin now virtually collapsing. Larry remembered the cabin as a sturdy dwelling when he stopped here fifteen years earlier, but the weight of heavy annual snows had taken its toll.

All that afternoon, we dove down troughs and surfed atop waves, a magnificent ride down spectacular canyons, around bends, and over plunging chutes. It was almost literally breathtaking. At one stop when someone asked me how I was doing, I said, "I want the doctor to check me out to see if I still have a heart after all those continuous rapids!"

At times I felt I was back in the Northwest Territories, where I had done a two-month Arctic Barrens trip ten years earlier. Once or twice, I actually called out, "Jim," the name of my Barrens guide, when I meant Larry, to ask a question. I was, indeed, spiritually wafted back. The momentary illusion, strange as it was, produced a most pleasant feeling.

As the afternoon wore on, all of us became physically tired and often eddied out for brief rest ashore. At one stop Larry related an incident from his spring Rio Grande trip. In his party were a father and his eleven-year-old son. "They entered a Class II stretch of rapids," Larry recalled. "In the middle of the rapids, the kid in

the bow abruptly put down his paddle and calmly tied his loose shoelace, while his father struggled to keep the canoe upright through the worst of it. That kid, I guess, felt he was pursuing his right priorities.”

In the lead canoe, Larry became increasingly alert to spot the evening campsite. Everything seemed to look the same, rapid after rapid, without any distinctive landmark. Once or twice he pulled off the river onto a gravel bar and in vain scouted around. The rest of us waited in eddies, anticipating a hand signal to land. From the previous year's trip, Larry vaguely remembered a cliff face opposite the campsite. If he missed this campsite, he would have committed himself to the approach to Class IV ledge rapids, possibly a point of no return. Around the bend, just after we swept down a roaring Class III rapids, Larry almost immediately dug in hard to land on river right, revealing a half-hidden gravel beach of perhaps three or four canoe widths. Only a guide with eagle eyes would have seen it, a totally inconspicuous nook wedged in the rocks. In a moment, Larry clambered up a slippery bank trail to the woods, found the campsite, and waved us in. The site was small, just a ring of stones for a campfire and a few places for tents.

I followed an almost overgrown trail heading toward the downstream, hearing the river's roar increase with each step. The path was obviously the regular scouting trail. As I stepped through the last bushes and onto a slippery ledge jutting into the river, I faced a forbidding sight — almost all whitewater and exposed ledge slabs and rocks, the water ripping through channels to drop in gaping holes. Others joined me to look it over, scanning every angle and potential route with their binocs. A canoeing expert with luck and an empty canoe might run it and emerge unscathed, but for a party our size, ranging in ability from above average to limited, such a run was out of the question. In the event of an injury, evacuation would have taken a day or so in that inaccessible place. According to plan, we would line along river left the next morning.

By the time I returned to the camping area, all the obvious and choice campsites were taken. But I then noticed a level area overlooking the Class III rapids we had just run. With a few tugs of saplings and bushes, I cleared my own site, a perfect spot — flat, scenic, and away from the other tents and cookfire smoke.

Supper was a spicy Mexican meal, accompanied by stewed vegetable greens — fiddleheads and fireweed — which Dwayne had picked. After three days, we had finished the water in our individual jugs and canteens, so we were drawing water from a large jug strategically placed at the end of the buffet line. The drinking water tasted slightly metallic, and I wondered if it had been treated to spare us from giardia, but no — river water was being boiled to guarantee safe drinking water, and the taste came from the fire's smoke and ash. Many of us headed straight to the wine dispenser every evening for the cool California rosé wine. It certainly tasted better than the water, and after every dinner the dis-

penser was always drained.

The notorious black flies were for some reason absent on this trip, but nasty mosquitoes abounded. The midges (or no-see-ums) as well were having their own supper on us at Class IV Rapids Camp. My after-supper walk was back to the Class IV Rapids promontory, pointing the way toward tomorrow's whitewater, roaring away in the direction of The Stairs.

Wednesday, 17 June. Class IV Rapids Camp to Gravel Bar Camp.

Waking up early to a pounding downpour, I remembered the wet clothing I had strung out overnight to dry. Throughout the camp, clothes dangling from lines, branches, and trees were being doubly washed. A few drops of water landed on my sleeping bag, so I tightened all the tent zippers to prevent further soaking. Others in our party later told me they cursed roof holes that were supposedly “patched” — until the rains began. I dozed off and awoke some hours later at daybreak.

The rain had stopped. I pulled my writing pad from a plastic sandwich bag and jotted down trip notes from the previous day. “Gosh, I do love it,” I wrote, “despite the rain, the midges, and wet clothes, which can only diminish a tiny fraction of my enjoyment of it.” I threw on some dry clothes and zipped open the tent door, anxious to get back on the river.

The great moment of every day was backpaddling out in our loaded canoe and peeling out into the main current of the river. As Dwayne and I headed downstream, my muscles and spirits felt good. We paddled maybe half a dozen strokes before ferrying hard to river left to ride up on the shoreline rocks. We quickly leapt out to begin lining, as the quick water we had left accelerated into a churning, snowy obstacle course. We lined the canoes, half stumbling on slippery or uneven rocks, with plenty of slack to allow swinging around exposed boulders. After twenty minutes of boulder-by-boulder, swing-out-and-swing-in releasing and yanking, with occasional four-person efforts to haul canoes over ledges, we bypassed the rapids and were ready for a very short paddle to approach The Stairs. Ahead I saw a horizon — where the water level, rocks, and the river itself simply disappeared — as the Bonaventure dipped below our line of vision. We landed immediately on river right and hiked downstream to scout.

The Stairs are well named — five successive ledge drops, the second from the top particularly pronounced, with a two-to-three-foot pitch. The whole fifty-yard descent of the “steps” demand a screaming right turn at the bottom to swing around a cliff — strong stuff in the event of a dump. Everyone in our party clambered over the rocks, scanning the potential run with the most discerning eye. Marsha and I, both paddling bow in separate boats, felt The Stairs could be canoeable, but only with a perfectly executed run. The slightest mistake — a sudden shift of weight, or an

imperfect set-up at the beginning with a foot off either way through the chute — would invite disaster. Even before the scouting ended, Marsha and I elected to walk, whereupon Jim and Dwayne volunteered to take our places in attempting to take the boats down in separate runs. As Larry walked back to his canoe to begin his test run for everyone to watch, the other guides manned the shoreline at strategic points with their throwbags, ready for any emergency.

Larry approached The Stairs in slow motion, making sure he would catch the slightly depressed lip of the second ledge. He was in top form easing down, executing the entire route with the precision of an engineer. The run was fast — half airborne over the drops, a jerky final flutter in heavy water, then a right turn — all done in a matter of seconds. As Larry flashed by, our cameras swung with him to record his feat. Within minutes, Larry came hiking back to direct those who would follow.

At staggered intervals, the others followed suit. Roger and Joan made a beautiful run, then the newly formed team of Dwayne and Jim, and so forth. It almost began to look routine. I leapt down, boulder by boulder, to reach the end of the run and the right turn that hid the eddy. Then I heard a yell and great commotion. I turned to look backward to see Shauna and Bahia in the water, thrown from their capsized boat. In seconds,

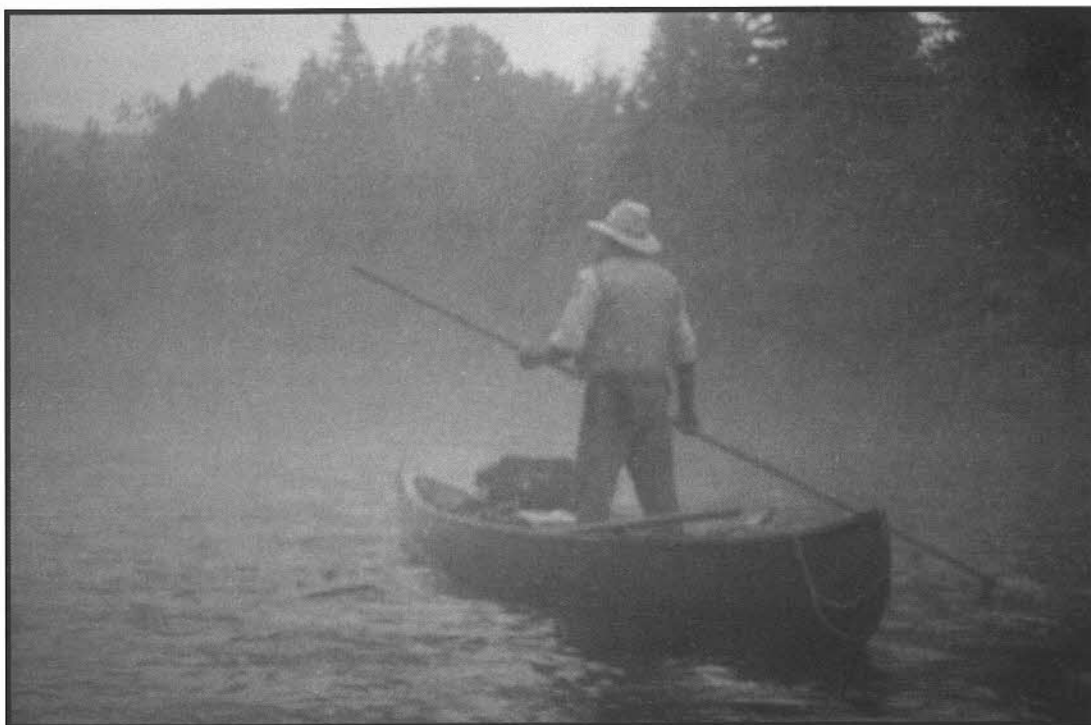
a perfectly upright craft had become a swamped canoe. The water was pouring in over the left gunwale. Dwayne and two or three others rushed into the river to grab the runaway canoe. The rescue party brought the women to shore. They were uninjured, more surprised than anything else. Shauna, wearing a wetsuit, needed only a moment to regain her composure. Bahia, on the other hand, wearing wool pants and shirt, was totally soaked and needed a complete change of clothing. Within minutes they were able to joke about the dump. Jamie had captured the whole incident on his camcorder, and he rolled the tape. The women were the first to view it — first watching glumly, and then breaking into laughter.

As Larry remarked, "The origin of the accident had occurred even before the second stair. The set-up was off." On the approach, the canoe leaned too much to the left; with the hull tilting, the sweep over the second ledge accelerated and compounded what was already underway. All the gear was tied in (expedition policy) and remained intact. Our party was prepared and very fortunate. We simply bailed out the canoes at our eddying-out sanctuary and soon paddled away.

Within a few minutes on river left, we noticed a tributary cascading loudly into the Bonaventure, which widened and picked up more and more water for the next two days. The cascade only hinted at what lay



Lining to bypass Class IV rapids



Poling into the fog

above. We landed and trudged up a steep hill through a thicket and discovered an unnamed 75-foot waterfall plunging into a scenic pool. This locale was not even depicted on the topo map. It is now marked in ink on our map as "Picture Falls," and true to its name, we all snapped numerous photographs.

After our usual stand-up lunch downstream on river right, we were off again. No matter how heartily we ate, we had work to do, and any heaviness or sluggishness quickly wore off. All afternoon, unsettled weather hovered over us, and we hastened toward our proposed campsite. The Bonaventure rolled on, with rapid after rapid, screaming left and right turns, and hidden rocks we'd see only at the last minute. The rollicking river played with us like a coquettish kitten.

During a late afternoon candy break, Larry held forth with a story from his previous year's trip. "On this same stretch of river," he said, "our party had eddied out for a brief break and saw ten girls from Montreal paddle by. On that sweltering day, the girls evidently thought they had the remote Bonaventure to themselves, and all were in the nude. After a discreet wait, our party peeled back into the river. Within a few minutes, we unexpectedly caught up with the girls, as one of their canoes had dumped. They were trying to rescue themselves, along with their canoe and gear. We volunteered our help and extricated them. Then the girls paddled off in a casual and unaffected manner."

Gravel Bar Camp had many tentsites, all open and unprotected, with shrubs and saplings set back from the river. The vegetation provided a home for the midges and mosquitoes, which instantly greeted us. The flat tentsites were on fine sand, and soon grains

were clinging to our boots, clothes, skin, tents floors, air mattresses, and everything else. Firewood posed no problem, as Larry used his chainsaw to cut branches and roots from a tree trunk washed up near the landing.

It was steak night, with baked potatoes and veggies; Larry grilled the meat to order from the large skillet. Marsha's red wine complemented the steak perfectly.

Thursday, 18 June. Gravel Bar Camp to Foggy Camp. Lightning stabbed and thunder crashed during the night. Even with my eyes closed, I could sense the white intensity of each flash, with the clap following so close at times I thought the next would strike my tent. After a torrential downpour raked the area, the storm finally moved away and quiet returned.

When I poked my head out in the early morning, a layer of fog had settled over the valley, especially thick on the river itself. After a breakfast of blueberry pancakes (those not consumed were packed away to be served as "biscuits" at lunch), we swung into the current again. Dwayne and I were glad to be back on the river, as if we had been paddling for weeks and knew no other life.

The thick fog bank clung close to the water, as solid-looking at times as a white wall. At other times, it became more transparent. Larry, in the lead, would pick up the sound of the water and ride the rapids down a chute and around a curve, disappearing into the fog for several seconds. Then his hat would appear above the fog bank, next his head and shoulders, and finally the rest of him and his canoe — all intact. It seemed almost surrealistic. For the next hour, we all played a delightful cat-and-mouse game with the fog

— “a whole new dimension to canoeing,” as someone remarked — until the swirling whiteness began to evolve into a fine mist we could see through.

Throughout our Bonaventure trip, Dwayne always alerted me to special trees, plants, and birds. “Many of the plants are just coming out here now,” he said. “They have been blooming and growing in Maine for over a month.” The appearance of any bird along the river, whether high above or skimming over the water, attracted his attention instantly. Ahead, mergansers and their young, alarmed by our approach, thrashed and fluttered to take off, while rough-legged hawks soared overhead. Other birds we saw frequently were the Canada jay, or camp robber, and the white-throated sparrow. After lunch, Dwayne made a rare sighting. Flying upstream close to the water was a harlequin, a blackish duck with yellow circles around its eyes. “The harlequin has been on the endangered species list in the United States,” Dwayne said. “It is gradually coming back, but it’s rarely seen.”

Late in the afternoon, I noticed a sign, “G-102, TOM BEAN,” nailed prominently to a tree. Other signs at 200-to-300-yard intervals bore the names of “RUSSELL,” “FOSTER,” “INDIAN FALLS,” “GRAND BLACK,” with numbers in descending order. “G-1” would be the farthest downstream. These were salmon pool sites. The Quebec government issues an annual permit to the lessee, who then controls the fishing rights to an individual or corporate section of the river. I learned later

that there are 103 permits, so I must have missed the first sign as we paddled by.

Soon, as the current diminished, our canoeing party came upon a salmon fisherman casting his line from the middle of a canoe. A guide in the stern was in charge of the motor, one in the bow handled the anchor and net. We waved and paddled wide to avoid disturbing the well-outfitted sport, who was paying dearly for his fishing privilege. Someone in our group asked softly if they had caught any fish, and one guide spread his arms wide. In another such encounter, the guide shook his head dejectedly.

It was almost six o’clock when we pulled in on river left and landed on a gravel bar. This place was the only decent campsite to put us in position for our next-day take-out. Downstream, civilization encroached. Our home for the night was a duplicate of the camp we had just left — plenty of unprotected sites, fine clinging sand, midges and mosquitoes, and a large uprooted tree for Larry’s chainsaw. Rain arrived quickly, so we ate our spaghetti and meatballs under the cook fly. The river fog soon rolled in, and I was happy to be settled for the night at Foggy Camp.

Friday, 19 June. Foggy Camp to Hotel Chateau Blanc. Foggy Camp lived up to its name, with a morning mist on the river. Under the cook fly, Larry prepared a special breakfast for us. With his spaghetti-sauce leftovers he created his version of huevos rancheros, care-



Breakfast at Foggy Camp

fully dropping about 15 eggs into the bubbling broth from the previous night's supper of onions, mushrooms, tomatoes, and peppers. The eggs were poached in the sauce and the dish was as savory as it sounds — a robust breakfast to set us up for a hard day on the river. In Canada, this dish is known as Eggs Gilles, named for its inventor, Gilles Brideau, the famed river guide who years before had pioneered commercially guided trips on the Bonaventure.

As we were breaking camp for the last time, a motorboat rattled by, carrying two fishing guides and their client. During that morning, we encountered many fishing parties on the river, their access made all the easier by a dirt road cut into the hillside on river right. One party had caught a 34-pound Atlantic salmon the previous day. Every now and then we saw a camp, with a path leading to water's edge and a dock.

One fishing boat was heading for shore as Dwayne and I paddled by. The guide told us they had caught a 12-pound salmon, and he and his client proudly lifted it in a classic fisherman's pose for us to photograph. "We catch Atlantic salmon here," the guide explained, "with some pools very productive and others barren. I am not aware of any fish being caught in this pool for the last four or five years. Molson's of Montreal controls this ten-mile stretch of river. It costs \$1,000 a day to fish here, room and board included." Dwayne and I thanked our newfound friend and promised that someday we would return if we were ever making that kind of money.

With each passing mile we noticed more parked cars and trucks, trailers, newly built cabins, even a new bridge over the Bonaventure. Workmen were grading the approach as we paddled under the span. At noon, on river left, about 20 or 30 fishermen were casting from shore, while one or two boats were anchored in the middle of the river. The village of Bonaventure evidently allows its inhabitants free fishing or charges them a nominal fee for a license. We enjoyed our final picnic lunch on the Bonaventure, which still showed plenty of kick and energy and powerful rapids.

As we had done briefly on our way in, we stopped to see Gilles Brideau at his camp. "Have you enjoyed the Bonaventure?" he asked. "Oh, yes," we all answered. "Would you canoe it again?" "Absolutely!" "I have canoed the Bonaventure fifty times," Gilles said, "and it is different every time — sometimes sunny, sometimes foggy, sometimes rainy, and always a beautiful river." Gilles was conversant on almost any topic — river news, Canadian-American relations, the fate of humankind, and his direct personal relationship with the Almighty. In his typical humorous style, Gilles told us he expected to live to 104, and he had it all arranged. Larry confessed he'd attempted to talk to the Man Upstairs but had never received an answer. "No wonder," Gilles explained, "God speaks only French."

We reluctantly took leave of Gilles and pushed on. The river was now flat and a quarter mile wide as it meandered majestically toward the sea. Riverfront

camp lined the banks. Boys fished from sand bars. Ahead a long bridge spanned the mouth of the Bonaventure. Soon I had my first whiff of salt air, and shortly thereafter noticed gulls flying overhead.

After rounding a jetty and passing under the bridge, we paddled out into Chaleur Bay, named by Jacques Cartier for the sultry weather he encountered while reconnoitring around there in 1535. Now, more than 460 years later, we ourselves experienced relatively warm temperatures. The sun was valiantly attempting to break through, the first sunshine we'd encountered on the entire expedition. It was a fine omen for ending the trip.

We headed toward a prominent landmark, the steeple of the village Catholic church. I reluctantly paddled that last mile, knowing that all too soon a final stroke would land *Obe* on the beach for take-out. With sadness, Dwayne and I heard the hull rasp along the sand in front of the Hotel Chateau Blanc across the street from the church, established in 1760. Camp that night would be an oceanfront hotel bedroom. As we carried our gear up to the hotel veranda, I glanced toward the dining room. A woman seated there saw us through the window and appeared rather startled by the appearance of modern-day voyageurs.

That evening, we enjoyed a marathon three-hour dinner in the dining room. Along with others, of course, I ordered salmon.

Our friend Gilles was right. I know I shall return to the Bonaventure, just as the returning salmon instinctively swim upstream. The Bonaventure tugs at the heart, a river never to be forgotten by anyone who has ever paddled or fished its magical waters.

Practical Information

For those intending to descend the Bonaventure River, an experienced party with strong leadership should have little difficulty. Less-skilled canoeists, for their own safety, ought to engage the services of an outfitter/guide. I strongly advise anyone unfamiliar with the area to seek local directions in locating the hard-to-find put-in at the northern end of Bonaventure Lake.

The seven Quebec topographical map quadrangles, covering the trip from the lake to the sea, are: Lac Madeleine, Ruisseau Lesseps, Mont Alexandre, Rivière Reboul, Lac McKay, New Richmond, and New Carlisle. These essential maps are available from Canada Map Office, 615 Booth Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E9.

Four outfitters are currently available: (1) Gilles Brideau, Cime Aventure, 200, chemin A. Arsenault, Bonaventure, Quebec GOC IEO, Tel. (418) 534-2333, whose many services include a shuttle to the put-in; (2) Michael Patterson, Wilds of Maine Guide Service, Inc., 6 Abby Lane, Yarmouth, Maine 04096, Tel. (207) 846-9735; (3) Martin Brown, Sunrise County Canoe Expeditions, Inc., Cathance Lake, Grove Post Office, Maine 04638, Tel. (207) 454-7708; and (4) Warren Cochrane, Allagash Canoe Trips, P.O. Box 713, Greenville, Maine 04441, Tel. (207) 695-3668.



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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. Try to submit your contributions by e-mail, on 3 1/2 in. computer disk (WordPerfect or MS-Word or text files preferred, but any format is welcome), or in typewritten form, but legibly handwritten material will also be accepted. For more information contact the editor (address etc. see WCA Contacts on the back page). 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: Summer 1999 *deadline date:* 25 April
 Autumn 1999 1 August

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 3 1/2 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).

MAIN CANOE SYMPOSIUM will take place at Winona Camps, Moose Pond, Bridgton, Maine, on 4-6 June 1999. Spend a weekend learning and celebrating traditional canoeing and camping at a classic woodland camp. Website: www.mcs.gen.me.us. Contact: Jerry Kocher, Winona Camps, RR 1, Box 868, Bridgton, Main 04009, tel. (207) 647-3721; e-mail: JKocher@shore.net

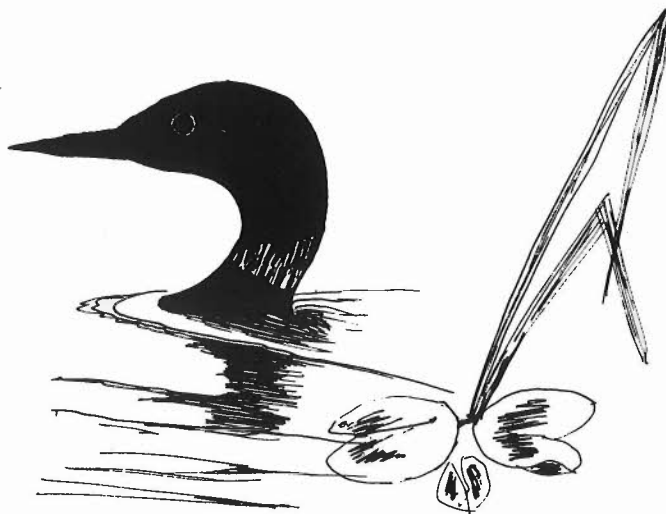
CANADIAN CANOE SYMPOSIUM will be hosted by the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association at their national headquarters in Merrickville, Ontario, on 13-15 August 1999. Seminars, workshops, guest speakers, special childrens' programs, demonstrations, and much more are scheduled. CRCA, POBox 398, 446 Main Street W., Merrickville, Ontario, K0G 1N0; tel. (613) 269-2910; fax (613) 269-2908; e-mail staff@crca.ca; website www.crca.ca

DON RIVER PADDLE

Toronto and Region Conservation and the Wilderness Canoe Association invite you to our annual "Celebrate the Don" on Sunday 16 May 1999. Beginning between 9 a.m. and 12 noon at Serena Gundy Park (located in Sunnybrook Park just north of Eglinton Avenue East and west of Leslie Street), the first leg of the paddle is on the West Don River until you reach the East Branch. The trip then continues south down the Lower Don to the take-out point at Harbourfront.

Much of the route is flatwater, but there are a few stretches of mild whitewater to test your skills. The scenery varies from wild and wooded to uninspired urban, but all in all it's a very interesting trip. Buses will be on hand at the take-out point to transport all paddlers back to Serena Gundy, where you can get your car to retrieve your canoe. Be sure to bring extra warm clothes sealed in plastic. During the paddle refreshments are available. Donations to Regenerate The Don are gratefully accepted.

To register and get your starting time, please call: (416) 661-6600-ext.331. For more information call: Marta Soucek (TRCA) at (416) 661-6600-ext.283.



WCA TWENTY-FIVE YEARS YOUNG!

Below you see a (reduced-size) copy of the first page of the first newsletter of the Wilderness Canoe Association, produced by its first editor in April 1974. Named "Beaverdam" for the temporary lack of a better name, the club newsletter was a modest publication of five pages, typewritten (all in capital letters), no photographs, and with only one set of small drawings to illustrate a short note on knots. Modest, indeed, but ambitious and anxious to grow.

The WCA had been formed in late 1973 by a small group of concerned paddlers meeting in Orillia, Ontario, but only after a reorganization in March 1975 did the association show any real signs of life. On page 9 of the Winter 1993 edition of *Nastawgan*, past editor Sandy Richardson gives some information on the struggling first years of the WCA.

The times were different then, much of the hi-tech canoeing and camping equipment we take for granted now didn't exist or was in the early stages of development. And rarely did one hear of somebody having canoed really far from home; remote destinations such as the Barren Lands and Labrador were still too far away for most people.

We live in a different "wilderness canoeing" world now; trips to the far North are becoming more and more popular, and the quality and diversity of equipment have reached levels that were unimaginable 25 years ago. People are still the same, though, searching for the same timeless delights and peace wilderness canoeing can bring. Maybe the WCA will still be around 25 years from now to help enjoy and protect our precious canoe country.



Beaverdam

INTERIM NEWSLETTER - WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION - VOL. I, NO. 1, APRIL 1974

LATE LAST YEAR, AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, A SMALL, DIVERSE GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS GATHERED IN A BARE CONFERENCE ROOM IN ORILLIA, STARED BLANKLY AT ONE ANOTHER AND, HAVING NOTHING ELSE IN COMMON, FORMED THE WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION.

WELL . . . IT DIDN'T HAPPEN EXACTLY LIKE THAT, BUT THE RESULT WAS THE FORMATION OF A GROUP OF CANOE PEOPLE INTO AN ASSOCIATION WHICH WILL, HOPEFULLY, CONCERN ITSELF WITH A NUMBER OF PRESSING ISSUES FACING ANYONE WHO TRAVELS BY CANOE: DEDICATED WILDERNESS TRIPPER, WEEKEND PADDLER, OR THE COTTAGER WHO VENTURES OUT ONLY RARELY FOR AN HOUR OR TWO -- AND WHO WANTS TO DO IT SAFELY . . .

THE NEED FOR AN ASSOCIATION HAS NEVER BEEN GREATER.

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TRAVELLING BY CANOE IS INCREASING ENORMOUSLY. MANY OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE NEVER USED A CANOE BEFORE AND THE IMPLICATIONS, IN TERMS OF SAFETY ALONE, ARE OBVIOUS. THEIR POTENTIAL IMPACT ON THE WILDERNESS CONCERNS US ALL.

AS CANOE TRAVELLERS, WE FACE OTHER PROBLEMS. PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT IS THE PRESSURE ON OUR WILDERNESS AREAS FROM COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT. THIS KIND OF DEVELOPMENT IS CRITICAL TODAY. GOVERNMENT HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THERE WILL HAVE TO BE ENVIRONMENTAL TRADE-OFFS TO PRODUCE ENERGY. AS A CASE IN POINT, ONTARIO'S ENERGY MINISTER RECENTLY SAID THAT PLANS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF HYDRO FACILITIES ON NORTHERN RIVERS ARE BEING REVIEWED. ONCE DISREGARDED ON THE BASIS OF ECONOMICS, THESE

PLANS MAY BE VIABLE TODAY BECAUSE OF INCREASING COSTS AND DIMINISHING SUPPLIES OF ALTERNATE POWER SOURCES USED TO GENERATE ELECTRICITY.

WHILE OUR AIM MUST BE TO OPPOSE UNNECESSARY DEVELOPMENT OF OUR WILDERNESS, OUR EFFECTIVENESS LIES ENTIRELY IN BEING UNITED, WELL-INFORMED AND IN TAKING ACTION IN A BALANCED, RATIONAL WAY. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT SOME ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURE GROUPS HAVE DONE THEMSELVES MUCH HARM WITH APPEALS BASED MORE ON EMOTION THAN ON RATIONAL THINKING, APPEALS WHICH FAIL TO RECOGNIZE THE INEVITABLE TRUTH THAT THERE MUST, AND WILL, BE SOME DEVELOPMENT, SOMEWHERE, SOMETIME.

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THESE INEVITABLE TRUTHS AND MAKE OUR OPPOSITION STRONG -- BUT CONSTRUCTIVE -- STRESSING ALTERNATIVES AND CONSIDERATIONS LEADING TO MULTI-USE CONCEPTS. WE MUST INTELLIGENTLY CONSIDER THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS; TOO FEW ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS DO.

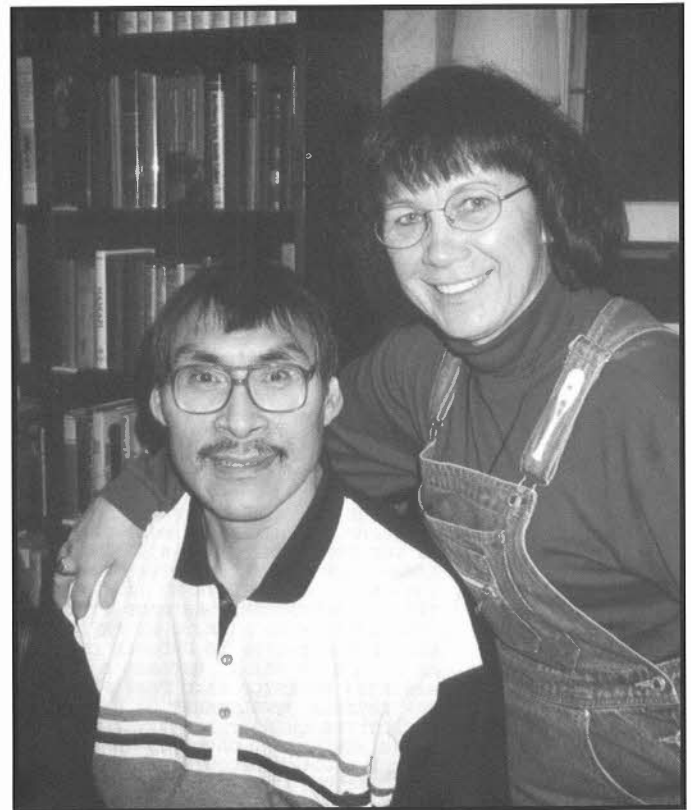
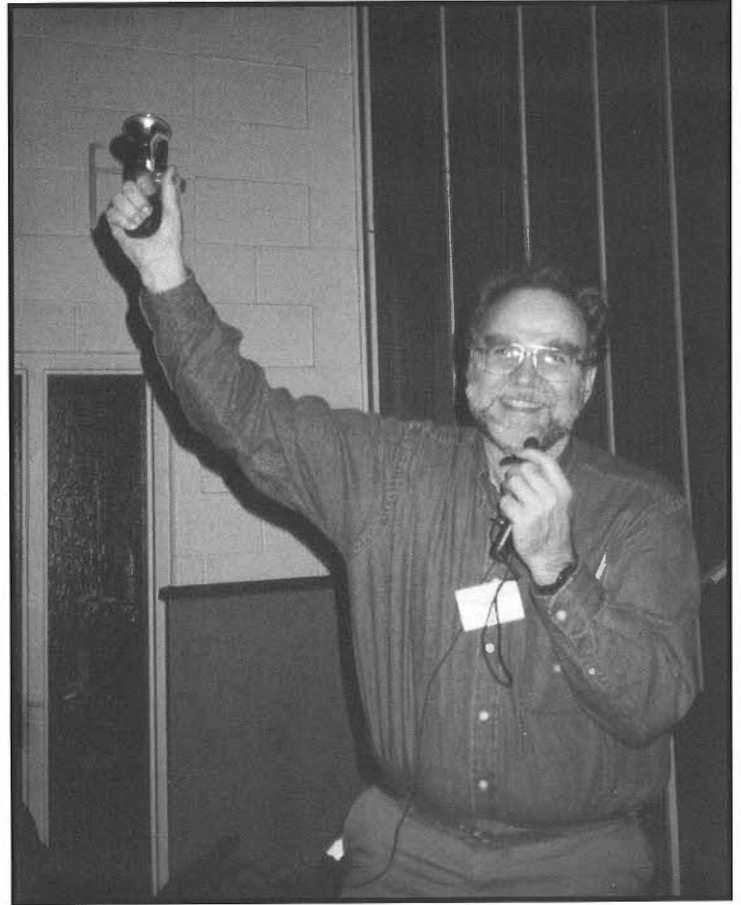
TO EFFECTIVELY DEAL WITH PROBLEMS WE CAN REASONABLY ANTICIPATE, OUR MEMBERS MUST COMMUNICATE THEIR VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES. AS JOE CHARLES REMARKED AT THE FOUNDING MEETING, THE STOCK-IN-TRADE OF ANY ASSOCIATION IS INFORMATION. WE NEED A POOLING OF VIEWS. AS A MEMBER, PLEASE RESPOND. ONLY IN THIS WAY CAN WE BRING A STRONG, REASONABLE FORCE TO BEAR ON A GIVEN PROBLEM. AND IT IS ONLY THROUGH STRONG, REASONABLE VIEWS

F. D. (PETE) EMMOREY, EDITOR

ARCTIC TRAVELS AND ARCTIC CULTURES II SYMPOSIUM

This 14th annual symposium (organized by George Luste and sponsored by the WCA) saw more than 700 enthusiastic participants enjoy the 18 presentations given in Toronto on 5 and 6 February. The following presentations were made:

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| — Summer-Long Arctic Paddle | Jill Allan |
| — Wildlife and Winter in the High Arctic | David Gray |
| — Inuit Language, Culture and Community | Leah Otak |
| — Eskimo Dogs and Polar Bears | Brian Ladoon |
| — Devon and Victoria Perspectives | Mike Whittier |
| — The Storyteller's Arctic | David Pelly |
| — Perspectives on the Lure of the Arctic | Shawn Hodgins |
| — Cold Ocean Adventures | Jon Turk |
| — Leadership, Outdoors and Under Stress | Will Lange |
| — A Thirst for Adventure | Dorcas Miller |
| — Youth Adventures in the Arctic | Steve Brunner |
| — Kayaking and Inuit Eco-tourism | Emiliano Qirngnaq |
| — George Douglas: the Man Behind Lands Forlorn | Kathy Hooke |
| — Dogrib Trails, Canoes and Archaeology | Tom Andrews |
| — Mindset: Dogrib Kids and Trails | John B. Zoe |
| — Franklin's Last Arctic Journey | John Harrington |
| — Arctic Challenges for the New Millennium | Robbie Keith |
| — Arctic Cultural Perspectives | Peter Ernerk |



CANOETRIP 1997

Viki Mather

It seemed to take all day to pack for a simple two-day canoe trip; we didn't get to the landing until 5 p.m. Lucky for us, there was a moderate south wind — our destination lay 11 km to the north!

Kate, now 12 weeks old, was tucked comfortably in the bow of the canoe in front of me. Vesta sat just behind me, while Allan steered the canoe.

It felt wonderful to have the wind at our backs as we paddled through the late afternoon sun. Vesta wanted to stop to explore an island here, to look at some pictographs there, to see what might be found in a bay over to the east. "On the way back," we kept promising. We needed to get to our camp as soon as we could to have time to cook dinner and set up for the night.

Kate slept cozily in her little nook in the canoe. When she woke, I sat down on the floor of the canoe to feed her. All the while, the wind pushed us onward.

By 7 p.m. our destination was in sight, and 15 minutes later we were busy getting supper ready and putting up the tent. Kate sat in her little chair with a bug net over the top while we got things organized. Fortunately, there weren't many bugs. We all slept well — including Kate who never woke in the night. Her first time in a tent — I think she's going to be a great little camper!

Next day we paddled a few kilometres to the outlet. A series of little waterfalls, islands, and shallow pools ramble over a kilometre to the next lake. It seemed as

though this would be a good place to have lunch — but the black-flies were voracious! I was glad to get back on the big lake — in the big breeze — and away from the biting menace.

On the water there was nary a black-fly to be seen. We managed to get rid of the few mosquitoes who came along for the ride after the portage from the pools.

The early afternoon we spent paddling in and out of little bays and around islands — just enjoying the scenery.

Allan dropped us off on our island, then went over to the western shore to explore. I fed Kate and put her into the tent for her afternoon nap. Vesta read in the tent beside her while I went off for a swim.

Such a glorious day! Such a beautiful lake! I had a long, slow swim, then lay down on a sun-warmed rock, thinking to have a little nap. I heard a rustling in the bush to my left. Thought it might be something big. But no, I thought, the little critters always make biggest noises. I looked up expecting to see a couple of squirrels playing in the low branches.

Then I heard a clomp, clomp, clomp! Something LARGE and brownish popped out below the tree branches. I gave a startled yell as it came near — about two metres away and running full speed! The otter did an immediate turn around and splashed into the lake before I could even see where he went. I had only a moment to sit up before I could smell his musk in the air. Whew! He must have been even more startled than I was.



Allan returned with oyster mushrooms. We feasted that night on shish-ka-bobs, battered and fried mushrooms and potatoes. Vesta baked bannock on a stick for dessert.

When the sun set, we went happy, stuffed, and tired to bed. Fell asleep to the sound of loons calling on the lake, and woke the next morning to a symphony of birds, bullfrogs, and wolves.

After breakfast I took a little paddle to the east shore to explore. While walking along the shore, I felt the forest tugging — enticing me to walk inward. When I came to a small clearing of blueberry bushes, a little brown bird was startled from her nest. I went to take a look and found two tiny, perfect eggs. Looking closer, I noticed a little pink thing there as well. Then looking

closer yet, I saw that yes, the little pink thing was wriggling around. It reminded me of my own little pink offspring taking her morning nap in the tent just across the bay. I left quickly to allow mother bird to get back to keep her little ones warm.

After packing up our camp, we set off southward — directly into the same brisk wind that had brought us north two days before. We had to work all the time to make any progress at all. We welcomed the stops promised to Vesta along our way to rest and regain our strength. The two-hour trip north took us over five hours on the return. There is no such thing as a free ride in the canoe. We paid more than double for the easy trip north.

FOOD FOR PADDLERS

CHICKEN AND DUMPLINGS

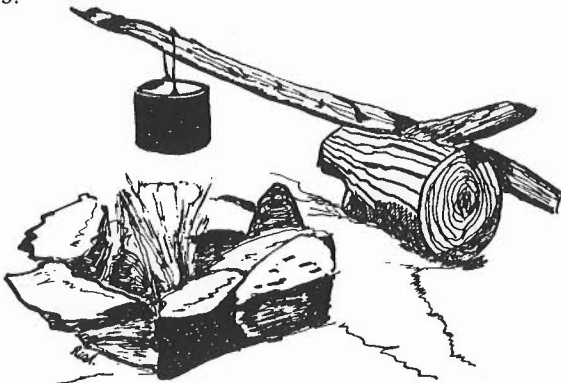
2 cans Flakes of Chicken
1 Knorr Cream of Chicken soup mix
½ cup dried deluxe mixed vegetables (bulk food)
7½ cups water

Dumpling mix (mix in advance of trip):
1½ cup white flour
1 heaping tablespoon baking powder
¾ teaspoon salt
⅓ cup skim milk powder

Soak dried vegetables in water for one half to one hour. Combine chicken, soup mix, water, and vegetables in a large pot. Bring to a boil and then simmer until vegetables are tender (won't take long if you soaked them in advance). Combine dumpling mix with ¾ cup water and 1½ tablespoons of oil. Spoon dumpling mixture onto bubbling liquid in pot. Cover and cook on low-medium heat for 15 minutes.

(From the website called Backcountry Kitchen)

This column on food for paddlers is the responsibility of Nastawgan's devoted food editor, Barb Young, 12 Erindale Crescent., Brampton, Ont., L6W 1B5; e-mail youngdav@interlog.com. Send her your favorite recipes and share your scrumptious ideas with other trippers.



MISSINAIBI RIVER LAND SWAP

The 50-km section of the Missinaibi River just south of the village of Mattice on Hwy 11 was never included in the Missinaibi River Provincial Waterway Park as it runs through a 75,000-hectare parcel of land owned by forestry company Spruce Falls Inc. (which forms part of the corporate empire of Quebec-based Tembec Inc.). The province has never been able to come up with the \$8 million plus asking price put on the property by the Kapuskasing-based Spruce Falls. Now a deal is in the works to trade the land for the provincially owned 79,000-hectare Gordon Cosens Forest to the southeast of the company's holdings. Spruce Falls could acquire this prime piece of old growth forest in exchange for the clear-cut wasteland that many of us have beheld on our trips down the river. Spruce Falls is licensed to cut Cosens, but cutting on provincial land would cost them the \$2.85 per cubic metre of timber stumpage fee. With this land transfer the property would become their private holding, making it exempt from the fee. As a result, the company would realize an estimated savings of over \$17 million. Not a bad deal!

The irony of all this is that the actual 200-metre strip of shoreline needed to fulfil the dream of making this historic wilderness route a waterway park only has a value of \$200,000. However, Spruce Falls refused to sell it as a separate block. When company Vice President David Gos was asked if they wouldn't consider offering the land as a gesture of good will, he reportedly replied: "Why should we?" One reason that comes to mind might be the province's 1992 bail-out of the nearly bankrupt firm, which provided them with 10 years of free electricity carrying a \$267 million value, and a cash payment of \$34 million from Ontario Hydro. Apparently some of us have short memories — or unusual ways of expressing their gratitude. I guess Dave has never heard the term "good corporate citizen." Wonder if he's ever heard the phrase "corporate welfare bum." Which one do you think best applies to Spruce Falls?

Bill Ness

PADDLERS' TALK

ATTACHING YOUR BAILER

If you have ever lost your bailer and had to use a coffee cup instead for the next three weeks, you probably tie the bailer in now. Having a tether that is long enough to use the bailer effectively, yet short enough to not get wrapped up in gear and ankles, can be a delicate balance.

The company I work for, Uncommon Journeys, has a great solution if this is a problem for you. We use flat webbing and a Fastex buckle. One end of the buckle is sewn onto a loop of webbing, so it can be attached to a thwart or seat by pulling the Fastex through the loop (a ring knot I guess). The mating end of the buckle is attached in a similar fashion to the bailer, for which we use large juice jugs with the pour spout cut off. With this system the bailer is closely tethered so it is never trapped under a pack or stuck around your gear, and it is quickly and easily available whenever it is needed. I find this is especially practical for whitewater tripping as bailing can sometimes be a regular part of the daily activities.

Stephen Reynolds

NEW ONTARIO ROAD ATLAS A BOON TO SHUTTLE BUNNIES

Last year, the Ontario government, as a cost-cutting measure, divested itself of the responsibility for the maintenance of many regional highways, turning this

over (i.e. passing the buck) to the local governments. As a consequence, many of the old Ontario highways we used to follow for car shuttles have become county roads. As an example, as you drive to the Burnt River takeout, you won't see the familiar HWY 121 signs any more. The road is now County 121. That you're still on the right road isn't too difficult to figure out as the number remained the same. However, where there is a previous county road number the same as the HWY number, the latter has been changed.

Undoubtedly there will be some confused paddlers driving aimlessly around this spring unable to find the old road numbers, and thinking they've just entered the Twilight Zone. Fortunately, along comes Map Art Publishing with the first comprehensive, updated Ontario Road Atlas in 1:250,000 scale. Available at many book and variety stores, at \$19.95 it isn't cheap. However, it's by far the best overall source I've seen for locating the access points and shuttle routes for Ontario's canoe routes. The color printing is crisp, with all the waterways and township side roads we've come to love clearly shown. Check it out.

Bill Ness

PADDLERS' TALK is your opportunity to publish ingenious solutions to all kinds of big or little problems encountered in the field. To submit your ideas, please contact Bill Ness or Toni Harting; addresses etc. are in the WCA Contacts on the back page.

WHITewater SAFETY TIPS

1. Rescue **people first**, gear second.
2. **Know your limits.** Remember, your limits change and are dependent on your health and conditioning.
3. Have an **Emergency Action Plan** for the river you're paddling. Also, think about what your options are if you get into a nasty situation on a river (such as getting stuck in a particular hole).
4. Constantly **keep track** of the members of your group even on a safe, familiar river. Stay within visual and auditory range. If your group is large, form a buddy system within the group.
5. Use **equipment and clothing** which is in good repair and is **appropriate** for the river and conditions you are paddling. Tandem boats should have full centre air bags (unless packs and barrels are providing you with the flotation a centre bag would). A wetsuit or drysuit is essential if the water temperature is below 10 degrees Celsius.
6. Buy a **throwbag**. Learn how to use it properly, then practise. Don't wrap the end of the rope around your hand. Don't put your hand through any loops.
7. Don't let a **series of small mistakes** add up to one disaster.
8. **Educate yourself** about the river and rapids you are running by scouting, using topographical maps and guide books, and talking to others.
9. Stay in **good physical condition**. Both you and your group will be safer.
10. Take a first-aid, CPR, life-saving, river-rescue, or canoe-skills **course**; then practise these skills.

Compiled at the WCA Outings Workshop on 23 Jan 99; submitted by Barry Godden.

WONDERFUL WANIGANS

Bill Scott

A wanigan's design reveals something of its owner's personality. Every experienced paddler has his or her own preference. After making a couple of them over the years, I have evolved a design that suits my needs well. Perhaps it might meet yours. Building a wanigan can be a great winter project to keep the hands busy while the mind wanders off on the next canoeing adventure.

Just what is a wanigan? A simple question, yet one that generates differing visions. The traditional meaning is a rugged, box-like container for holding the camp kitchen gear that is also suitable for portaging. In my style of travelling, I have expanded this usage to include not just the kitchen gear but all those miscellaneous items that one needs to access during the day but which you would rather not have to break the waterproof seal on a pack and dig around to get at. For me, this list includes rain gear, lining ropes, lunch, snacks, sun block, bug dope, first aid kit, and various other miscellany that one needs close at hand yet protected from the elements or from getting lost.

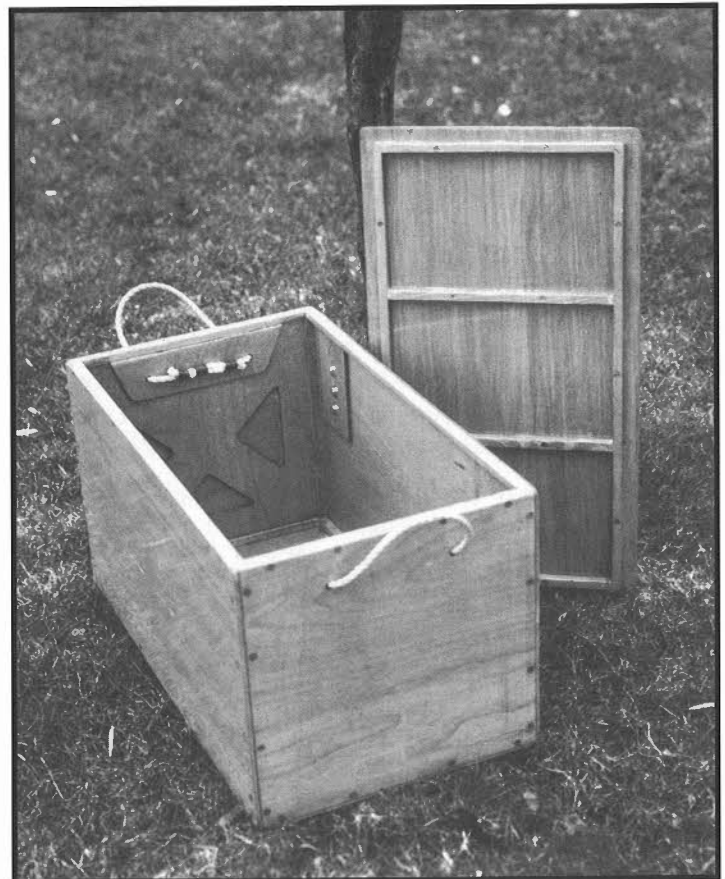
Just as in the case of backpack designs, there are two religious factions to wanigan users — the super-organized lot and the rest of us. The organized sect designs all kinds of clever partitions, shelves, drawers, attachments, and the like into the wanigan around their specific camp kitchen needs and routine. The advantage is the ability to find every spice container and utensil just where it always is. Neat and tidy. The downside is a less flexible arrangement for changing circumstances and less efficient packing. I prefer the wide-open container style. It adapts to the needs of the trip and allows one to pack the wanigan to the hilt when necessary. It might take a few seconds longer to find what you are looking for but a pattern quickly develops. For fragile things such as bread made on the trail, I use a variety of Tupperware-like plastic containers which nicely accommodate the modest neatness requirements of my personality. So those are the two basic internal wanigan designs. Each to his or her own.

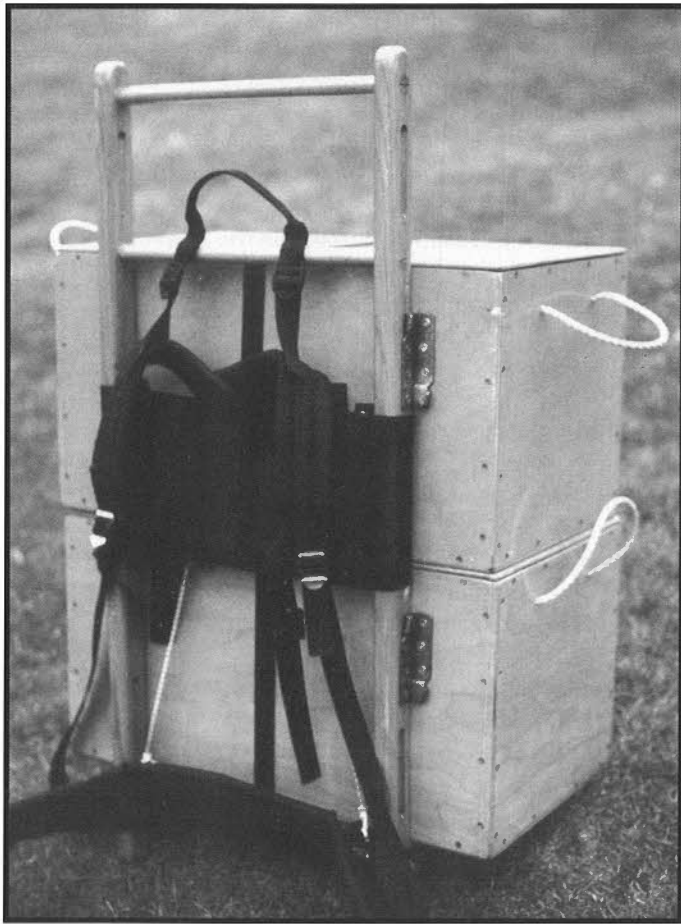
From there, the design issues get more interesting. The wanigan needs to: be sufficiently capacious and yet not so large as to invite a back-breaking load; be able to handle the largest item reasonably required in the camp kitchen; have a carrying arrangement satisfactory for portaging modest distances; be sufficiently waterproof and secure to handle a steady rain during the day and a prolonged swim resulting from a capsizing; be easy to access while seated in the canoe and just as quickly resealed; be strong (having the bottom rip out can really ruin your day); and be rugged enough to take the accumulated abuse of bouncing down the trail, being sat on in camp by a posterior that has spent too much time in front of a TV with a beer in hand, being dragged in and out of a canoe, and being unintentionally put down heavily on a corner by an exhausted, out-of-shape canoeist at the end of a long portage. Incidentally, these are many of the same requirements for a wanigan for traditional-style winter camping — just add dimensionality fitting a toboggan or sled.

The wanigan's carrying arrangement is another key consideration. The traditional approach using a tumpline or even shoulder straps places a great strain on the neck, shoulders and back. The load is also top-heavy and rather unstable which is awkward on rugged portages. What we need is an arrangement that distributes the weight more evenly be-

tween shoulders and hips, reduces the torque on the spine by keeping the weight closer to the body, and that is generally more secure, freeing up the hands for balance and support along rocky trails. A single tall and shallow box would accomplish some of these goals, but at the expense of impractical storage and access. Therefore, why not split the box in two and use a far superior carrying mechanism — the tried-and-true packer's frame?

These requirements have led me, after several earlier designs, to the one shown here. By partitioning the wanigan in two and using a separate pack frame, the load is much more manageable for getting it in and out of the canoe (or on and off a toboggan) and for loading and unloading. As well, the combined load fits much closer to the back, thereby reducing the torque on the spine, permitting a more upright carrying stance, and imposing less wear and tear on the body. With a pack frame, the load is relatively easy to get on and off the back. While this can be done single-handed, it is easier and safer for both you and the gear to have your partner give a hand in the process. The frame also balances the weight between the hips and the shoulders with padded straps, thus making long carries less of a pain. The arrangement also adds flexibility and can handle a variety of other loads. For short carries by those with strong backs, the pack frame can easily accommodate another pack laid horizontally across the top. All of these advantages have been achieved at the expense of a nominal weight gain as, for a given volume, a single container weighs slightly less than two.





In what follows, I offer my apologies to the metric commission but most wood products still come in the bad old imperial units. In the specific wanigan design shown here, the box length of 22 inches neatly accommodates the reflector oven, the largest item in my kitchen gear, and fits nicely across the canoe or lengthwise on my pulka. The width of 12 inches and height of 11.5 inches gives a combined carrying volume of about 3.5 cubic feet for the two units, which is about right. The finished and fully fitted set-up weighs about 22 lbs — 9 lbs for each half wanigan plus 4.5 for the pack frame. I find this an acceptable weight for the trade-off with ruggedness. I used scraps of material lying around the workshop for this design ($\frac{3}{16}$ inch birch plywood for the wanigan shell, $\frac{3}{8}$ inch square pine for reinforcement, birch dowels and ash for the pack frame) and put some thought into stress analysis and weight reduction, but always favored ruggedness over an extra ounce or two. No doubt a craftsman could shave a bit off this and achieve similar performance.

I would not recommend anything much larger, but if you really cannot manage without the kitchen sink, it would be preferable to achieve greater volume by increasing the height or length slightly without touching the width in order to keep the weight close to the body. Recall the purpose of a wanigan — to organize, protect, and give ready access to the kitchen gear (particularly anything fragile) plus miscellaneous kit you need during the day. Most of the food is best organized

by meal in individual Zip-lock bags and packed separately. Four olive barrels (labelled breakfast, lunch, supper, and miscellaneous) fit nicely in a canoe pack and hold enough grub for two hungry guys for a couple of weeks, while keeping food odors in and water out.

As to the implementation details, each wanigan is a simple box with close-fitting butt joints built around an internal $\frac{3}{8}$ inch reinforcing frame secured by a liberal amount of wood glue and small flat-head wood screws. The lid is similarly constructed. A rubber gasket could be fitted around the lid but I have found that a gasket is unnecessary to handle either rain or unintended full immersion if the lid mates well with the wanigan. The ends are reinforced as this is where most of the stress is. Further reinforcing is applied on the ends to accommodate the polypropylene rope handles, and on the back opposite the metal fixtures mating the wanigan to the carrying frame. The lid is held securely to the wanigan by means of a length of 1 inch nylon webbing and Fastex buckles. Sewing a finger loop at each end of the webbing allows the strap to be tensioned until it is quite taut. The wanigan meets all design requirements, except perhaps the ability to use it repeatedly as a camp seat. If this is a firm requirement, I would suggest using a somewhat stronger grade of plywood for the lid only or more elaborate reinforcing of the lid.

The carrying frame is made in the style of the old packer's frame. In this case, it is constructed of cross-grain laminated ash such that the frame is strong, light, and just about bomb-proof. Dimensions should be selected to match the user. In my case (5' 11" and shrinking), this gives a frame height of 36 inches and width of 13.5 inches, centre to centre. The side rails are 1.5 by 1 inch, as is the bottom cross brace which fits snugly under the lower wanigan. Further cross-bracing is by three $\frac{3}{4}$ inch dowels, the ends of which are split and then secured with glue and wooden wedges in the manner one secures a hammer head. The pack frame webbing, including hip and shoulder straps, can be purchased at many outdoor stores.

One neat bit about this design is the attachment arrangement, the idea for which came from a canoeing buddy, George Sherwood. These fittings, designed to attach bed frames, can be purchased from Lee Valley, www.leevalley.com, 1-800-267-8767 (tel), (613) 596-6030 (fax). Ask for Bed Rail Fasteners, size 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, part 94KO1.02, \$6.25 for a set of four pairs, eight pieces. Care is required in mounting them on the frame and wanigan such that a snug fit is achieved while allowing sufficient clearance for attaching and detaching the wanigan.

As to the construction sequence for the wanigan boxes, I first built the reinforcing frame (including the lid portion) while keeping it square, next added the plywood siding, then the reinforcement pieces, followed by sanding and sealing, and lastly installed the metal fittings and grab loops. Construction of the pack frame is self-evident.

Other than the occasional need to touch-up the varnish, I have found this design to be maintenance-free and quite functional. It has served me well on many trips.

(Editor's note: Another wanigan design, by Richard Smerdon, is presented in the Autumn 1983 issue of *Nastawgan*.)

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT DRAGONFLY SEX BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

Okay, okay, we give up. For 25 years a small but brazen and vocal minority of our readers has been clamoring for an exposé on dragonfly sex. "No," we said, "a thousand times no. The RAVEN is a reputable journal dedicated to the serious discussion of important social issues."

Well, times change and if you turn to this week's centrefold you'll see what all the fuss is about. This is the so-called "wheel position" of dragonflies. It is a common sight at this time of year around our beaver ponds and along our rivers. And, we have to admit, anyone seeing it for the first time can't help but ask themselves, "What ARE they doing?" or, "Do dragonflies know something I don't?"

Not to worry. We aim to clear up these questions and, what's more, to introduce you to the really interesting part of dragonfly sexual behavior — the part that occurs after mating.

Dragonflies in the wheel position are indeed in the act of mating — a process that begins when the male uses special claspers at the end of his abdomen to seize the female just behind her head. Whether this occurs when the dragonflies are in the air or perched, the male, still holding on to the female, bends his abdomen forward so that his ninth abdominal segment comes into contact with his second abdominal segment. This permits the transfer of sperm (produced in the ninth segment) to a special holding chamber in the second segment.

Having made this initial transfer, the male then straightens out his abdomen (more or less). The female in turn brings her abdomen forward in such a way that her ninth abdominal segment (containing her sex organs) makes contact with his second abdominal segment (where the sperm is). This, then, is the wheel

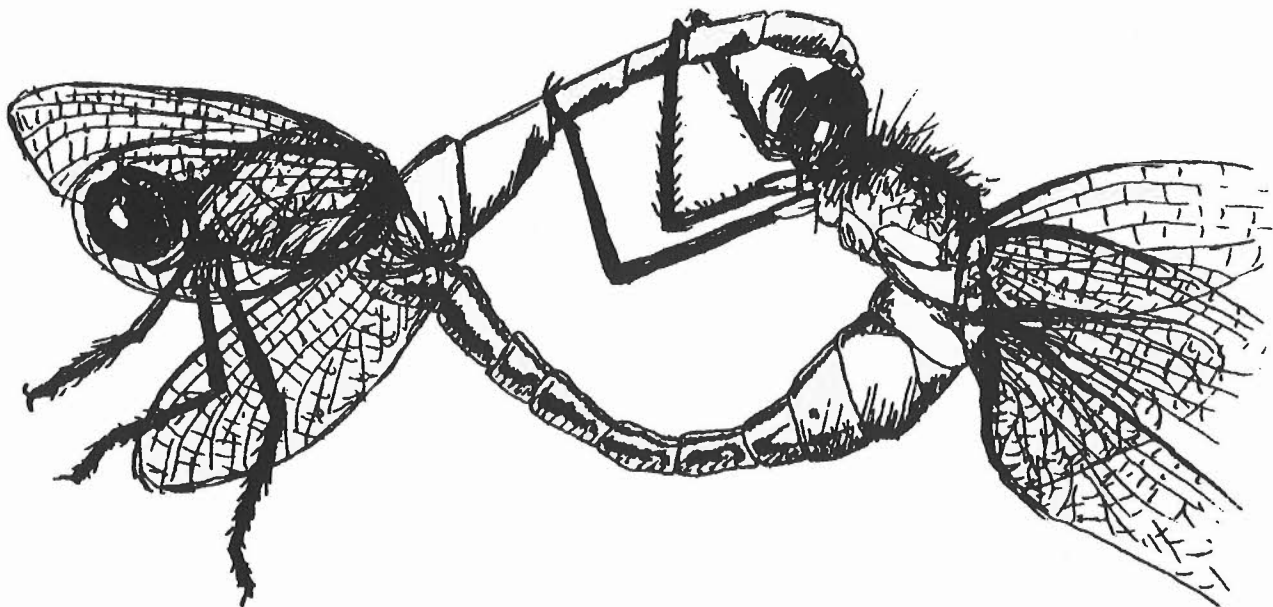
position illustrated here and it, of course, leads to the second and final transfer of sperm, this time from the male's body to the female's.

Now, if this were all that was involved in the dragonfly mating game, we might mark it down as nature's most remarkable case of sexual athleticism but otherwise just another variant on the usual theme, "boy gets girl." In fact, the truth is much more complicated.

After the male dragonfly has transferred sperm to the female, he does not fly away as you might expect. Indeed, the males of many species do not even release their grip but instead continue to grasp their females behind the head as they fly along laying their eggs. Some other dragonfly males do release their grip but they don't go far away. They hover just above and behind the female and follow along during the egg-laying process. If you watch this behavior, you will soon see that the males doing this are quite visibly guarding the females from other males. Rivals attempt to seize and mate with an egg-laying female and the guarding male just as determinedly attempts to drive them away and let the female continue uninterrupted.

Whether a male indulges in "contact" or "non-contact" guarding behavior, the question is why he bothers at all. If he has already mated with the female, surely he has won out in the unconscious competition with other males to pass his genes on to the next generation. Indeed, would he not be better off to abandon the female immediately and go off in search of other conquests? That way he could fertilize even more eggs and leave even more descendants than rival males who persisted in "uselessly" guarding their mates.

The key to understanding why male dragonflies behave as they do lies with the fact that merely mating with a female dragonfly does not guarantee fertilization



of her eggs. Sperm injected into a female's body during mating is only stored here and is not used to fertilize the eggs until the moment they are actually laid. This means that, no matter how many males have already mated with a female, none of her unlaidd eggs have been fertilized. A latearriving male therefore has a real chance of being the one who becomes the "father" of the eggs when they finally are laid.

All he has to do is mate with her in such a way that his sperm, and not that of any previous males, is in the best position to fertilize the eggs. In some dragonfly species the males actually scoop out and discard any sperm already in the female's body before they inject their own. In other species the males push previous sperm packages farther into the female so that they are much less likely to be in the optimum fertilizing location.

The upshot of this extraordinary "sperm competition" is that the winning male (the one who actually fertilizes the eggs) is the last one to mate. That is why male dragonflies go to such lengths to guard their mates from other males until egg laying is completed.

There is, of course, the further complication having to do with the two types of guarding behavior — contact and non-contact. Studies have shown that males who guard their females by maintaining their grip behind the female's head during the egg-laying process are guaranteed of not being displaced — so contact guarding might seem to be the best method. Non-contact guarding does have advantages under some circumstances, however. It can allow a male to

quickly seize and inseminate any new female who happens by while he is guarding the first. In fact, if he is really lucky, he may end up guarding two females that he was last to mate with and even try for a third.

Perhaps the most important thing of all in the sexual behavior of dragonflies is the light it sheds on the way evolution works and the help it gives us humans in comprehending the world around us. Dragonflies are mere insects, incapable of understanding the implications of their own behavior and yet they act in ways that are astonishingly sophisticated and appropriate for their own reproductive success. The explanation for this paradox lies with the "natural selection" that operates in favor of any strain of any plant or animal that leaves more descendants than other strains. Dragonflies that guard their mates have left numerous offspring (who also guard their mates). Any

dragonflies whose genetic makeup did not include guarding behavior left fewer descendants than their rivals with each generation and eventually became such a tiny fraction of the population that, for all practical purposes, they disappeared. Something the way small grains of sand are the only ones to pass through the "selection" exercised by a sieve, so too mate-guarding dragonflies are the only ones that have passed the test of natural selection for the most effective reproducers.

Reprinted from the 4 July 1985 issue of *The Raven*, courtesy of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

SPRING'S COMING

Saturday 1 p.m. Low cloud cover outside the kitchen window. The sky spitting cold rain. Looks like it's going to go on all day.

Later in the day listening to the weather forecast on the radio. The announcer says clearing tonight and warm tomorrow. This could be it. The last cold front of the winter. Spring's coming.

Time to start putting it all together again. The wife hears me thinking out loud and asks, "What is it all?"

Had to stop for a minute. What is it all? Does she want the short list? What is on the short list? As far as I know, everything is on the short list.

The body — Have to increase exercise amounts. Can't be up there and not in condition to do the physical labor required for travel in the wilderness.

The camping clothes — They need to be looked at with an impartial eye. An eye experienced in hard decisions on the "will it last?" issue. Threadbare clothes in the city will be reclassified to rags in the wilderness. Usually in a very short period of time. Shirts and pants have to be tough enough to take the hard wear that is going to be visited upon them.

The camping gear — This is always the place where new items try to make it into the trip equipment list.

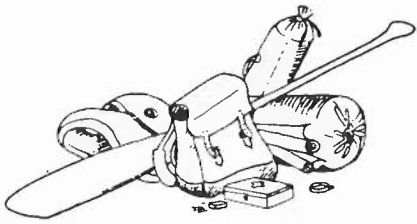
Problem is not so much gear wearing out as "nice to haves" wanting to be added in. New items are constantly being introduced to the camping market. To a canoeist, it becomes an issue of kilos. The buddies — Those you've shared food with, worked together to the best of your ability with, and endured danger, weather, and fun with. They are forged to you with bonds that far exceed ordinary friendship. They are your brothers in the finest meaning of the word.

Need to start getting them psyched up. Usually begin the process by reflecting with them about past trips. Nothing beats bringing back those old memories to encourage interest and enthusiasm in making new memories.

The mental state — Main quality to develop is that of gratitude. Every year that I get to go I consider the most precious of gifts. Actually, I consider it a preview of coming attractions. Like in the movies. It's as if I have been offered this chance to glimpse paradise. And my paradise will be the wilderness of the Canadian North. Great joy comes from every moment that is spent in the wilderness now. How incredible it would be if the moments went on forever.

I've been taught that paradise will be that fulfilling. I'm looking forward to it.

Greg Went



SILENCE LIVES

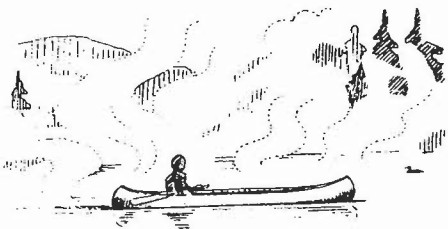
*Silence hides inside pingos and rocks,
And lies dormant in animal groans.
Silence hugs fur and feathered remains
On the floor bed of bracken and stones.
Silence lives within the skeletons
Scattered on the harsh barrens as loans
To the remaining creatures of the land,
Before they too become bones.*

*Silence lives within the Thelon waters
And inhabits the lone caribou's life.
Silence lurks in a muskox who dotters,
Devoured by a hungry wolf's strife.
Silence enters my soul as I paddle
In rhythm to the wind through the land.
Silence rides with me as horse and saddle
While it gallops over eskers and sand.*

*When I'm on the tundra I have no fear,
Except for the mighty grizzly bear.
Near seems so far and far seems so near,
I look into the forever and stare.
When I head to the distance where land meets sky,
I know I am not afraid of my death;
The tundra is where I can say my good-bye;
It's where I wish to take my last breath.*

Enid Weiner

This poem was inspired by a four-week trip on the Thelon River in the summer of 1996. I wish to dedicate it to my paddling partner at the time, Joop Stenfort, with whom I shared a most inspirational and literary journey.



REVIEWS

WILDERNESS RIVERS OF MANITOBA by Hap Wilson and Stephanie Aykroyd, published by the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, POBox 398, Merrickville, Ont., K0G 1N0, 1998, softcover, 160 pages, \$24.95.

Reviewed by Toni Harting.

It's always a delight to pick up a new book by Hap Wilson and enjoy the incredible maps this experienced tripper-mapmaker-writer-historian-photographer produces. So it is with his latest creation, this fascinating book on canoe routes in Manitoba. Hap and his partner, Stephanie, describe 19 rivers in such an enchanting manner, full of rich background information, historical and cultural subjects, gripping stories, and various tips on tripping in the wilderness, that the reader's first reaction must be to want to load the car with canoe and camping gear and take off to visit some or all of the places the writers talk about. Hap's maps and drawings are truly first class, and some of his photographs are also quite good, especially the color ones. The black and white reproductions are sometimes too grey and show a lack of contrast. A delightful and informative book that will bring many adventurers to go and visit the wilderness rivers of Manitoba.



CAMPING'S TOP SECRETS by Cliff Jacobson, published by The Globe Pequot Press, POBox 833, Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06475, 1998, softcover, 243 pages, 90 illustrations, US\$14.95.

Reviewed by Toni Harting.

During his long career as a tripper paddling remote rivers in northern Canada, Cliff Jacobson has collected a huge amount of information on how to be comfortable in the outdoors, information that can be of immense help to make camping safer and more enjoyable. This book is the second, completely updated edition of his book first published in 1987. It presents much of the wisdom Cliff has collected over the years, and it does so in a clear, easy-to-read style enriched with numerous illustrations. The book is a bit like the new column, Paddlers' Talk, recently opened in *Nastawgan*, but then on a much larger scale with longer items. Anybody who goes camping in the outdoors, newcomers as well as jaded oldtimers, can learn and profit from this book, making their stay in Mother Nature's lap even better.

WCA TRIPS

**WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT
PRESENTED IN THE SUMMER ISSUE?
Contact the Outings Committee before 2 May!**

For questions, suggestions, proposals to organize trips, or anything else related to the WCA Trips, contact any of the members of the Outings Committee: Bill Ness (416) 321-3005, rabbit1@globalserve.net; Mike Jones (905) 275-4371, dd890@freenet.toronto.on.ca; Ann Dixie (416) 769-0210, Peter Devries, (905) 477-6424, Gisela Curwen (416) 484-1471, g.curwen@danieltborger.com

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

14 March

OAKVILLE CREEK

Harrison Jolly, (905) 689-1733, book before 7 March.-----Water levels are always unpredictable on this small watershed. Plan for fast, cold water, and possible sweepers on the narrow bends. Oakville Creek can be a long day's paddle if the weather gods are in a bad mood, though a superb run if water and weather are favorable. Put-in and take-out can be adjusted depending on the weather. Suitable for intermediates with good cold-weather paddling gear. Limit six boats.

27 March

UPPER CREDIT RIVER

Paul and Diane Hamilton, (905) 877-8778, book before 20 March.-----We'll paddle from Inglewood down to Glen Williams. The river will be fast and very cold with some small rapids. Although the weather will likely be cold, the river valley is nicely sheltered from the wind. Suitable for novices who are properly dressed for the cold conditions. Limit six boats.

27 March

MOIRA RIVER

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 20 March.-----We will meet at Chisholmss Mill in the morning and then run down the river to Latta. In the afternoon we will paddle the more difficult Lost Channel section. This allows us to be only a short distance from our cars at any time, and permits newer canoeists to get a feel for this river to decide if they want to tackle the more demanding upper section after lunch. Wetsuits or drysuits, helmets, and properly installed flotation bags are required. Tandem boats must have centre bags. A good early season trip for intermediate paddlers prepared for cold water. Limit six boats.

2 April

MOIRA RIVER

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 27 March.-----A replay of last week's outing on one of our favorite spring rivers in southeastern Ontario.

10 April

BEAVER CREEK

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 3 April.-----This will be a challenging whitewater run suitable for advanced-level whitewater paddlers with fully outfitted canoes and proper cold-weather attire. Limit five boats.

10-11 April

MISSISSAGUA AND BLACK RIVERS

Jay Neilson and Frank Knaapen, call Jay at (416) 690-4016 or Frank at (613) 735-4741 by 4 April.-----We will be running the Mississauga and Black Rivers this weekend. One is required to be fully outfitted and have intermediate class 2 whitewater skills. Some class 3 and 4 challenges can be portaged. Limit five boats.

17-18 April

BEAVER CREEK AND UPPER BLACK RIVER

Barry Godden, (416) 440-4208, book before 10 April.-----Saturday's run follows Beaver Creek down to Fiddler's Rapids. Sunday we run the challenging Upper Black River. Both of these require advanced paddling skills. Wetsuits or drysuits as well as full flotation for canoes are needed. Limit five boats.

24-25 April

MASSASSAUGA PROVINCIAL PARK

Bob Bignell, (905) 627-3730, bignellb@mcmaster.ca -----Route to be decided nearer the time to determine ice conditions. New members are especially welcome. Maximum of four canoes / eight participants.

24-25 April

UPPER MADAWASKA AND OPEONGO RIVERS

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 17 April.----- Two days of whitewater excitement for advanced paddlers. Saturday we will paddle the upper Madawaska, which is a fast-flowing pool-and-drop river with quiet stretches interspersed with some very serious rapids. All rapids can, and some must, be portaged. On Sunday we will move to the Opeongo, which contains long stretches of continuous riffles plus several significant drops. Portaging is more difficult here. In high water this can make for a strenuous trip. Wetsuits or drysuits, helmets, and fully outfitted whitewater boats with full flotation are a must. Limit six boats.

1 May

WILLOW CREEK

Mike Jones, (905) 275-4371, book before 24 April.-----Willow Creek winds its way through the Minesing Swamp just west of Barrie. There should be an opportunity to see plenty of migrating birds. Suitable for novices. Limit four boats.

1 May GANARASKA HIKING TRAIL

Peter Verbeek, (416) 757-3814, pverbeek@freenet.toronto.on.ca, book before 28 April. ----- A challenging 19-km hike in the Wilderness section of the Ganaraska Trail. We will hike from Moore Falls to Devil's Lake. You can discover some new places to go canoeing in this beautiful Shield country.

1-2 May ICE-OUT TRIP MASSASSAUGA PROVINCIAL PARK

Ann Dixie, (416) 769-0210 and Anne Lessio, (416) 293-4116, book before 23 April. ----- Last year's ice-out trip was successful, so we are repeating this opportunity of an early start for the enthusiastic flatwater canoeist. The organizers will lead a search to find ice for après-supper cocktails at the campsite. Limit six canoes.

2 May MOIRA RIVER

Bill Ness, call (416) 321-3005 before 9:00 p.m., book before 26 April. ----- By this time of year water levels on the Moira have gone down from break-up highs, and the temperature is on the rise. This is the perfect opportunity for newer whitewater paddlers who want some intermediate experience to get on this classic spring run from Lost Channel to Latta. There are some good surfing spots and loads of eddies to practise catching. The water is still chilly enough that you need a wetsuit, and your boat needs flotation bags in case you and it part company. Limit six boats.

3-5 May GANARASKA TRAIL BACKPACKING TRIP

Peter Verbeek, (416) 757-3814, pverbeek@freenet.toronto.on.ca, book before 28 April. ----- A challenging 65-km backpacking hike of the entire Wilderness section of the Ganaraska Trail, between Moore Falls and Sadowa, through Shield country. For experienced backpackers only. This will get you in shape for the coming portaging season.

8-9 May SHARK LAKE - KAWARTHAS

Gisela Curwen, (416) 484-1471, and Ann Dixie, (416) 769-0210, book before 30 April. ----- One-way trip with short car shuttle. This very scenic route starts on Long Lake and finishes on Coon Lake; two lightly travelled cottage lakes. Inbetween we paddle through a number of lakes in the Kawartha wilderness. We plan to camp on Shark Lark where we hike some of the exposed granite ridges which offer great vistas of the lake. Hopefully, we see the first migratory birds return and the first wildflowers. Limit four canoes.

8-9 May WOLF LAKE

Viki or Allan Mather, (705) 853-4929, book soon. ----- The blackflies always appear at 1 p.m. on Mother's Day around Wolf Lake (northeast of Sudbury), where we will make a base camp. Depending on conditions, we will paddle if the ice is off, but we will hike for sure! This is the largest remaining area of Old Growth Red Pine in the province, offering excellent opportunities for a 3-5 day (or longer) canoe trip. We will meet at Highway 17, one half hour east of Sudbury.

8-9 May UPPER MAGNETAWAN RIVER

Paul Wilcox, (905) 884-3775, book before 1 May. ----- The Magnetawan is an exciting whitewater river containing class 2-3 rapids and some falls that must be portaged. We will paddle from Ahmic Lake to Maple Island both days, running the two outlets from Ahmic Lake for variety. This a great trip for strong intermediate paddlers. Wetsuits or drysuits, helmets, and properly outfitted boats are a must. Limit six boats.

8-9 May MISSISSAGUA RIVER AND EELS CREEK

Bill Ness, call (416) 321-3005 before 9:00 p.m., book before 26 April. ----- On Saturday we will paddle the Mississagua which is a classic pool-and-drop run. The river is a series of rapids in the class 1-3 range separated by flat sections and scenic falls (class 4-5). All major rapids can be easily portaged, making the trip suitable for any intermediate. The next day we will run Eels Creek, which is similar to the Mississagua but narrower. It's a very pretty little creek with some real fun drops, but you must be a solid intermediate with good boat control in class 2 water or you could get into potentially unpleasant situations. A wetsuit or drysuit is required. Open canoes need full flotation, but must be set up for efficient portaging. The scenery justifies toting a camera. Limit five boats.

15-16 May RANKIN AND SAUBLE RIVERS

Anne Bradley & Barb McIntosh, call Anne before 9:00 p.m., (519) 855-4835, book before 7 May. ----- This weekend provides some fine spring flatwater paddling in Bruce County. The Rankin is an 18-km, four-hour varied trip across lakes, through marshlands filled with springtime waterfowl, and down a narrow river through a drowned forest. The lower part of the route will test your ability to j-stroke, draw, and pry. The few short rapids can be easily portaged. The Sauble is a 12-km, four-hour run through one of Ontario's most interesting drumlin fields. Plenty of unspoiled land at the back of pioneer farms. Beginning paddlers will find little trouble on the slowly flowing waters. Those wishing to learn to solo canoe will find the twists and turns of the river a challenge. For further details on these two fascinating routes, see Andrew Armitage's excellent book, The Sweetwater Explorer. Camping is available at Sauble Falls Provincial Park. Limit eight paddlers.

15-16 May OPEONGO AND UPPER MADAWASKA RIVERS

Jay Neilson and Frank Knaapen, call Jay at (416) 690-4016 or Frank at (613) 735-4741 by 9 May. ----- We will be paddling the Opeongo and Madawaska Rivers this weekend. One is required to be fully outfitted and have strong intermediate WW skills for class 2 and 3 rapids. Canoeists who enjoy challenging whitewater will find these rivers worthy. Limit five boats.

15-16 May BEAVER CREEK

Karl Schimek, (705) 487-0172, phone before 9 p.m., book between 7-11 May. ----- Beaver Creek, north of Marmora, is a real river. The trip involves numerous chutes, portages, canyon stretches, and a rather long car shuttle. On Saturday we will do the remote middle section and on Sunday the usual lower end from Shannock Bridge. Suitable for good intermediates. Limit three boats.

- 22-24 May **FRENCH RIVER**
John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 15 May. ----- From our beautiful campsite on The Ladder we will play at Blue Chute, The Ladder, and Upper (Little) Parisien. Enjoy a weekend of great scenery and fun rapids on this historic waterway. Suitable for all skill levels. Wetsuits, helmets, and flotation are required. Limit six boats.
- 22-24 May **WOLF-PICKEREL LOOP**
Paul and Diane Hamilton, (905) 877-8778, book before 15 May. ----- Beginning at the bridge at Hwy. 522, we'll paddle down the Wolf River to Dollars Lake. We'll continue down Dollars to the Pickerel River. This is an easy 2.5-day trip with the possibility of beating the worst of the black flies. Suitable for novices. Limit four boats.
- 22-24 May **PETAWAWA RIVER**
Jay Neilson and Frank Knaapen, call Jay at (416) 690-4016 or Frank at (613) 735-4741 by 16 May. ----- We will be going down the Petawawa River from Lake Traverse to Lake McManus. Those wishing to accompany us should be fully outfitted and have strong intermediate to advanced WW skills. Early take-out above Crooked Chute Rapids is mandatory. Limit five boats.
- 29 May **BASIC FLATWATER WORKSHOP**
Doug Ashton, (519) 654-0336, book before 22 May. ----- This workshop is being offered to new members who wish to develop their basic paddling skills. We will discuss and practise strokes, portaging, and canoe safety as it relates to flatwater paddling. The day will be paced to allow for plenty of practise time. Participants will be expected to provide a suitable canoe, PFD's, and paddles. Registration is limited to 12 current WCA members.
- 29-30 May **PALMER RAPIDS INTERMEDIATE WHITEWATER CLINIC**
John & Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book immediately. ----- This tandem and solo clinic is designed for those who have previous whitewater experience and want to further develop their skills. The emphasis will be on having fun and playing in the rapids. We will practise ferries, jet ferries, and eddy turns across strong current differentials. Participants must have an ABS canoe outfitted with thigh straps and full flotation. Helmets and wetsuits are required. Limit six canoes. WCA members only.
- 29-30 May **PALMER RAPIDS AND LOWER MADAWASKA RIVER**
Paul Wilcox, (905) 884-3775, book before 22 May. ----- A weekend of whitewater fun on the Madawaska. We will spend Saturday at Palmer Rapids, playing and warming up for the down-river run on Sunday. The Lower Madawaska is a pool-and-drop section with several rapids separated by flat stretches. All significant drops can be easily carried, making this an outing intermediates would enjoy. Limit six boats.
- 5 June **GRAND RIVER, CAMBRIDGE TO PARIS**
Rob Butler, (416) 487-2282, book before 28 May, prior to 9p.m. ----- Meet at put-in on river left, river-bank parking area, next to GTO Gas Bay on Highway 24, south of Cambridge (which is also the north end of the Paris/Cambridge Rail Trail). We will car-shuttle to the Sports Arena Parking lot in Paris. Not a strenuous trip but likely some fast riffles. We will stop at the Outfitter for coffee on the way down, and take out just up-river from the CNR bridge in Paris. It can also be arranged, for those who wish, to cycle back the 16 km along the pleasant rail trail to their vehicle at the GTO put-in.
- 11-13 June **DUMOINE RIVER**
Jay Neilson and Frank Knaapen, call Jay at (416) 690-4016 or Frank at (613) 735-4741 by 30 May. ----- We will be running the Dumoine River. Fly-in cost is around \$150 per person. Interested participants should be fully outfitted and have intermediate WW skills. The Dumoine has some challenging rapids which can be portaged and long stretches of class 2. There is one long portage around three splendid falls. The Petawawa will be the back-up river should the fly-in conditions be insurmountable. Limit five boats.
- 12-13 June **FRANKLIN ISLAND**
Doug Ashton, (519) 654-0336, book before 5 June. ----- Franklin Island is a large crown-land island located on Georgian Bay near Parry Sound. The area offers exceptional scenery, open campsites, opportunities for exploration, and interesting waterways. We will meet early Saturday morning and put in at Snug Harbour. Weather conditions will dictate our ability to paddle around the island. However, there is an inland waterway that will allow access to and from the island if the conditions are unco-operative. Participants should be comfortable paddling in large, open water. Limit four canoes.
- 18-20 June **GEORGIAN BAY NORTH SHORE**
Bob Fisher, (416) 488-4698 evenings, book by 1 June. ----- Three days of exploring the island archipelago of Philip Edward Island, just south of Killarney Park. We will leave Friday morning 10:00 a.m. from Chikanising River. There will be some open water crossings, but this is a suitable trip for all skill levels. Enjoy endless vistas as we paddle among the smooth pink rock islands. Limit six boats.
- 19-20 June **WHITEWATER COURSE AT PALMER RAPIDS**
Hugh Valliant and Jim Morris, call Hugh at (416) 726-5355, valliant@micomtech.com (preferred), book beginning 17 April.

NOW FOR THE 16th SEASON

Due to the difficulties with the post office delivering Nastawgan promptly, and in order for all WCA members to have an equal opportunity to sign up for this course, registrations **WILL ONLY BE ACCEPTED BEGINNING 17 APRIL at 9 a.m.** DUE TO THE ITS IMMENSE POPULARITY, THE COURSE HAS FILLED UP WITHIN THE FIRST COUPLE OF DAYS FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS. Under **NO** circumstances will registrations be accepted prior to that date and time. 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, techniques, and judgement necessary to safely negotiate a set of rapids. Palmer Rapids is considered a class 2 set. In this controlled and structured environment where the pace is slow, there will be plenty of time to practise and perfect our 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 after a day of paddling there will be a group BBQ on Saturday night featuring a real salad, a real steak, real potatoes, using real charcoal. A deposit of \$25 is required to secure your spot in the course and at the table. 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. Just let us know. Limit eight canoes.

2-4 July FRENCH RIVER OR LOWER MADAWASKA RIVER
Hugh Valliant and Jim Morris, contact Hugh at (416) 726-5355, valliant@micomtech.com (preferred), book beginning 17 April at 9 a.m. (see above) ----- This is a continuation of the Palmer Rapids weekend and an excellent opportunity to practise and further refine and hone your whitewater skills in more challenging rapids. The location of the course will depend upon summer water levels. Suitable for novice or beginning whitewater paddlers. Preference will be given to those who attended the Palmer Rapids weekend. Limit 10 canoes.

19-20 June LOWER MADAWASKA RIVER
Karl Schimek, (705) 487-0172, phone before 9 p.m., book between 10-14 June. ----- From Palmer Rapids to Griffith via one of the finest pool-and-drop rivers. We will be camping on the river. An exciting whitewater weekend for good intermediate paddlers. All the rapids can be portaged. Limit five boats.

19-20 June BURLEIGH-HARVEY RECREATION ZONE
Glenn Spence, (613) 475-4176, book between 1 May and 11 June. ----- This trip will involve lake hopping and creek work. You will need efficient portaging skills. Suitable for novices. Limit five boats.

2-4 July PETAWAWA RIVER
Joe Bourgeois and Chris McDonald, contact Joe at (416) 410-7240, akuni@interlog.com ----- Chris and Joe have been paddling the Petawawa River for over eight years and would like other WCA members to join them this year on one of the best whitewater rivers in Ontario. The Petawawa runs through some of the most scenic and remote places in Algonquin Park, and offers some of the finest easily accessible whitewater paddling in southern Ontario. Suitable for intermediate or better paddlers. Limit six boats.

10-16 July KILLARNEY PARK
Richard Todd, (819) 459-1179, richard@magi.com, book as soon as possible. ----- All the best lakes in the southern part of the park, plus a day of hiking for those interested. Some moderately strenuous portages. Limits: nine people, four tents. More details at <http://infoweb.magi.com/~richard/trips/trips99.htm>.

31 July - 2 Aug. OTTAWA RIVER
John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 24 July. ----- We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river, right where we take out. On Saturday we will paddle the Middle Channel, on Sunday the Main Channel, and on 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. Full boat flotation and helmets required. Limit six boats.

14-18 August KILLARNEY PARK
Richard Todd, (819) 459-1179; richard@magi.com, book as soon as possible. ----- Accent will be on soaking up the amazing scenery, both from the water and from the hiking trails where we'll venture once or twice. This will be a relatively easy trip with my family along. Limits: nine people, four tents. More details at <http://infoweb.magi.com/~richard/trips/trips99.htm>

18-22 August GEORGIAN BAY
Richard Todd, (819) 459-1179; richard@magi.com, book as soon as possible. ----- This will be an easy outing mostly in sheltered waters. In fact it will be possible to stay entirely in sheltered waters should there be waves of any size. We will again base ourselves in the Alexander Passage area, this time exploring to the south, including such features of interest as Hang Dog Channel. I will be bringing my family, so anyone participating must be willing to keep to an easy pace. More details at <http://infoweb.magi.com/~richard/trips/trips99.htm>.

22-29 August NORTH ALGONQUIN PARK
Richard Todd, (819) 459-1179; richard@magi.com, book as soon as possible. ----- This will be my first venture into the area. Although it will not be a heroically difficult trip, it will be more demanding than the two preceding it. Starting from Kioshkokwi Lake, we will paddle about 75 km to our take-out at Wendigo Lake. Numerous portages, mainly short. Limits: nine people, four tents. More details at <http://infoweb.magi.com/~richard/trips/trips99.htm>.

4-6 Sept. OTTAWA RIVER
John & Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 28 August. ----- Please see trip details above for 31 July - 2 August.



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., Hepworth, Ont.
- Smoothwater Outfitters, Temagami (Hwy. 11), Ont.

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

CANOE FOR SALE Dagger Ocoee, beautifully outfitted with ash gunnels, foam saddle, and double thigh straps. Perfect for the advanced open C1 paddler. \$1200 fully outfitted. Howard Abrams, (416) 787-9823 || howie.abrams@utoronto.ca

CANOES FOR SALE Used cedar/canvas canoes; all require some work; ribs and planking in good condition. Don Smith, (613) 584-2577; vent@intranet.ca

CANOE TRIPS Dumoine/Noire/Coulonge/Patawawa Rivers; complete and partial outfitting and shuttle services from Valley Ventures in Deep River, Ontario, (613) 584-2577 || vent@intranet.ca || www.intranet.ca/~vent

FRENCH RIVER BOOK has been drastically reduced in price and is now available in book stores for only \$22.95 plus tax. French River: Canoeing the River of the Stick-Wavers, by Toni Harting.

NATURAL OUTINGS Exotic wilderness hiking/canoeing ecotrips one-to-two-week bargain adventures:

- March break: canoe Okeefenokee/hike Cumberland Island.
- April: explore the ultimate, Mexico's Copper Canyon and backpack New Mexico's Gila Wilderness.
- June: West Coast specials: B.C.'s Gulf Islands and Washington's Olympic Park and Mt. St. Helen's volcano. Basecamp dayhiking.
- July: Newfoundland/Labrador explorations.
- August: Yukon River canoe trip / Kluane mountain basehiking.
- September: Arizona/Utah great canyon parks tour

— November: Costa Rica ecotours, coast to coast. C\$600-800/week. Tel/fax: (705) 434-0848; e-mail info@naturaloutings.com; website www.naturaloutings.com

THE ADVENTURE MAP Wilderness mapmakers Mark Jameson Smith and Christine Kennedy are releasing a number of new titles in The Adventure Map series this year. They'll publish maps for the Spanish, Bonnechere, Oxtongue, Burnt/Irondale, White, Mattawa, and other rivers, as well as areas like Frontenac P.P., Wolf Range (north of Peterborough), and more Algonquin maps including Algonquin 3 — Corridor South and Algonquin 10 — Barron Canyon. We start from scratch with original aerial photogrammetry followed by extensive field survey, either on foot or in a canoe to check features and ensure we have accurately rendered the trails, trail junctions, portages, campsites, and other features, including many historic attractions.

Other maps in The Adventure Map series already available include Algonquin 1 — Corridor North, Canoe Lake Daytripper, Opeongo Lake Daytripper, Frost Centre, Point Pelee N.P., Pinery P.P., and some western areas like Mt. Revelstoke N.P., Glacier N.P., and Lake O'Hara. Maps retail for \$4.95 to \$12.95 and are available in outdoor stores, the CRCA, Canadian Canoe Museum, Northern Books, and other outlets. Most are printed on waterproof plastic. Mark Jameson Smith, Chrismar Mapping Services Inc., Box 1277, Uxbridge, Ontario, Canada L9P 1N5; tel. (905) 852-6151; fax (905) 852-9474; e-mail email@chrismar.com; website www.chrismar.com

PANORAMIC PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS Les Palenik of Advantica will teach this summer two one-day workshops devoted to panoramic landscape photography, using specialized panoramic cameras. The Introductory Panoramic Course (13 June 1999, cost \$65, incl. lunch) is for amateurs or professional photographers who want to learn about panoramic photography. The Advanced Panoramic Workshop (20 June 1999, cost: \$145, incl. lunch) is a hands-on course for serious photographers who want to learn how to use panoramic camera. Optionally, this workshop can be extended by another day. Films and development extra. Both courses will take place at Roselawn Lodge in Bala, Muskoka (two hours from Toronto). The lectures will take place both inside and outside, before you practise in the field. Field trips, meals, lectures, and travel will be scheduled around the best photographic times. For more information and to register, call Advantica at (905) 773-0749. Advantica website www.advantica.com

Where it is ...



... in this issue

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Bonaventure | 16. Food for Paddlers | 21. Spring's Coming |
| 12. News Briefs | 16. Missinaibi River Land Swap | 22. Silence Lives |
| 12. Don River Paddle | 17. Paddlers' Talk | 22. Reviews |
| 13. WCA Twenty-Five Years Young! | 17. Whitewater Safety Tips | 23. WCA Trips |
| 14. Arctic Travels ... Symposium | 18. Wonderful Wanigans | 27. Products and Services |
| 15. Canoetrip 1997 | 20. Everything You Wanted ... | |

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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.