



*Rollway Rapid*

## **PETAWAWA RIVER**

### **Lake Traverse to McManus Lake**

**Aleks Gusev**

*Please do not rely on my descriptions of the rapids outlined here, because the water levels we encountered were extremely high. ALWAYS scout any rapids before running them.*

**Friday, June 6, 2003**

It never fails. Planning, preparations, check lists, last phone call the night before..., always a promise to myself to go to

bed early. Yeah, right! My canoeing partner, Milijan, drove to my place in Etobicoke, Ontario, directly from Cambridge, where he works. I had the stuff pretty much ready, canoe tied up on home-made 2x3 studs on my car roof-top. For this trip I borrowed a roof-top box from a friend. We were going to sleep in the back of my Explorer the first night, so extra space on the roof might come in handy.

We left home at 6:30 p.m. for the Achray campground in northeastern Algonquin Park, via Peterborough and Bancroft. I had made prior arrangements with the Park staff to have the warden expect us around midnight at Achray. Sand Lake Gate access point closes at 9 p.m., so the only way to get the permit and key for the Crooked Chute cabin was to get them directly from the warden that night. The Crooked Chute cabin is one of 13 log cabins the Park rents out. They were originally built as a shelter for the Park rangers, mostly in the early 1900s. We wanted to be at the put-in on Lake Traverse that same night, so that we could just push off first thing in the morning.

### Saturday, June 7

At 12:30 a.m. we dropped off an envelope with my spare car key, money, and instructions at the Algonquin Portage store. To reach this outfitter we turned west on road 28 (also known as the Barron Canyon road) from Hwy. 17, north of Pembroke. Arrangement was made in advance to have my truck dropped off at the McManus Lake take-out a day prior to our scheduled return date.

We arrived in Achray at 12:45 a.m., only to find out that the cabin key had been left at the Sand Lake Gate by one of the staff. However, they were very accommodating and offered to have the key available by 7:30 that morning. With no other options available, we arranged our beds in the back of my truck and hit the sack. Since our last trip here I had worked on mosquito netting that would enable us to open one of the car windows but keep the bloodsuckers out. My solution this time was a large piece of netting that virtually wrapped around the door. Slam the door shut and—voila: open the window, breath deeply, and laugh!

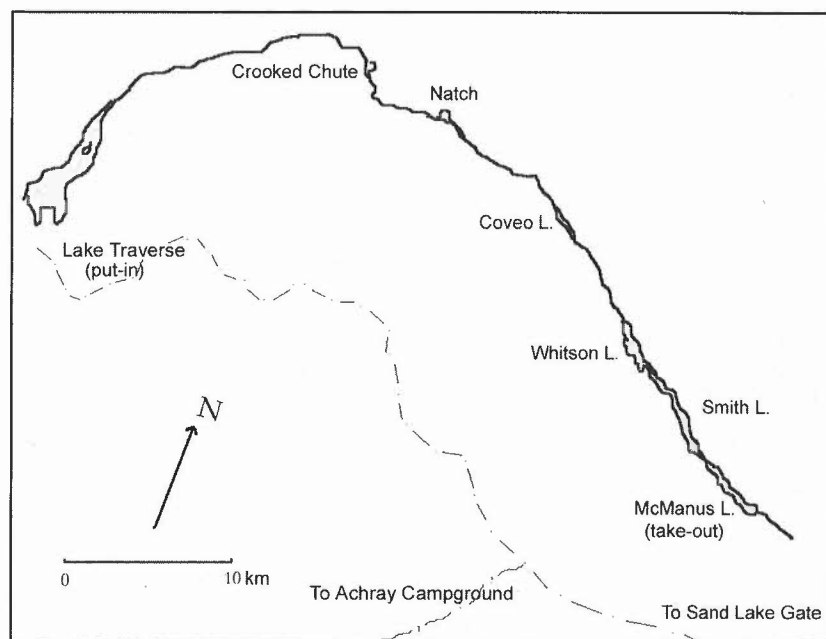
The night was truly beautiful, calm and warm. Strangely enough, there were no mosquitoes, probably because of the rain that fell earlier in the evening.

As the dawn was breaking, I heard Milijan slapping himself silly, chasing the buggers away that had somehow entered our sanctuary. I looked around to see where the hole in my netting was, only to realize that we'd left the sunroof a few centimetres open. It just proves that no system is foolproof—there will always be a fool (or two) left to leave some hole open.

At 6:30 a.m. we packed and had an early breakfast. The warden stopped by to greet us. We picked up the cabin key and the permit at the Achray office, and started our drive to Lake Traverse, some 45 km away.

We reached the put-in at 10 a.m. So this was the Pet! We often wondered what it would look like: fast? big? We looked at the impressive Poplar Rapids from the wooden bridge. Milijan and I had paddled the Credit River last Sunday, wanting to brush up on our ferries, eddy turns, and communications. We still didn't feel comfortable with our backferry so took some time to practise at the flush-out below Poplar. Again we didn't have much success. We departed from the put-in united in our thinking that we should not rely on our backferry in any serious situation. As we were leaving, the Algonquin Portage van dropped off another party of four paddlers (one of them called Joe) and two canoes. We would meet them many times again over the next few days.

The paddle down Lake Traverse was uneventful, as we had anticipated. We could see campsites along the shore,



some with sandy beaches. A few small powered boats passed us in the opposite direction, slowly trolling along.

At 1 p.m. we reached Big Thompson Rapids; we could hear them rumble long before coming around the bend. The 345-m portage on the right was obvious. One of our concerns was the risk that the portage would be too close to the rapids, but this proved to be unfounded. The party that had put in at Lake Traverse at the same time we did caught up with us at the portage trail.

Milijan and I were both fairly new to whitewater paddling. Prior to this trip, we had enrolled in a two-day moving-water course with Adventure Paddling in Guelph. This proved to be an excellent decision as the skills we learned effectively propelled us to the next paddling plateau. However, we also had an understanding: if one of us didn't feel comfortable about any particular stretch of whitewater, he could veto and opt for the carry. So our plan was to always carry the gear (two canoe packs) first, and scout from the shore on the way back.

It was here that it first became obvious to us how high the water level really was. Water pouring over the ledge on the right was spectacular, simply overpowering, or so it seemed to us. The description of the Big Thompson in George Drought's book *Petawawa River* identifies the channel at river right as runnable at all water levels. For us, it certainly didn't seem like that today. Milijan found a spot where we could put in below the ledge and still get a decent run out of it.

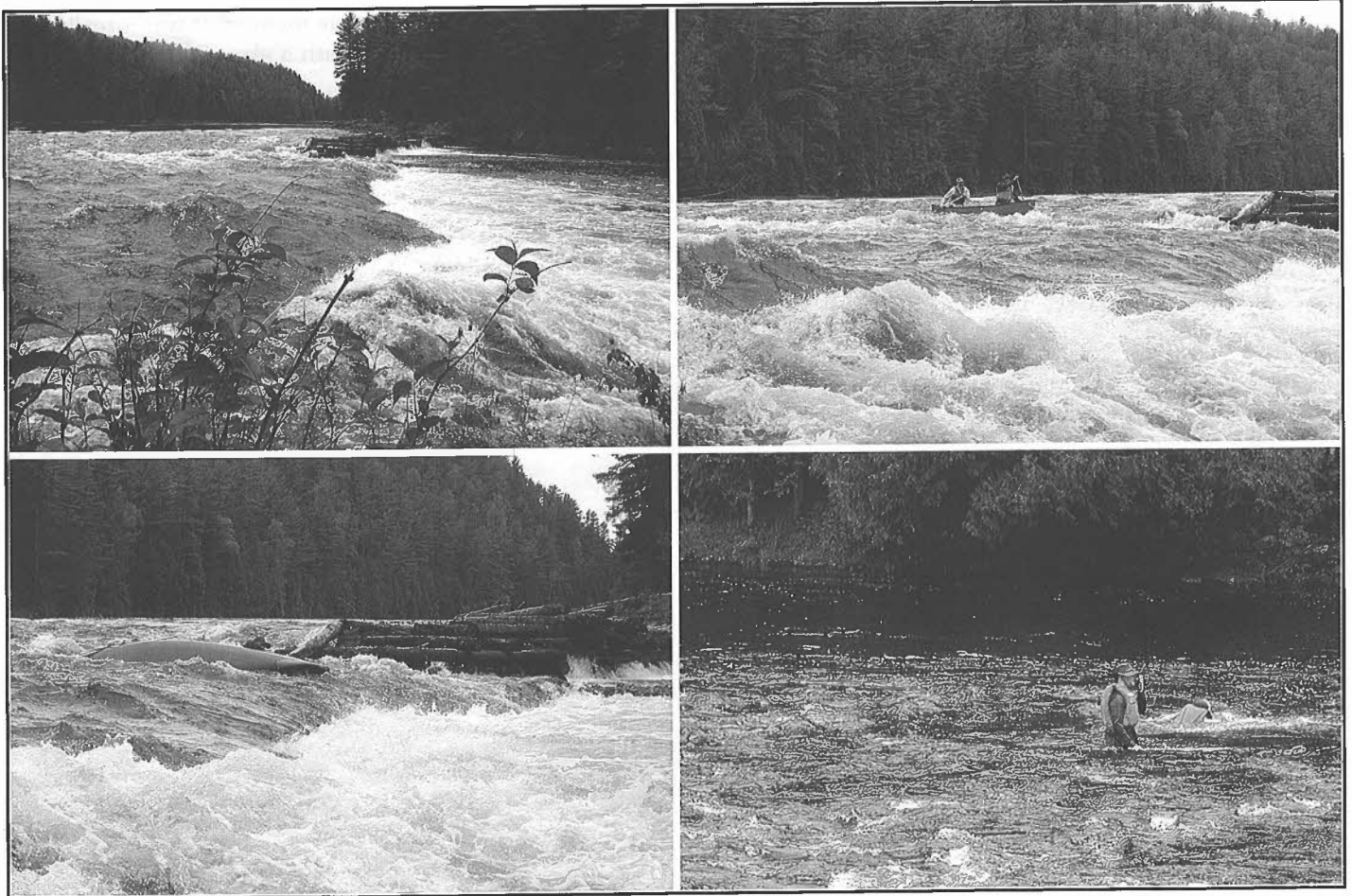
In the meantime, two guys from the other party were going to try the left channel, where the water seemed less treacherous. The ledge was still quite pronounced, but there was a large pool just below the old dam, to catch them in case they swamped. Milijan and I stood on the rock just below the ledge on the right shore to watch. The two guys were lining up on the approach, trying to come across the ledge at an angle in order to hit a small tongue of blackwater. Unfortunately, they lost their balance as the canoe turned sideways, spilling them over the gunwales. They surfaced in the pool below, but the canoe continued to drift downstream, staying slightly to the left.

After some 50 m the canoe got stuck sideways between two submerged rocks, and water poured over the

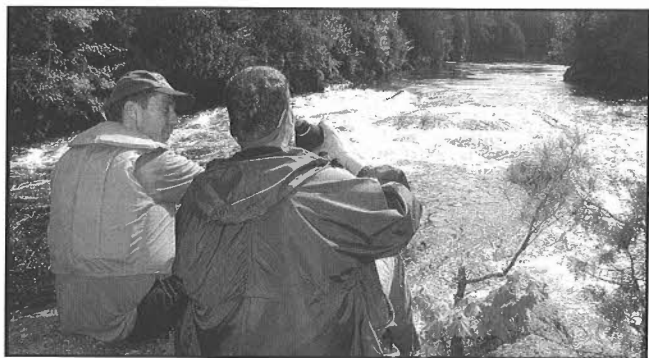
gunwales quickly, wedging it firmly. One of the paddlers swam to the canoe and pulled in behind it. The river was not very deep there and he was able to stand up on the rocks. The other guy wasn't able to hang on, and continued to swim downstream. It was quite fascinating to watch, once we realized they were both safe. Eventually, both of them managed to tilt the boat enough to loosen the river's grip, and it sprung free. We ended up spending way more time at Big Thompson than we had planned, which could delay our arrival at Crooked Chute later.

At 4:00 p.m. we reached the short Little Thompson Rapid, which has a 165-m portage on the left. We carried the packs again and scouted on the way back. The channel on the right seemed quite intimidating, with huge waves. We decided the left channel would be more appropriate, but that careful attention was required. A large rock was blocking the clear path for the straight run left-of-centre. We decided to go left of the rock but as close to it as possible, in order to avoid being swept too close to the rock face on the left that curved towards the river.

Success! As we were passing the rock we started paddling hard to the right, wanting to avoid the rock face and the waves that splashed against it. More by luck than by



*Mishap at Big Thompson Rapid*



*Little Thompson Rapid*

design, we were spat into the eddy behind the rock and claimed victory over our first significant rapid. The photographs that a friend took later showed that we were much further away from the rock than we remembered from the boat.

The next seven kilometres were straight paddling, with one short swift before reaching Grillade Rapid. True to our word, we carried our packs and scouted every rapid, also this one, regardless of the rating. This was very much a learning experience and we didn't want to miss any little detail. Even in the high water, this was an easy paddle, the bow happily bouncing up and down in medium waves.

Hey, this is fun!

Crooked Chute was reached at 6:30 p.m. Which take-out should it be? That question was very much on our minds as we approached the left bend immediately before the first take-out. We knew from the book that three take-outs exist. In any case, we would carry the packs from the first take-out and evaluate the second take-out from the shore. We ruled out the third one, taking George's advice.

Joe and his partners were ahead of us, having already completed the first carry. They decided to camp at the middle site, which was very nice, right at the water. It was getting darker, and as we passed them on the way towards the far end of the portage, we could smell onion soup cheerfully boiling in the pot. We were getting hungry ourselves!

The portage took whatever strength remained in our tired bodies, as this had been one long day. We dumped the packs at the end of the trail and looked around for the Crooked Chute cabin, but we couldn't see it from where we were standing. However, the map indicated that it had to be close by.

Now it was really getting darker. I figured by the time we went back for the canoe, walk the trail, and

paddle to the cabin, we'd have a half hour to spare before nightfall. Walking back we decided it was safe to descend by canoe to the second take-out, which would save us a carry of some 300 m.

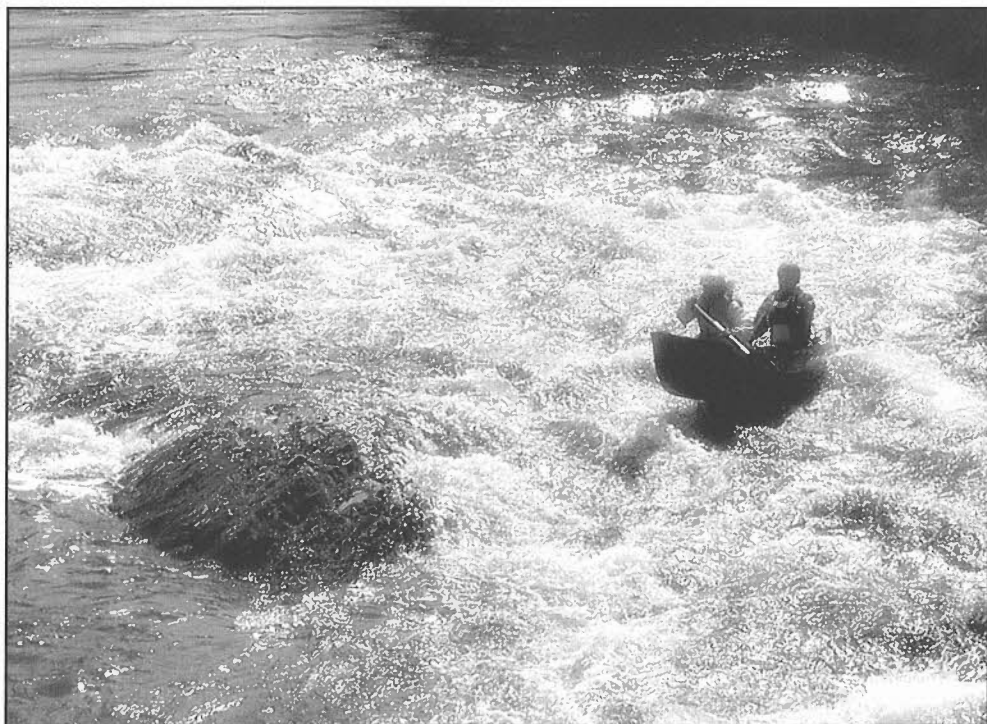
We found the cabin at 8 p.m., some 150 m south from the portage. It measures 16' x 20' and has one room with two sets of double bunk beds. The place looked old, with two aluminum boats tied beside it. A table with bench chairs and a wooden stove completed the interior design of the cabin. So much for wilderness camping and remoteness; there was a vehicle path leading right up to the cabin. I guess those visitors that come on wheels need canoes to get around on the river.

I was determined to get a bath before retiring for the night. It was a courageous task, considering the mosquitoes were out in full force. Hmmm, Aleks and Milijan are on the menu tonight, let's see who will shed their clothes first! Well, I can honestly say the water felt very good, and a few bites were a small price to pay.

Just as we had carried all our gear inside, the rain started. We got the fire going in the stove and hung our stuff to dry overnight. In no time we had the soup and sausages boiling and old friend Seagram joined us at the table. After a hearty meal we lit up the cigars and stretched out. Did I already mention it was a really long day? The evening ended with a glass of red wine before we collapsed for the night.

### **Sunday, June 8**

I woke up well rested at 5:00 a.m. The rain must have stopped earlier while we were sleeping. Tip-toeing outside, careful not to wake Milijan, I cherished the early morning



*Little Thompson Rapid*



*Whitewater below Crooked Chute*

lighting, so special, the colors soft and a little hazy. I love taking photographs in those conditions, so I grabbed my camera and headed towards the Chute.

Last night we had mistakenly walked part of the trail that descends right down to the shore, and which is probably used to scout the rapid below the Chute. I remember silently cursing ourselves for missing, while bent under the weight of a canoe pack, the main trail, which is like a highway. But this morning I headed right back along the same path, minding my footage as the path was slippery from rain and moisture. I slowly worked my way up the right bank towards the Chute. Wherever a decent-size rock offered itself, I would sit down and just watch the river, mesmerized. This is quite a spectacle, water gushing and bubbling, racing over the ledges and down the holes left in their wake. From my vantage point I could see the water spilling from the Chute some 150 m upstream, the Chute itself being partially blocked by the large rock.

The river makes a sudden right turn just after the Chute; perhaps that's why it's called Crooked. Looking downstream, it was easy to see the small pool where the whitewater runs out of steam and finally slows down. To the right of the Chute is the sluice that loggers must have used to drive the lumber around the impassable part of the rapid. It appeared as a combination of a

natural and man-made channel that still had iron nails and supports scattered around the bottom. The iron posts that supported the structure were twisted like spaghetti, probably a testament to the incredible power of water that once ran here.

For a few minutes I perched myself on the high rock that virtually extends into the Chute, and where one is engulfed by water on both sides, giving an uneasy sense of vertigo. Sounds of water rushing down the narrow sides and ramming into the rocks were deafening. One thought kept coming back to me, a question really—how can anyone possibly run a canoe down this sliver of whitewater, so overwhelming and threatening?

Looking at the water for so long reminded me that it was time to wet the line back in the small pool below. I'm not much of a fisherman, but I don't mind trying. By now Milijan was up and had a small fire going. Breakfast!

If yesterday had been a long day, today would be even longer. When planning the trip we purposely divided it into three parts: Put-in to Crooked Chute (20 km), Chute to Five Mile Rapids (15 km), and finally Five Mile Rapids to take-out (15 km). We left the cabin at 10:30 a.m., knowing that the Rollway Rapids take-out was only a short paddle away. Little did we know that it would take a lot more time than anticipated.

So down the river we paddled, until a portage sign appeared on river right. We promptly hauled our packs ashore, beached the canoe, and started down the trail. The yellow portage sign was torn into pieces, missing most of the bottom half. We thought this was Rollway, but were a little confused by the absence of visible whitewater as well as sound of one of the longest rapids enroute. Soon we arrived at the end of the trail and there the truth was revealed: the yellow portage sign visible from the downstream end of the portage had P120 m handwritten on it. This obviously was not the Rollway trail. As it turned out, one of our maps was missing a bottom piece. When I was photocopying the map so that I could laminate it, a small but important piece was left out. With that lesson learned, we pressed on towards Rollway.

We figured by now that water levels were way higher than what George Drought described as HW in his book, which would put Rollway out of our league. As previously discussed, the gear was carried to the end of the 820-m Rollway portage, where the put-in was rocky and tricky with hardly enough space for a single canoe. Scouting on the way back Milijan spotted another put-in below a ledge which would save us carrying the canoe for the final 300 m. There was no real eddy or calm water to put in easily, but we managed somehow to strap in and push off. The ride was great, bumpy but dry. I really like my boat—a Nova 16' Prospector. I've read the articles that other owners have written about this canoe's high flare and great riding ability in waves, taking on very little water. Now I was witnessing first-hand what it really meant.

We paid tribute to Blair Fraser who had drowned at Rollway in the late sixties. He was a member of the



*Crooked Chute cabin*

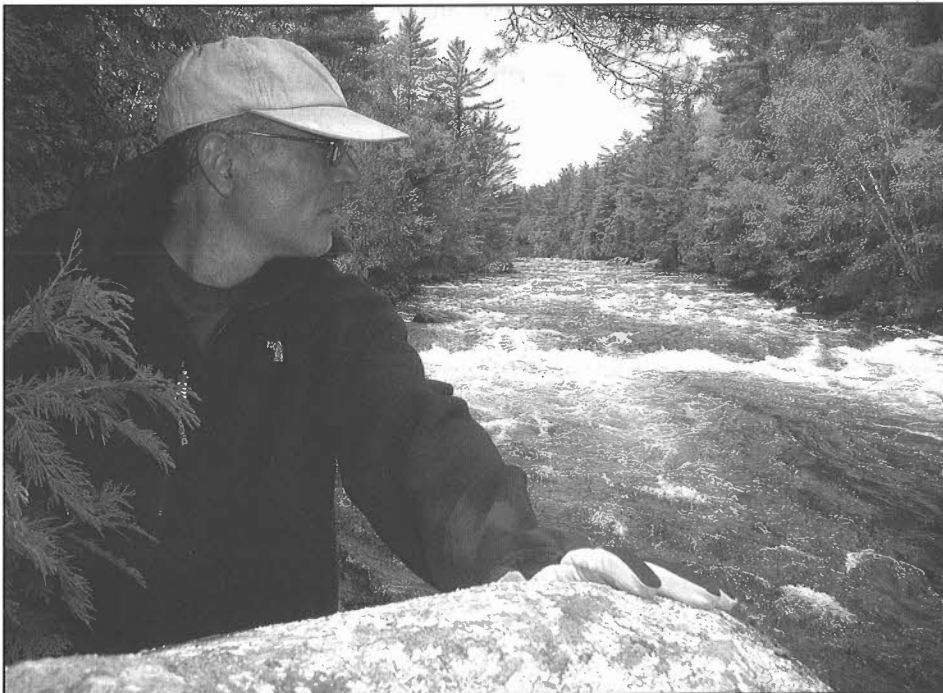
famous group of seven paddlers called "The Voyageurs." Perhaps the best-known members of the group were Sigurd Olson and Eric Morse—both graceful and elegant writers. Their books represent the link between the old world of long-vanished fur traders and modern wilderness canoeists. A cross with Blair's name and signed by his fellow "Voyageurs" commemorates that terrible accident. It can be seen on river right, midway down the portage trail.

Because of the high water, the river banks were flooded to the extreme. In order to steady the canoe enough for as long as it took us to strap in, we had to jam it on the rocks, partially afloat. The ride was great and exhilarating, straight down the middle, hip-hopping on wave-tops, taking in a little water—but nothing significant.

And now, ladies and gentleman, the whitewater you have all been waiting for: The Natch Rapids!

By now we were really a great team. Take-out, gear carry, scout, make decision. If you're reading this, you probably already read George's description of this portage on river left around the Natch: "...You have to be a mountain goat to do this portage." Without a doubt, we enjoyed this part of the river the most. Scenery, history, water, portage—memories of this place will surely linger in our minds for a long time to come. Even the sun peaked bashfully through the clouds to cheer us along.

I hadn't asked Milijan this, but I believe each one of us already had somehow formed a notion about this rapid by the time we dropped the packs at the portage end. I guess we looked for reasons not to run the Natch, and if we couldn't find any good reasons, well then we'd break the run down into several pieces.



*Rollway Rapid*

The first section of the Natch starts with the ledge that we quickly decided not to run. The rough water was just too much. We promptly focused all our attention on the second ledge. It is very easy to scout from the left, both below, above, and over the ledge. All angles seemed equally important to us.

The one we studied the longest was the over-the-ledge view. A small cliff rises sharply just below the ledge and provides an excellent spot for watching the current. To the far right of the ledge is the hole with a strong hydraulic action, now accentuated further by the above-average water volume. To be avoided. Smack next to the hole, slightly to the left, was a large wave. If hit directly, or on the right, the wave could side-slip the canoe into the hole. Our reasoning was that we needed to be to the left of the wave, but not by much. On the far left was another action that pushed the water towards the rock face on top of which we were standing. There were several large waves shortly after, making this an uncomfortable choice.

So the course was set—we'd attempt to cross the ledge left from the large wave, but not too far to the left for fear of being rammed into the rocks or swamped by the serial waves. As soon as we crossed the ledge, we were to steer hard to the right and eddy on river right. That way we would take several large waves on the side, rather than the middle. We were hoping this would help us take in less water.

We watched the bubbles and current some five metres above the ledge, tracing down their paths over the ledge. We could clearly envision where we needed to be in order to enter the ledge at the "sweet" spot. The concern was if it would be as obvious from water level once we were lined up on the approach.

In the meantime, Joe's party had caught up with us and were studying their approach from the same vintage spot. Lucky for us, they decided to go first. There's no substitute for the confidence and insight one can gain from watching another canoe run the rapid before you do! They did a great job with a perfect approach, right where they wanted to cross it. However, trouble started when they hit the haystacks. Waves enveloped them and they took on water. With every wave they took on some more, the canoe getting heavier and riding deeper and deeper until they were totally submerged.

Well, we weren't going to change our minds now! Up we went to fetch the canoe waiting for us above the first ledge, and

part carried, part lined up over and around the ledge. From there we ferried across to the right towards the calm pool of water. Once there, we slowly gathered momentum but kept backpaddling, trying to line up with the current to the exact spot where we needed to be.

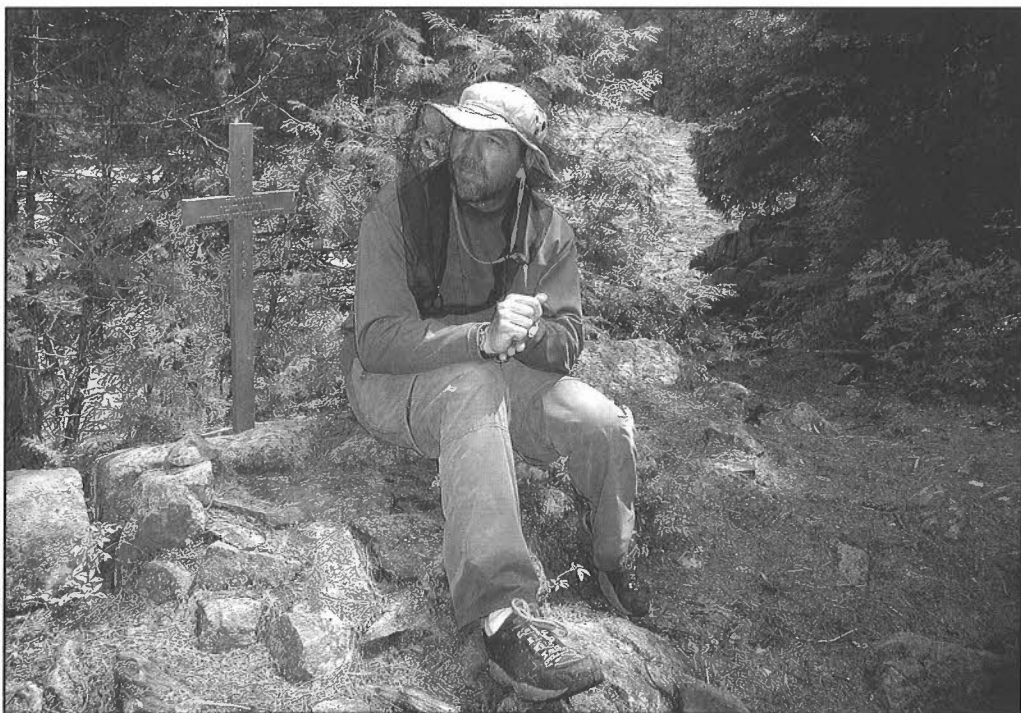
The canoe responded to every move we made and we glided towards the ledge, picking up speed. Now we could see the large wave on the right, so we knew where we didn't want to go. There was a stretch of white foam to the left of the big wave, about one metre across. We aimed at it, veering slightly to the right from centre. Vroom! The bow sank deep, exposing the rest of the rapid in my clear line of sight, over Milijan's head. As quickly as the bow sank, it rose back as we rode on top of the first wave.

Frantic action ensued, Milijan prying (and praying) and I drawing feverishly to the right. It worked! Up and down we went, but the boat took very little water, if any. Energetic and decisive effort was the key! As soon as we were able to gasp the next breath, we were safely in the eddy on the far right. Surely this was a testament to the quality of this beautiful canoe with its pronounced flare and Prospector design, rather than our paddling skills!

We ferried across the river to pick up our packs and give our thanks to the other paddlers who had been spotting for us and cheering us on.

It was now already 4:30 and the dark clouds had gathered all around us while we were busy working the second ledge

Rain didn't concern us as much as the second section of the Natch did. Rated 4 in high water, it was surely even tougher today. Knowing how long it took us to scout and run the first section, we were concerned it might be dark



*Blair Fraser memorial cross*



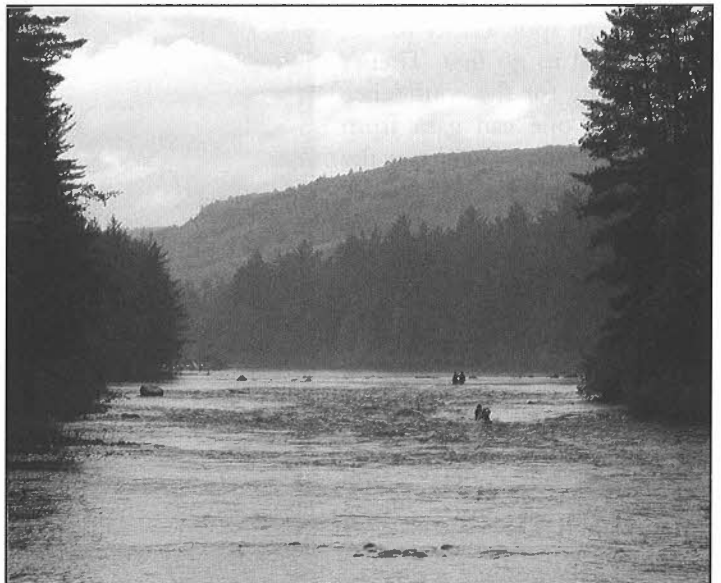
*Lower Natch Rapid*

by the time we'd done the second one. So down the river we went.

The second section didn't turn out to be nearly as tough as the first one. After carrying the gear we carefully scouted from the left shore, but couldn't find any reason why not to run it. Which we did. In hindsight, perhaps the run seemed easier to us because of the higher water level.

The next 4.5 km is a straight paddle towards the Schooner Rapids, crossing two short swifts along the way. The 2305-m portage is on the left and true to our word we stopped to scout from the shore. Schooner is rated 2 in high water, described as an easy run and lots of fun. The left shore doesn't lend itself to easy scouting, the trail is vague and obviously not much used. After taking a peek through the thick growth we decided we had done enough scouting.

Until we hit the first rock in the Schooner we didn't even recognize how shallow the water was. Soon we hit another, then another. Next thing, we were sitting wedged on top of a flat boulder. I had to chuckle. In his book, George says this of Schooner: "...The only thing that you have to watch for on these rapids is relaxing too much and ending up doing something silly." Well, right!



*Below Five Mile Rapids*





The second part of Schooner came and went. Just as we were nearing the end, a black bear cub surprised us by running down towards the shore some 50 m in front of us. Our immediate thoughts were about mama bear. As soon as the cub saw us, it darted back up the hill, and we were left wondering if mama would appear to see who scared her little one. But she didn't.

After several hundred metres we came across the first good campsite along Five Mile Rapid; however, it had already been taken by the other party. We passed a few sites that didn't exactly inspire us, before finally settling at 7:30 for one of medium quality, just before the second last section of the rapid.

Rain was threatening, so up went the tarp. The tent followed and then dinner. Just before the meal, Mr. Seagram stopped by again. I kindled the small fire enough to smoke away persistent mosquitoes. My bonnet was working fairly well, although there were several large lumps on the ape of my neck. Milijan seemed to have suffered disproportionately more bites than I and couldn't help but scratch the most sore spots. Ah, that too, shall pass. Luxury of the tent! Bugs-free sleep.... No sooner my head touched the ground, I was asleep and dreaming. Another great, albeit long day.

### Monday, June 9

Rain had been falling most of the night. At 8:00 a.m. I found myself drifting in and out of sleep. This is not something I usually do. Come to think of it, I almost never do it. It's my wife, Tanja, whose ability to drift back to sleep, seemingly at will, I always admire. It was the dripping of the raindrops on the fly that lured me back to semi-sleep.

Eventually the rain stopped, and we crawled out of the tent to be greeted by the wet world around us. The rain would gently follow us the rest of the day. Breakfast was leisurely, as we were in no great hurry to leave.

When we finally departed, it felt as if the magic was gone. In a short few hours we would be sitting in the car, our thoughts probably turning towards home and various responsibilities. The river changed as well, narrow banks opening up to give way to the large expanse of Whitson Lake.

We paddled down Smith Lake, passed the last swift before reaching McManus Lake where we took out at 1:00 p.m. As we gently touched the shore and laid the paddles to rest, we knew we'd be back for more next year, and every year after that.



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**Published by the Wilderness Canoe Association**  
Nastawgan is an Anishinabi word meaning "the way or route"

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

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

**EDITORIAL**

The new editorial team is slowly but surely taking shape. On the back page are the names of the team members who will share the responsibility of putting our journal together as of 2006. Don't forget that this is your journal and that we are constantly looking for new material; what is most needed at present are short (two to three pages) trip reports.

Please pay special attention to Bill Ness' very important thoughts on the future of the WCA, on pages 12 and 13. We will have to make vitally important decisions and the time to do that is approaching fast.

**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 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:

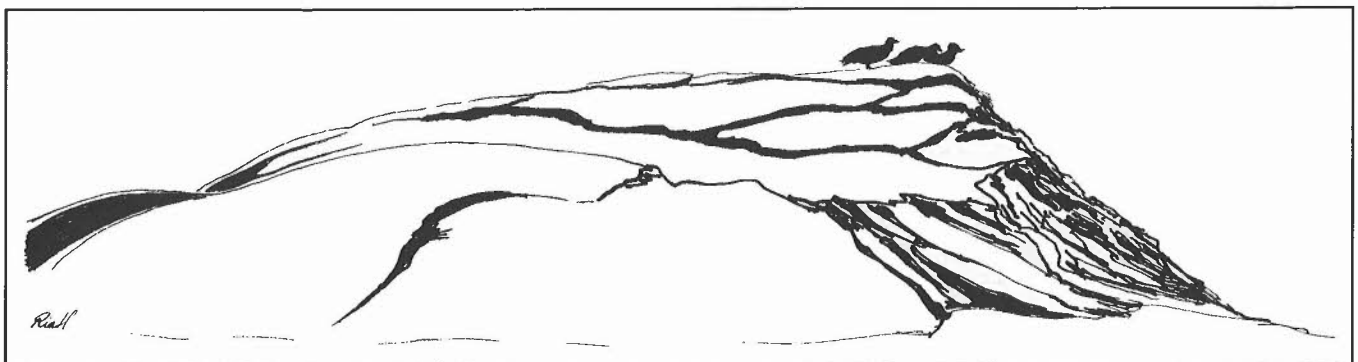
issue: Autumn 2005      deadline date: July 31  
Winter 2005              October 30

*MULTIPLE YEAR WCA MEMBERSHIPS* are now possible, albeit with no discount. This will help alleviate much of the (volunteer) administrative work, save your time and postage, and also hedge against future fee increases. Contact membership secretary Gary James for more information.

*KAWARTHA* On April 21, 2005, the Ontario Government formally placed into regulation the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park. This means the area now has an established boundary and size (37,587 ha) and is officially a provincial park.

**SEE YOU AT THE FALL MEETING  
2005**

The WCA Fall Meeting is a great time to get together with fellow WCA members to share stories of summer paddling adventures and to wind down the paddling season. This year the Fall Meeting will take place on September 23 - 25 at the Doe Lake Girl Guide Camp in the Almaquin Highlands. A registration form with more information is printed on the inside back of the cover wrapped around this issue of *Nastawgan*.



## THE ZEN OF THE FRENCH

Up until a few years ago, I had been in a hurry my whole life. I gulped every meal, drove far too fast, pushed my business associates to be more efficient, and even tried to break a new record each week for mowing my lawn. The French River changed all that.

It happened on a brilliantly clear Canadian night, the kind I had only seen a few times before in northern Maine. The day's paddle with my guide had gone well and we were camped on a small bay. I had never canoed a big river and everything about the journey was new and exciting. We were about to crawl into our tents when I decided to spend some time simply appreciating the night.

I sat on a large round boulder still warm from the September sun. Stars stretched to the far horizon in every direction. As the breathtaking Milky Way teased me with its timeless mystery, I remember feeling an extraordinary sense of solitude, an intense joy at being completely alone with the elements of the land. I was a man, a human being, but not separate from the rock I sat on, the stars above me, or the river at my feet.

It was then I realized that I could not hear a single sound except my heart beating. The experience of absolute quiet startled me! For the first time ever, I heard no cars, no planes, no wind, no computer fan, no television, no human voice.

The primal stillness enveloped me and, in that brief instant, humbled me. It gave me a precious gift—the realization that if you find perfect silence, or remove yourself from common distractions, you can begin to see and understand the world differently.

When I returned from my trip down The French and told my wife about my experience on the rock, she smiled and said, "That's very Zen. You were meditating and you didn't even know it." Zen, I soon learned, was a school of Buddhism that asserts you can discover enlightenment through meditation, intuition, and knowledge, rather than through faith.

In the years that followed that night on The French, I found myself pulled back to the river again and again. Part of the reason was that I was researching a novel, but I knew it was far more elemental a calling than the promise of fame, fortune, and the next Hollywood blockbuster. For the briefest instant, the soul of the river had paused on its journey, noticed a lone man admiring its quietude, and seen fit to touch me. It revealed a door that once opened, could never be shut again.

I know this because every time I come back to The French, I'm awed by what I experience. The river and its obvious beauty are there for anyone who cares to explore it. Yet, The French also speaks in a language all its own to those who care to listen. To hear what it is saying, you must be willing, perhaps even yearning, to respect what you see and interpret what you feel in an entirely new way:

- Worn pathways atop the cliffs ask you to honor those who have come before.
- Mosaics of lichen parading across the schist hint at a divinely beautiful origin.
- Ancient high-water marks etched in stone record the passage of countless springs.
- Wild blueberries sweet with the taste of the sun offer a simple lesson of nature's bounty.
- A leaf on an unhurried journey downriver speaks eloquently about priorities.
- The bow ripples of a canoe gliding through smooth water sing a song about harmony.
- Northern Lights dancing in the heavens over the great gray river seduce you with childlike wonder.
- The sound and fury of rapids cascading in the noonday sun invite you to seek beauty.

The French River is a place filled with magic and, yes, Zen-like experiences. Paddle its waters. Camp on its shores. Walk the old portages. Swim in a secluded cove. Capture the memories with your camera.

Then, go find a favourite place that seems to speak only to you. Sit very still and let the cares of the moment melt away. Feel the sun upon your face or turn your head to the moon. Taste the breath of the river. Listen for the sound of silence. If your heart and mind are true, the river will take you by the hand, ask you to stay a while longer, and let you discover a part of yourself that you never knew was there.

Mike Van Winkle

### MY WILDERNESS

Fire blazing,  
Smoke  
Twisting and turning  
Into the sky  
Where glistening stars sit,  
Still beside the moon,  
Not a ripple to be seen across the still, smooth lake,  
Nothing to be heard  
But the cracking of the fire  
And the seldom  
Hoot,  
Or howl  
Of the wilderness,  
The smell of pine in the air,  
Not a care in the world,  
I wish I could spend longer  
In this paradise!

Tyler Ashton—age 12

## NASTAWGAN?

**“Nastawgan is an Anishinabi word meaning the way or route.”**

Am I alone? I have a nagging question. It just popped into my brain and won't go away. I was e-mailing to Toni the list of new WCA outings for publication. I could count them on one finger. One new outing for the summer newsletter. Do we have a problem?

Businesses, political parties, empires, and even canoe clubs grow, mature, and decline through time and in response to an ever-changing environment. A few such entities manage to revitalize themselves and prosper anew. Many don't.

The WCA was born in what was in some ways an exciting and golden age for canoe tripping. The groundbreaking northern trips of pioneer recreational canoeists like the Morses and the Masons were still fresh memories. We even had a canoeing Prime Minister. Wildlands with few people and fewer roads were not far away, and the gas to get there by car or plane was cheap. Information on these routes was difficult to come by, and equipment was often homemade, with advice passed on from paddler to paddler. Amongst those bitten by the wilderness canoeing bug (which didn't transmit West Nile Fever back then), there was a true spirit of community.

The young WCA grew and thrived in its early years in this environment. Being a part of our group had many unique attractions. Membership opened the door to a newsletter detailing trips in the far north, and access to the small community of canoeists who had been to those wild areas. Workshops and articles provided the esoteric knowledge needed to locate or build yourself the gear necessary to venture into the bush. Not only could you read of the exploits of a Herb Pohl or a Jim Greenacre in *The Wilderness Canoeist*, but you could actually spend a day or a weekend with them on local lakes and rivers, listening to campfire stories and learning new skills. It was not unusual to see a hundred people register for spring and fall meetings filled with fascinating presentations and activities. Our booth at the Toronto Sportsmen's Show every March was packed with visitors anxious to buy our newsletters and plunk down their membership money. Most new members were in their twenties and thirties in those days.

Now fast-forward twenty years. Wilderness canoeing as a sport no longer captures the public's imagination. People in the industry will tell you the market for quality canoes and kayaks has gone beyond flat and has actually been declining. Aside from some young people attending summer youth camps with tripping programs, the average canoe tripper is middle aged or older. The price of gas has driven the cost of remote fly-in trips beyond many people's budgets. Closer destinations have suffered from over-use or “development.” The Toronto Sportsmen's Show was left to the motorized-recreation crowd years ago, while the local Outdoor Adventure Show attracts few paddle-

sports exhibitors or paddlers. However, on the up side, for those who do pursue the sport, personal contacts and information on even the most exotic destinations are now only a mouse-click away. Canoeing sure has changed.

So what's happened to the WCA over this period? How have we adjusted to these changes?

Not surprisingly, the average age of members has continued to increase while membership growth has peaked. This is to some degree a reflection of general demographic changes in our sport. But that's not the entire story. The value of WCA membership has declined over the years. This has led to a situation whereby our inability to attract younger, enthusiastic new recruits to fill the shoes of older retiring members has led to reliance on fewer and fewer individuals to fill important roles. In turn, this has caused a further deterioration of the quality of club life.

At the Board level, we have for several years been in a situation where due to inadequate numbers of active members, directors are forced to organize club events as well as manage their Board work. This not only makes it difficult to attract good Board candidates but distracts incumbents from their primary role of providing good management and strong leadership. The quality of both Board functions and club events has to suffer when people simply have too much on their plates. In days gone by, our spring and fall meetings featured numerous well-organized workshops on various aspects of canoeing and camping skills that created value for members, especially for those new to canoeing. However, in recent years these have disappeared without a trace—a victim of too much work for too few hands.

While on the Outings Committee I have always had the good fortune to be able to team with a strong group, our success in providing an active outings program continues to go downhill as older outings organizers move on to other interests and are not replaced with fresh new faces. The program is now very dependent on the generosity of a small number of members. It's time for all to face up to the reality that the club outings program is heading the way of the dodo bird.

Over recent years there have been two interesting developments in the club that challenge our ability to maintain a full and rewarding outings program.

Firstly, with few exceptions, the members who do the long remote trips don't participate in the regular club outings, either as organizers or attendees. At one time, it was possible for newer members to enjoy day and weekend outings with experienced wilderness trippers, who were a wonderful source of inspiration and knowledge. It was an opportunity to pass on to a new generation of WCA'ers an appreciation of our wilderness canoeing heritage, which should be a core value of the WCA. It also gave novices a chance to participate in the club's tripper network, perhaps

one day leading them to be invited on one of these major trips. Unfortunately, we can no longer offer that experience

Secondly, active members' local weekend trips are increasingly organized through networks outside the regular club outings schedule. This is an inevitable outgrowth of electronic mail. With the push of a button, paddlers can arrange impromptu trips on minimal notice to accommodate personal schedules, weather, and water conditions. In the Dark Ages, before e-mail, the WCA newsletter was the only way to organize trips. Today it is much more difficult to persuade organizers months in advance to post fixed-date trips in *Nastawgan* when they can so easily self-organize at a moment's notice. This year we have begun encouraging organizers to post trips on the website on an ongoing basis, to remove some of the limitations imposed by the quarterly paper newsletter format. However, we are still behind the times, competing against paddling bulletin boards and even virtual clubs that are making our processes obsolete.

Like our outings program, *Nastawgan* is now facing serious challenges from the new electronic technologies. Our newsletter has long been both the showpiece of the WCA and the cement that has held it together. For a voluntary organization of our size, its quality has been remarkable. Needless to say, much of this has been due to the dedication and talent of Toni Harting, its long-time Editor and Guardian Angel. Toni's coming retirement will undoubtedly pose significant administrative challenges. While the experiences of many organizations and businesses point to the difficulties of finding successors to such extremely effective one-man shows, let's assume that there is a smooth transition to a new operational model, and focus on challenges inherent to the newsletter per se.

Since the WCA's founding, the newsletter and its contributors were one of the few sources of available information about remote canoe trips. Trippers joined the club just to participate in this unique community and enjoy access to its information exchange. While membership still creates a sense of belonging to a special community, and there are personal rewards to seeing your literary creations in print to be shared with fellow members, the informational value of membership and *Nastawgan* has continuously diminished since the advent of the Internet. Today the Internet provides a universal source of information and contacts for paddlers.

Our paper newsletter additionally saddles us with very significant minimum fixed production costs, as well as virtually yearly escalating mailing charges (courtesy of Canada Post). Most of our membership money is used to support it. How can this be reconciled with a membership that is at best static, and will most likely decrease in the coming years?

It also commits us to a labour-intensive production process. This has not been an issue over the many years Toni has shouldered the substantial responsibilities. However, next year...

Like most periodicals, the value of the content of our newsletter is largely ephemeral. Canoe route information and conservation issues change, sometimes rapidly and dramatically. Our fellow members' thoughts and their trip experiences are best shared and enjoyed while fresh. Today people expect to receive a constant flow of "as it happens" news. We see expeditions that submit daily field reports via satellite connections, canoe trippers who self-publish their memoirs on their personal web pages the day after arriving home, and paddling clubs that exist as virtual entities in cyberspace only. If *Nastawgan* is to remain relevant, it has to find a way to fit into this world.

So what's my nagging question? Do we know where we are going and do we have a map on how to get there?

If our destination is a small organization that is essentially a newsletter written by and for fellow elite wilderness canoe trippers, then we are probably on course. There is actually nothing inherently wrong with that, as long as our membership body recognizes where we are headed and knowingly agrees that this should be the future of the WCA. However, my concern is that we are being born on the winds of change without understanding what is happening and that our destination may be an unpleasant surprise when we reach it.

Back in 1998, on the WCA's 25th anniversary, we held a special focus group entitled "Rekindling the Spirit." Its purpose was to explain the challenges then facing the club and seek members' advice on how we could reinvigorate our organization. The WCA and its environment have changed a lot since then. Perhaps it's time once more for us to formally share thoughts and reach a consensus on where the club should be going and what we need to do to get there. Maybe we need to find a new *nastawgan*.

Bill Ness



# THE BEOTHUK CANOE

Claire Muller

Last June, my husband, Bernard, and I visited old pals in Newfoundland. In our wanderings around the Gander district, we came across a Conservation Area at Bryde's Cove with a very small museum. The museum was closed, but we squinted through the windows and there, in the dark, was a Beothuk canoe. We were very excited, but also frustrated not to be able to see it up close.

As compensation, I went to the university bookstore in St. Johns and found a major tome (which I did not buy) about the Beothuk and two very small books which I did purchase. The pictures reproduced here, better than anything else I could find, show the remarkable design of this unusual canoe.

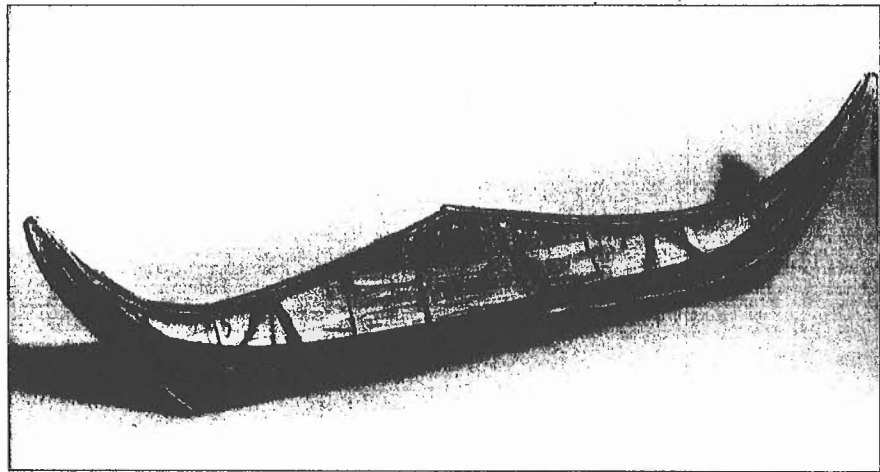
The Beothuk canoes were similar to the ones with which we are so familiar in that they were of varying lengths (to suit each family's needs) and of the same materials—birch bark, cedar, and spruce—but it was the lines and performance which were so different. Also they had fenders.

The birchbark used was not of a single sheet but in big pieces, all sewn together and gummed. When it was laid down, a pole was then laid along its length, which thus gave the canoe a keel, and the sides were bent up and, like ours, held in place with stakes. Both ends of the canoe were cut, shaped, and sewn together. Ribs were inserted at intervals and the floor of the boat was protected with cedar slats laid lengthwise. Thwarts kept the sides of the canoe apart and completed the main construction. The gunwales were lashed with spruce root as were all other lashings. The gum was the traditional spruce gum mixed with animal fat just like ours.

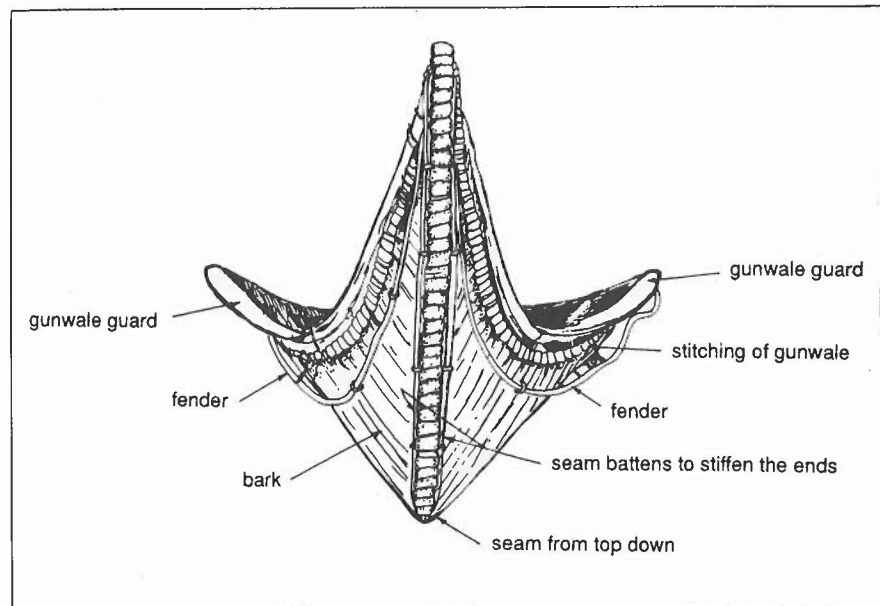
When a boat was launched, flat stones were laid on the bottom to give the necessary stability, and thick moss was laid over the stones on which the occupants could kneel or sit in comfort.

To us, the lines of the Beothuk canoe looked to be of an impractical shape, but these canoes served admirably on the open ocean where the Indians ventured when the swells were gentle. And of course, most of the travelling was done on inland lakes and rivers.

There are probably one or two or more Beothuk canoes in existence in Newfoundland, and our Canadian Canoe Museum has a replica, but that is all. It would surely be a grand challenge to build one in Ontario or Quebec so that we "inlanders" could admire such a remarkable, beautifully designed and utilitarian craft. Any takers? Bernard and I would be happy to contribute towards the costs. Again, any takers?



Canoe replica made by Shanawdithit for Capt. W.H. Jones of HMS Orestes in 1826-27



## FOOD FOR PADDLERS

### A TASTE OF THE PAST

Just recently read Farley Mowat's book *No Man's River*. Excellent reading, with a paddle adventure down the Thlewiaza River (runs east-west into Hudson Bay, near the border of Nunavut and Manitoba). The events take place in 1947. Lots of references to food which I thought were interesting.

#### Bannock

"With the arrival of the Europeans, bannock soon became the staple food of arctic travelers. To make it, one need only untie the mouth of a sack of flour; sprinkle a teaspoonful of baking powder on the exposed surface; mix the baking powder into the top inch or so of flour; make a depression about the size of one's fist; then slowly pour cold water into this hollow, stirring as one pours. When the resultant ball of dough is thick enough not to stick to your flesh, pat it (a knee makes an adequate working surface) until it is a little smaller than the diameter of your frying pan and about half an inch thick. Put a chunk of lard or other fat into the pan and heat till it starts spitting. Slip in the bannock dough and cook, flipping at intervals until both sides are golden brown." (Pg. 114-115)

#### "Ponassing" the duck

"Having skinned and cleaned it, he spreadeagled it on a double cross made of willow branches, the lower ends of which he thrust into the sand so the cross leaned over a bed of coals. There the bird roasted slowly in its own juices, while strips of bannock Telee had wound around individual slanting sticks baked to a crusty golden brown." Telee or Telequoisie was a member of the Idthen Eldeli. (Pg. 142)

#### Pemmican

"You begin, he explained, by putting equal quantities of previously rendered caribou heart fat (which has a gluey consistency) and bone marrow (which produces an oil as light as olive oil) in an iron pot and gently bringing the mixture to a simmer. Then you add pulverized dried deer meat and small cubes of back fat and stir until the mixture becomes thick enough to hold together. At this juncture raisins or, better still, cranberries can be added. The result is then ladled into sacks made of scraped deerskin and allowed to solidify into something resembling slabs of brownish asphalt. He assured me that, properly made and stored in a cool place, it would keep for years. I sampled some that Egenolf had made several years earlier. Although rather hard on the teeth, it had as good a flavor as the best corned beef." Egenolf was a Roman catholic priest in Brochet. (Pg. 159)

#### Smoked Deer Tongue

"Smoked deer tongues were once the supreme culinary

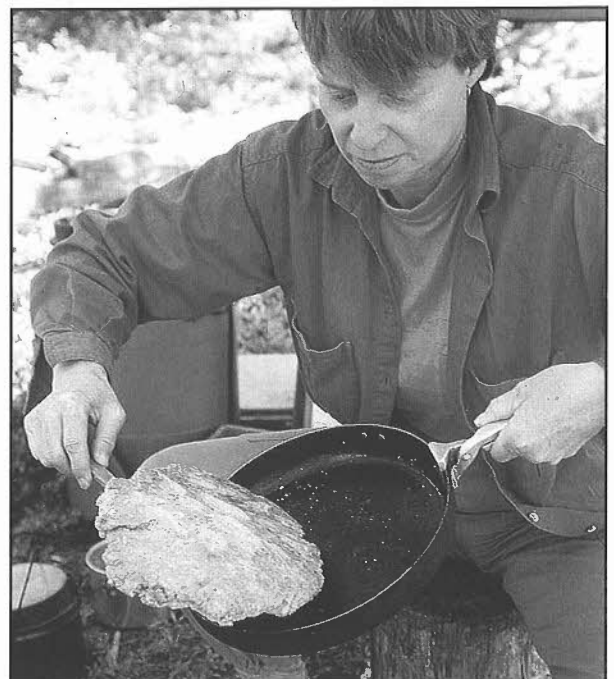
delicacy of the North. Egenolf made his by soaking fresh tongues for eight or nine days in strong brine; boiling them for an hour; then smoking them over a spruce and birch smudge for at least a week. Preparing them for the table required only that they be soaked in cold water overnight, after which they were boiled until the skin could easily be peeled off - somewhat as one might peel a banana. Indeed, smoked deer tongues were often referred to as Brochet bananas. The father told me that the mission still smoked two or three hundred tongues a year and that he ate one almost every morning for breakfast, along with a thick slice of pemmican." (Pg. 159)

#### Blood Pancakes

"The piece de resistance was blood pancakes, which Charles made from fresh blood drained from the yearling's body cavity mixed with flour, baking powder, and a handful of cranberries. The resultant flapjacks were as leathery as old boot soles and nearly as enduring. One survived at the bottom of the grub box until the end of our journey." Charles Schweder was a German-Cree trapper on Windy River and whom Farley canoed the Thlewiaza with. The yearling was a recently shot caribou. (Pg. 262)

(Published with permission from Key Porter Books. Copyright © 2004 by Farley Mowat. *No Man's River* is available in fine book stores everywhere.)

*If you would like to share your favourite tripping recipes, please contact Barb Young, 12 Erindale Crescent, Brampton, Ont. L6W 1B5; youngj david@rogers.com.*



# FOUR DAYS WITH YUKON-CHARLEY

S.R. Gage

When we first met Yukon-Charley, near the Yukon/Alaska border, he was in a pretty dark and dismal mood. Although one of us has lived in Whitehorse for more than 10 years, Charley considered us newcomers to the North, and wanted to rain on our parade. I guess it's something you have to expect from an old-timer. Charley has been around for a good many subarctic winters, although he only took to calling himself by his present name in 1978.

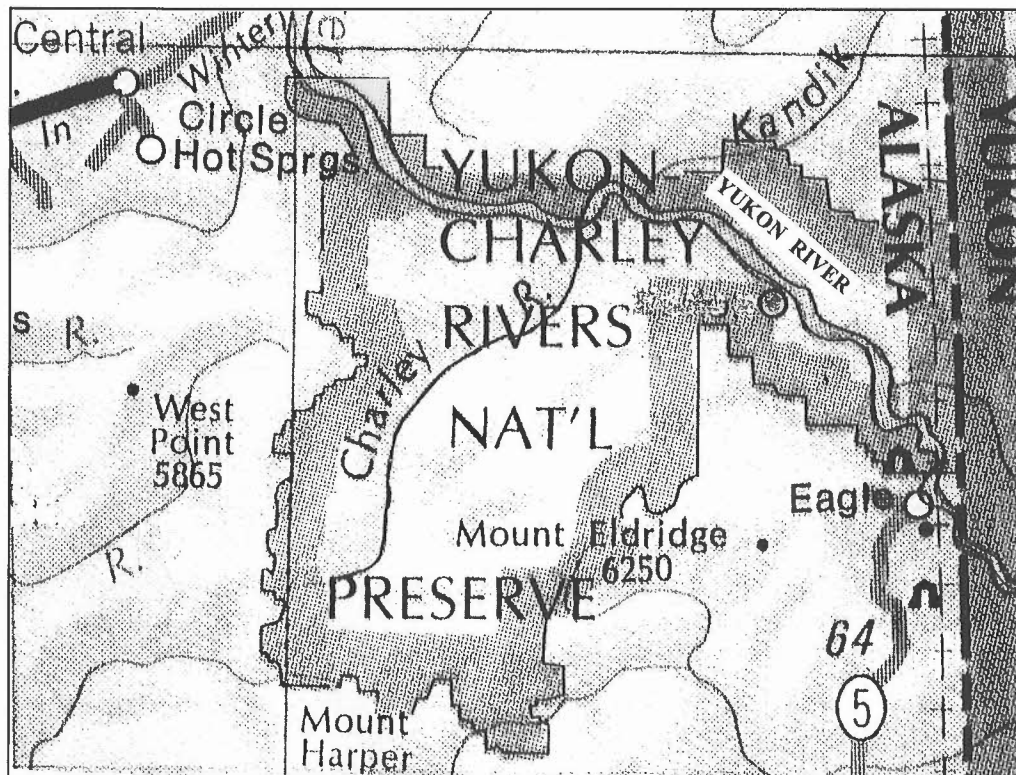
The US National Park Service puts it this way: In the deep interior of Alaska the great Yukon River strikes through bluffs and mountains of an ancient landscape . . . Axis of the region, the silt-laden Yukon here flows constricted and swift through a great geologic fault. Side-streams tumble from the hinterlands further passageways long inviting human traffic. Chief among these crystal rivers are the Charley, the Kandik, and the Nation . . . The 2.5-million-acre [6.2-million-hectare] Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve includes all 106 river miles [171 km] of the Charley . . .

If Yukon-Charley was a person, and if he had come from the lands described by the Park Service, he might have been one of the hard-bitten prospectors who laid mining claims on Fourth of July Creek in 1898. Or Charley could have run a roadhouse along the Yukon, providing food and lodging to miners, mail carriers, and trappers up through the 1930s.

The real Yukon-Charley is a magnificent tract of land, rich in natural and human history. Yukoner Jeremy Baumbach and I had a glimpse of this vast protected area while paddling from Dawson City to Circle, Alaska, on the Yukon River. The clear waters of the Charley, with their challenging whitewater and air charter requirements, would have to wait for another trip.

The rain had come soon after our canoe crossed into the reserve on an August afternoon. We had planned on seven nights between Dawson and Circle, and our rate of progress meant we had to paddle on through the wetness. The steady current of the Yukon helped, pushing us west and north under leaden clouds. Downstream of Dawson the river is much less travelled by canoeists than the traditional gold rush section, so we knew when it came time to camp that our best bet would be the wide beaches of the Yukon's islands. During our week on the river we saw traditional fish camps, but no sites above the banks specifically bushed out for paddlers.

The island beaches are composed of three materials in distinct segments: gravel, gray-black mud, and gray-black sand. We wanted a sand base for our tents, but distinguishing it from the mud was hard, especially when everything was wet. We stopped at three islands and trudged over the beaches, heads down, water dripping off our noses, looking for good spreads of sand. Stop number three was







"Socked-in" morning at Wood Island

named Wood Island on our river guide. I was now getting the odd shiver down my back and didn't want to return to the canoe. Jeremy found a small pocket of sand and we set up camp without delay. With a tarp up over the cooking area and the camp stove roaring, we finished the day in good style.

Day two with Yukon-Charley found us having breakfast in the middle of a cloud. It was certainly humid, but not raining. The biggest chore was rolling up our tents on the supersaturated sand. Complete a half roll of the fabric and swipe your hands to the left and right, clearing the grit; again and again.

We were soon back in the pull of the river, and by 11:00 a.m. the clouds were burning off, revealing a wonderful panorama of mountain and forest. The wide valley of the upper Yukon had given way here to a more restricted river. Mandioc Bluff, for example, drops from a height of 951 m directly into the Yukon. The land behind Montauk Bluff is part of the original North American tectonic plate, made up of a sequence of unmetamorphosed sedimentary rocks. The area had been untouched by the last ice age, so many unusual rock pinnacles and sharp, V-shaped valleys are evident. For Jeremy, who sees mountains every day, this was all pretty much more of the same. However, for an Easterner like me, it was high-caloric eye candy.

This was a day of steady paddling in ideal conditions--no wind, no bugs, and the only boat seen was a National Park Service outboard. You can at least grudgingly accept the presence of park staff in protected land. But, when the preserve was set up, in the late 1970s, the grudge was more seriously held by many in the area. John McPhee's *Coming into the Country* provides an insight into local park politics.

As plans for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline began to form 30 years ago, the US government determined a need to make land claim settlements with the native population of the state. One hundred million hectares were set aside for the original peoples. At the same time, Congress chose to protect representative areas from the risks of further pipelines and industrialization. Yukon-Charley was part of

that plan. The area is flanked by two towns on the banks of the Yukon, Eagle to the east, and Circle to the northwest. These towns have road connections and in turn have been the only direct access points to the big river in Alaska. The "River People" who used these access points and who trapped, hunted, and prospected around the Yukon drainage system were threatened by preserve status.

The back-to-the-landers kept a low profile in the late 1970s as the Bureau of Land Management threatened to push all squatters out. In the end, some kind of compromise was reached, as several cabins are still evident within the preserve, and the Parks Service main brochure says: "... a few hardy souls still pit their fortunes against a true frontier wilderness."

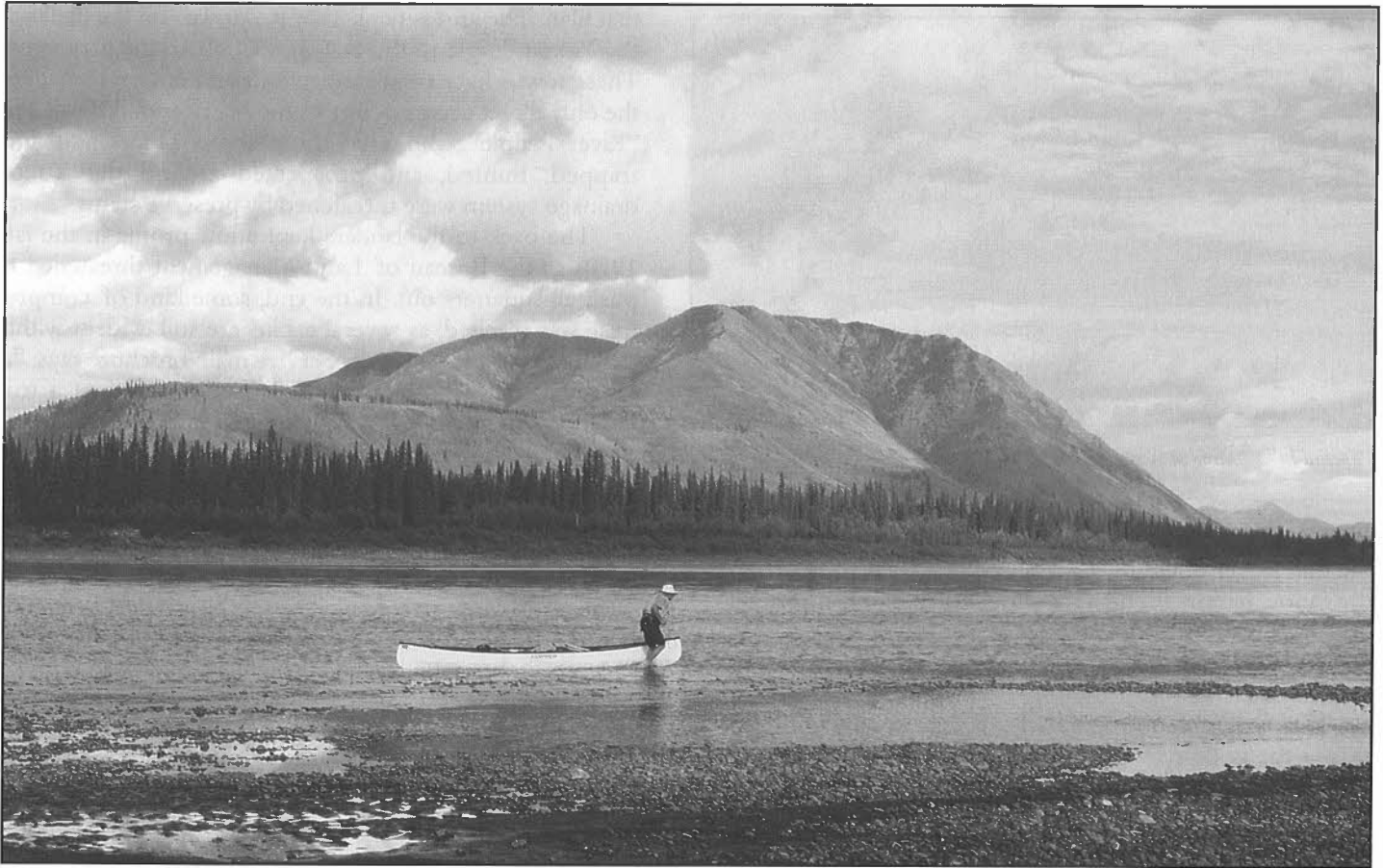
McPhee's book, which centres on the land in and around Eagle, actually prompted an influx of young adventurers to the Yukon River. These more recent river people have run the gamut of wilderness types. At one end is Ned Rozell, who served as a park ranger in the area and went on to write two books on the North and become a contributing editor to *Alaska Magazine*. At the other end is Dennis Tucker, who got so bushed he badly froze both his feet and later fired 15 bullets into the plane that medevaced him out of Eagle, blasting the pilot he thought could have done more to save his feet.

River travellers can still get a taste of the grub-stake life by staying in one or more of the seven cabins maintained for the public in the preserve. There is no charge for cabin use, but accommodation is first come, first served.

We chose to rely on nylon roofs for our second night with Yukon-Charley. We explored the north side of an island downstream from Washington Creek, and decided to keep looking on the south side. Jeremy waded into the cold waters of the river and lined the boat around the east end of the island; then we drifted down to a big rock that would serve as a waist-high table for dinner later that afternoon. I finished off a 63-kilometre day by turning our dinner rock into a firm easy chair. It was time to contemplate a quiet Yukon River evening. I had brief thoughts of the "Axis of Evil" as I lit a contraband Cuban cigar at 65 degrees north, 142 degrees west, but soon turned my focus to the pink sky reflecting on Mount Kathul. Around the



Dry river channel on Camp 5 island



*Moving the canoe upstream around an island to Camp 5*

mountain are vast uplands carpeted in untouched forest. The only sound was the gentle gurgle of current sweeping past me toward the Bering Sea.

By 9:30 the next morning we were packed and ready to load the canoe. Suddenly, four peregrine falcons came at us from across the river. There was much squawking and carrying on as they reached the downstream point of our island. A family of herring gulls had spent the morning at that point, and after some observation with binoculars, we realized a falcon had stooped on an immature gull, and was sitting on the beach, tearing it apart for breakfast. The feeding raptor was probably just learning to hunt, as the rest of his gang flew around in a big circle calling out high-pitched congratulations. The gulls evidently decided flight was inadvisable under the circumstances. They remained huddled at the river's edge.

We had heard quite a few peregrines in the previous two days, and could well believe the Park Service statement that this preserve has the highest nesting density of these masterful flyers in North America.

One of our goals for the morning was to replenish our drinking water supply. We had checked a stream flowing off Mount Kathul the day before, but it was dry. Jeremy said that snow pack the previous winter had been low through much of the Yukon basin, and we were seeing the effects in dry stream beds and empty

channels bisecting many of the Yukon's islands.

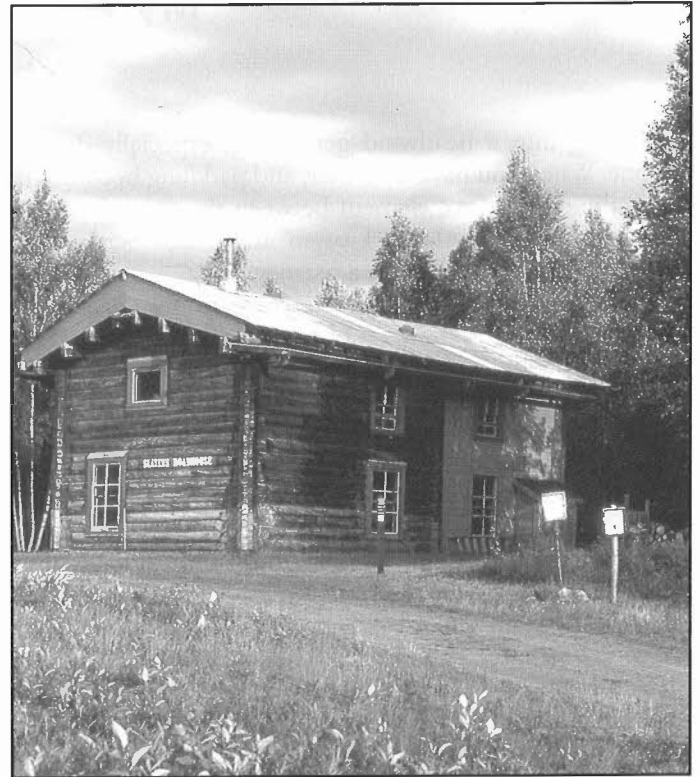
The Kandik River looked a bit too gritty for our taste, so we pushed on to the Charley. Again Jeremy was out and pulling, to get us into position to fill our plastic cube. We were glad for the extra ballast, for no sooner were we back in the big river than a northwest wind began to blow with authority. In short order whitecaps were coming at us from upstream. We sheltered for lunch under a cut-bank near the entrance of Sam Creek

After lunch we pushed off into a current (rated at about eight kilometres per hour), that, from a canoeist's perspective, was completely neutralized by the wind. The centre section of the river was blowing hard, so we chose to hug the south shore and work through the side channels. Avoiding dead ends and finding enough depth for our paddles now became a real challenge. Shallow areas near shore that had shown a riffled effect caused by gravel, were now much deeper, but retained the same "bumpy" appearance caused by the push of the nor'wester. Usually we read the river correctly, but a couple of times we ran out of options and were stranded in the shallows. We had to abandon ship and guide the canoe to a deeper passage. My rubber-bottomed LL Bean boots proved extremely water-retentive when filled from the top. It took a Dawson City dance hall kick to empty each boot before settling back into the canoe.

Our goal for the day was Slaven's roadhouse at the outlet of Coal Creek. It had looked like a short day on the map. There was supposed to be time to take in some of the history evident along Coal Creek. The wind and the river had other ideas. We arrived at Slaven's at 5:30 p.m. and trudged up to the big two-story house. The river had dropped 11.6 metres from our previous camp, but it seemed like we had fought for every bit of that descent.

The roadhouse was built in 1932 by Frank Slaven. This Ohio lad had come north in the Klondike Rush of >98 and had moved on into Alaska, staking his first claims on Coal Creek in 1905. With the onset of the Depression, Slaven branched out from mining into the hospitality industry. The National Park Service began a careful restoration of the house in 1993.

We were moving the canoe well back from the blustery river when we met Keith, a maintenance ranger who was working at the site. He offered us several sleeping options and the use of his kitchen. I choose a bunk space on the second floor, which old-timers like Ed Biederman or his son, Charlie, may well have used. Both men had delivered the mail between Eagle and Circle by dogsled.



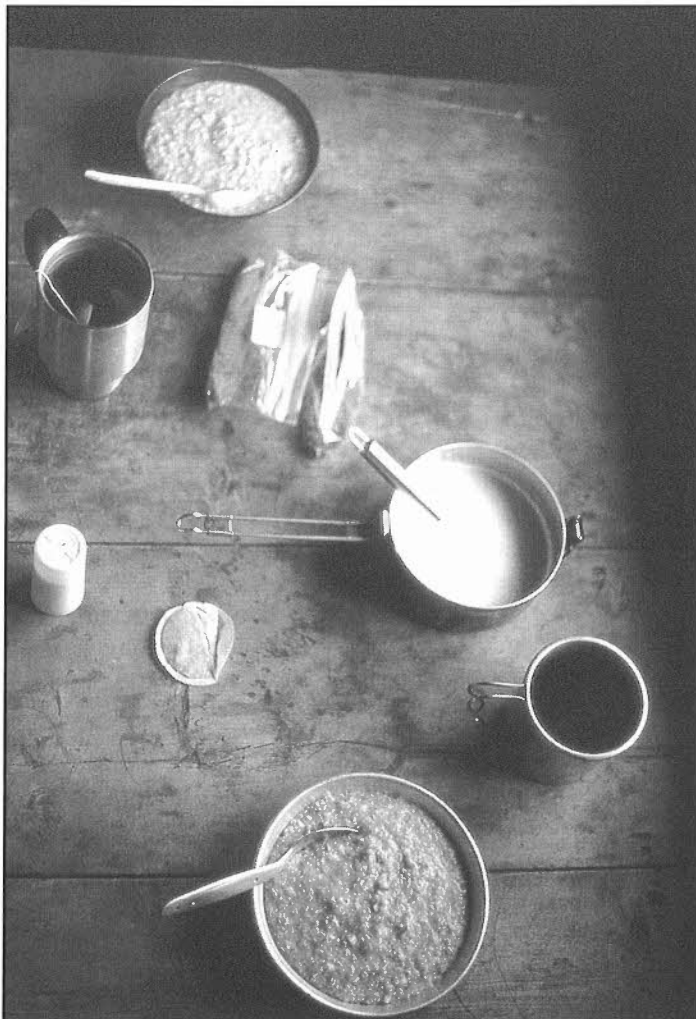
*Slaven's Roadhouse*

The old days are relived at Slaven's for two weeks every February during the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race. The roadhouse is an official "dog drop" where mushers can leave injured and tired dogs for airlift to the outside. Park staff are on hand to keep the wood stove red hot, and to provide round-the-clock meals for the men and women who are driving their teams between Whitehorse and Fairbanks. In 2002, 27 teams stopped here for a break from the -40° weather. To get water for their visitors, the park staff had to cut through over one metre of river ice.

I got a sense of the Quest experience by reading Sue Henry's *Murder on the Yukon Quest*, starring musher/detective Jessie Arnold. I realized we had a dog's eye view of part of the Quest route, from Dawson City to Circle.

The wind was still blowing hard at 10:30 p.m. when we turned in. It picked up again the next morning as we bent to our labours, fuelled by oatmeal porridge that was cooked on a propane kitchen range. The sun was shining and the big blow seemed to be slacking by lunchtime. We stopped as the river was about to turn from north to west. On the far bank we looked back to Takoma Bluff, rising 180 m from the water's edge. The top of the bluff pulls back gradually from the river and tapers north into a massive wetland. This is the first harbinger of the vast Yukon Flats which lie ahead. When we pulled out at Circle, the wonderful mix of scenery we had enjoyed would give way to 300 km of flat marshland.

By late afternoon we were saying goodbye to Yukon-Charlie. I would love to visit with him again!



*Breakfast at Slaven's Roadhouse*

## My Wild Goose Chase

Robert Perkins

Paddling into a headwind gets tiring, especially doing it alone. When you have a partner, and paddling becomes tiring, the competitive element between the two of you can keep you going. Alone, I often arrive at, "Screw this!" sooner than if I were with a partner.

There are long, open stretches of the Back River where a headwind is always blowing, no matter what direction I'm paddling in. This particular day, along a sandy area where hard-packed dunes rise up behind a hundred yards of beach, I landed Loon instead of continuing to paddle into the wind. One good thing about a headwind is that it tends to dim the presence of the bugs. Mosquitoes and blackflies are delicate beasts unable to go for fleshy targets during a wind or a rain. In a rain, they simply hunker under a leaf, waiting for the intermission in their desire for blood to end. In a wind, they follow in your wake, as you provide a wind block, the way a large boulder in strong current creates an opposite eddy on the downstream side. They'll land on you, laboriously climb up your shoulder or back, constantly prospecting for that vulnerable spot. They're not lazy, the bastards.

On this afternoon, the weather was overcast, the wind strong, and I walked downriver along the beach into it. I had been travelling about a month and a half. There were small- and medium-sized rocks scattered on the beach ahead of me, and out from behind one of these rocks popped a Canada goose I had not seen. He bolted because I had gotten too close for his comfort. He waddled frantically off; keeping a respectable distance between us, looking back over his shoulder to be sure I wasn't gaining. He was moulting. I knew I could never catch him since, if I got too close, he would head for the water, so I just kept walking. I wouldn't say I was ignoring him. I would love to have caught up and had him for dinner, but the odds were slim.

Then, all of a sudden, what had appeared to be a rock further down the beach from either of us came alive, turning into a wolf that jumped for the goose. It was a wolf that I later imagined had been laboriously sneaking up on the goose, having spotted it, and begun his painfully slow approach along the exposed beach way before I landed. He

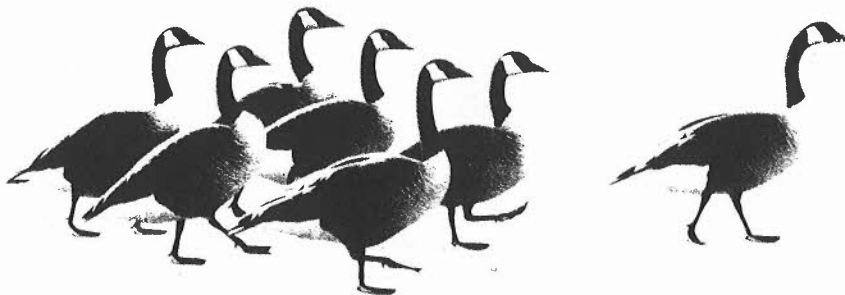
did not seem to have seen me, or he didn't care. The goose had not seen the wolf because he was running toward him, looking over his shoulder at me. The grey wolf caught the goose in his mouth in an explosion of feathers. I stopped cold. I never got to see a kill, unless it was mine. After shaking the goose violently, the wolf shifted the bird from his mouth to the ground, pressing it under his left front paw. He never took his eyes from the goose. What he would have done next I'll never know since I started running hard at the wolf, yelling at the top of my voice, "That's my goose, damn it. Drop it. That's mine!"

I've never seen an animal, or anyone, as surprised as the wolf looked at seeing me pounding down the beach, waving my arms and yelling. His whole body became stiff and alert. In a split second he decided to abandon the goose and run for the cover of the dunes. That left the goose lying on the beach for me to pick up. I slowed to a walk, congratulating myself by saying, like Little Jack Horner, "Oh, what a good boy am I!"

I don't pluck a goose anymore. It's too much work. Instead I skin them. I save the heart, the liver, and sometimes the gizzard to sauté in olive oil, salt, and pepper. I cut off the breasts, and the back meat, and the legs.

On a moulting goose, depending on how far along the moult is, I can observe the feathers forming inside the quills. All in all, a goose is good for several days worth of meat and, along with the carcass, can be stretched into an extra week as goose soup. Let Aldo Leopold sing the praises of goose music heard flying over his head in the spring. I'll sing the praises of good goose soup.

As I came within 10 feet of the goose, to my astonishment, he jumped up, squawking, and pelted off toward the water. I was so surprised, I did not move quick enough and the goose got to the water before I got to him. I stood on shore, half a mile from my canoe, watching the goose swim away, honking madly, tipping his head up and down toward the water, as if accepting the silent applause from all of nature. After a minute, I doubled over laughing. I couldn't stand up. I sat on the wet sand, convulsed in a laughter that rang out over the water to join the honks of the departing goose.



# GOOSENECK TO WAHWASHKESH

## THE LONG WAY AROUND

Viki Mather

Allan, our seven-year-old daughter Kate, and I were looking for a new canoe route northeast of Parry Sound, where she goes to summer camp. Where to go? I peered at the map for weeks ahead. We didn't have the five days needed to do the longer trip that was recommended by several people last summer. We had only three days. Where to go?

Looking at the map, it seemed to me that there should be a way to go to the south of Wahwashkesh Lake, through Gooseneck into Loon Lake and up through a couple more small lakes, and then into Bolger Lake, which put us back into the well-known canoe area. But could it be done? Were there portages between the lakes?

I asked my niece who has a cottage nearby. I asked a friend who lives on the lake, and another who lives half an hour away. I asked the camp director who had been around the area since she was seven. No one knew for sure if the route was passable. The camp director suggested asking Mr. A, who had been around this area forever.

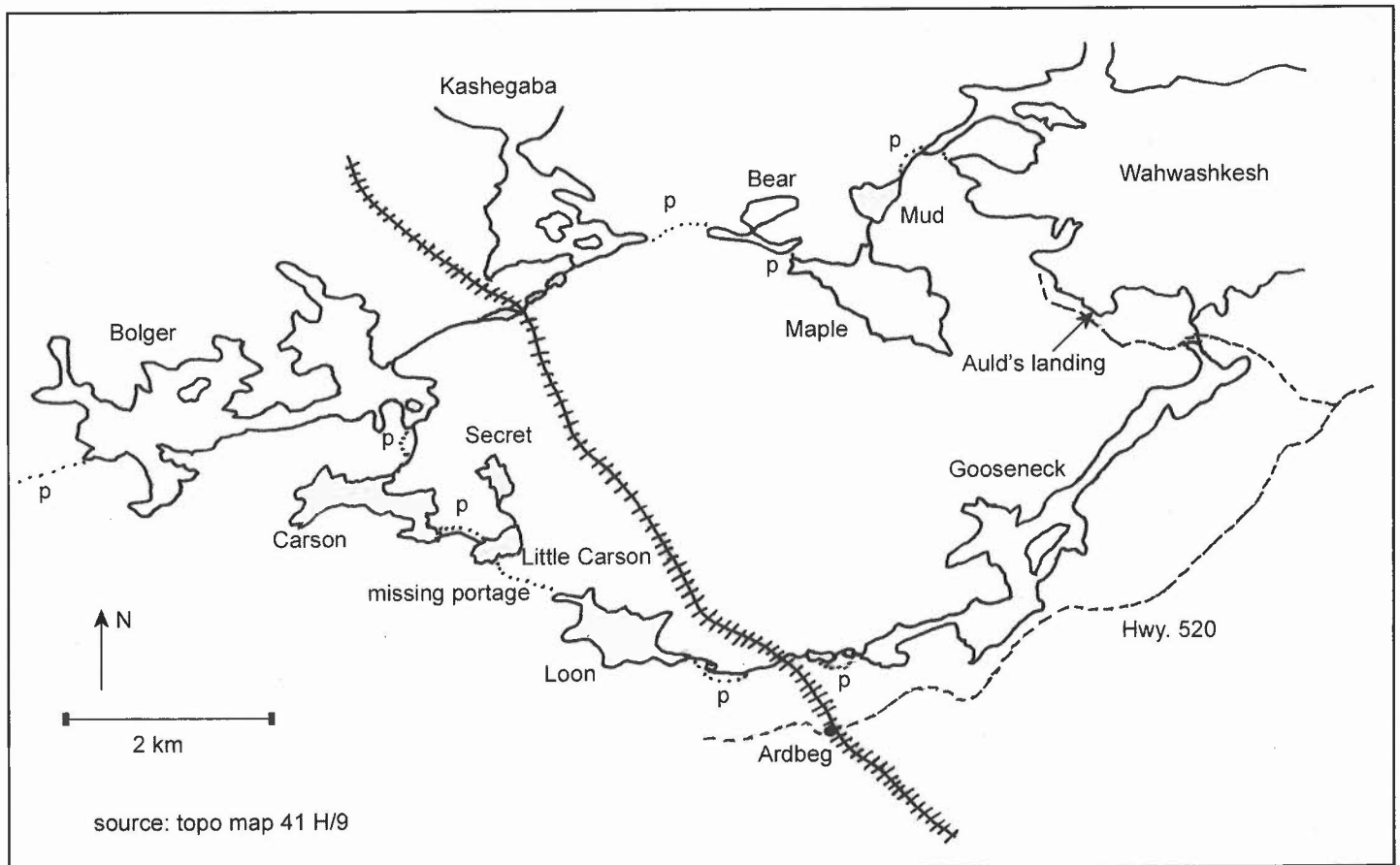
Now, we didn't have a contact number for Mr. A, so we just packed up all our gear and decided to give it a try. As it turned out, Mr. A was at the dock when we arrived,

so just before we headed off into unknown country, we asked him what he knew. Plenty, it turned out.

He travels though the area in winter these days, but he remembers a time when indeed, people carried canoes between these lakes. He thought no one had done so for years, and suggested it could be a difficult trip. Nonetheless, he gave us some hints as to where to find the portages, or at least how to avoid getting stuck in the long swampy area between Loon and Little Carson lakes. He wished us luck, but shook his head as we walked back to the canoe to get ready to go.

As it turned out, the trip was wonderful. No, there weren't always portages between the lakes, but it was easy enough to find our way through the woods.

Our trip began at a long lake called Gooseneck, northeast of Parry Sound. We had a good map, but very little information as to where creeks would be wide enough to paddle and where the portages would be located. Was this route going to be possible? We didn't know for sure. Such is the joy of exploring new places.



The western end of Gooseneck Lake is full of pickereelweed and water lilies. Yes, the water is shallow. We wound our way through until we could see a big beaver dam. The path of moving water got very narrow, and made a few sharp right-angle turns. The odd log lay just a few inches below the water, crossing our path. A couple of times we got out to lift the canoe around a corner, over an obstruction, or to push it through an area that was too narrow for the canoe. Meanwhile, we noted the southern shore had possibilities for a short portage. Next time, we'll go that way.

At the beaver dam, we all got out, lifted the packs up to the narrow top of the dam, and lifted the canoe over the top. Whew! Now we had lots of water to paddle in. Thank goodness for beavers.

We soon approached the railway tracks indicated on the map. They loomed high above the water. As we paddled closer, we looked for the place most likely to exit the canoe and carry our stuff up and over. Should we go left or right?

We could see two culverts under the steep pile of slag. Do you suppose there would be a chance they were big enough to paddle through? It didn't seem likely. Yet as we got closer, the culverts looked bigger. And so did the steep mountain of fill that had supported those rail tracks for the past 80 years.

Yes! The culverts were huge! They were at least six feet in diameter, and only slightly more than half-full of water. The canoe fit with us inside. It was a little spooky, but we ducked our heads, tucked in our paddles, and used our hands on the culvert to push ourselves up the gentle stream.

Kate wanted to know what would happen if a train were to cross while we were tucked inside. To distract her from her angst, we pointed out a couple of long-abandoned birds' nests that were tucked several feet into the end of the culvert. A few minutes later, we emerged back into the brilliant sunny day.

We moved on up this lovely stream. Shortly after we rounded the corner, we could hear the train coming; what would it have been like to be underneath when the train went by? Leaving the last vestiges of civilization behind, we paddled up the creek. Gradually, the water got shallower, more waterweeds covered more of the water's surface, and more rocks slid just a few inches from the bottom of the canoe.

Luckily, we came to another beaver dam, this one less than a foot high. We were able to paddle right up to it, then lift the loaded canoe over to the other side. This gave us just enough water to paddle up to a small—very small—inlet stream.

We pulled the canoe out on a large area of bedrock to the left and wandered around a bit to look for a portage. We found no evidence of a path through this pretty little forest. So, we simply carried packs and canoe through the woods for a few hundred feet to the next lake. One nice thing about portages is the opportunity to find blueberries. Yum!

Loon Lake is very pretty but we didn't linger. The gap between Loon and Little Carson is quite large. We wanted to have lots of time to find our way.

The map shows a big wet area between the two lakes. Chances were good that the best way through would be to the south of this wetland. We cruised the shoreline. Allan got out and walked parallel to the shore, looking for signs of where there might be a trail. No luck. I parked the canoe at a spot that felt right, then wandered into the woods.

I found a portion of what looked like it might have been a trail at one time. I went back to the canoe, consulted with Allan, and we both lifted the canoe packs and started off into the woods. Kate stayed with me, and we remained on the higher ground. Allan walked closer to the lowlands.

After 15 or 20 minutes, we stumbled upon a trail that had been flagged many years ago. The flagging tape was faded and torn in many places. But the trail seemed to be going generally in the direction we were, so I called Allan to join us. The trail went up a bit higher, crossed a few small meadows, and then dove back into the deep shadows of the oak and pine forest.

When we came to a little dip in the trail where a spring freshet had been, Allan dropped his packs and headed back to get the canoe. Kate led the way for us, her keen eyes picking out the fragments of flagging tape on the twigs ahead. Soon I could see the glint of water in the mid-afternoon sun. We scrambled down a steep embankment, through a dark forest of old cedar and hemlock.

Success! We found Little Carson Lake. Kate and I looked for a better way to get up the hill and back to the trail. We arrived at the spot where Allan had left the packs at the same time as he arrived with the canoe.

Once we were back to the lake and floating again, I took a careful look at the map. The portage between Loon and Little Carson is at least two-thirds of a mile long. Even though the distance between the two shows as only one-third of a mile on the map, the trail length is doubled to avoid the swamps. Little Carson is a jewel of a lake. We found a lovely spot to camp on the northeast shore.

On the second day of our canoe trip, we woke to another sunny morning in the middle of nowhere! Ahh... wonderful it was. This is what I seek when travelling in the wilds: a lonely little lake where few others venture.

After breakfast, Allan and Kate went off in the canoe to explore while I made notes and pattered around packing things away. They followed a bit of a creek and then walked through some bushy distance until they came to Secret Lake. Yet, how much of a secret could it be with a name like that? From the shore they saw a pretty little island that might have possibilities of a campsite. Maybe next time.

Our travelling began that day with a portage into Carson Lake. This was along a good trail, which showed evidence of winter use as well as summer. The fierce headwind, which had blown the day before, had gone and we

had a leisurely paddle along the southern shore of the lake.

As always, we were on the lookout for places to camp. We found a few possibilities and marked them on the map. We hadn't far to travel that day so we paddled the full mile and a quarter of shoreline.

Our map didn't tell us where the portage would be. We had a good look along the north shore as we paddled easterly toward the outlet creek. There were a couple of boat caches, which might mean a portage nearby.

The water became very shallow as we approached the outlet. We had to step out of the canoe to lift over some logs, and then found enough water to paddle along a short, shallow wetland. Another boat cached on the shore showed us the portage to Bolger Lake.

The portage was a pretty, but short and steep drop alongside a waterfall. It connects with Bolger Lake at the southeast corner—a hundred feet into a cattail swamp. We had no trouble winding through the waterway to get to the main lake.

Bolger Lake is in one of the new Ontario Living Legacy Waterway Conservation Reserves. Located along one of the main canoe routes just south of the Magnetawan River, this area is frequently used as a travel corridor. We had the rest of the portages for our trip well marked on our map but we had no idea where the campsites might be.

We could tell from the cottages along the shore that Bolger is a lake that has been occupied for decades. There are beautiful, old, historic buildings alongside the newer ones with huge picture windows.

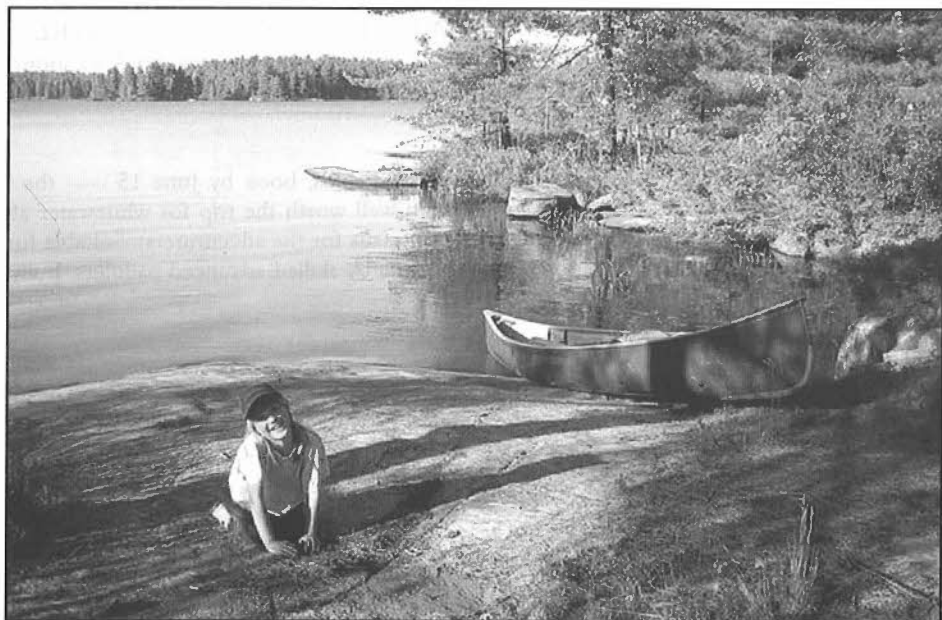
We couldn't find any campsites as we paddled west. Buildings occupied all the best sites. This is always a problem when canoeing in settled areas. Just two-thirds of a mile from the west end of the lake, we found a campsite tucked into a tiny bay. Beautiful! We had lunch and a swim. Then with the security of a place to stay, we headed out in the canoe again to explore.

There are two north-south-oriented bays at the west end of Bolger. Both are relatively unoccupied by cottages and both offer a couple of interesting campsites.

I paddled into a very remote, skinny little bay to the north after dinner. A single loon sat upon the water in the middle of the pool at the end of the bay. Where was her mate? As I slowly and quietly paddled out of the bay, I saw him. He sat low in the shrubbery on a tiny islet. On a nest! He watched me pass without leaving the nest. Soon there would be chicks! This brought a happy ending to the day, and the end of my trip notes.

Here's a description of how to complete the loop: paddle to the eastern edge of Bolger Lake, to the creek that flows between Bolger and Kashegaba Lakes. This mile-and-a-quarter paddle crosses under the railway tracks again, at a historic spot where both lakes used to be exclusively accessed by rail. Paddle along the south shore of Kashegaba to the well-marked portage into Bear Lake, then east again. There is a tiny portage from Bear into Maple Lake, where there are a couple of nice beaches and very nice campsites. From Maple, paddle north through the wetland to Mud Lake, and continue north to the well-used portage into Wahwashkesh Lake. We could not find a portage between Wahwashkesh and Gooseneck lakes, but it may be possible to use the cottage road on the east side of the creek. I would recommend dropping off your stuff at the dam at Gooseneck, then driving down to Auld's Landing where you can park for a small fee. Then you can hike back up the road about two-thirds of a mile or so to begin the trip.

I wrote this article only as a description of our little trip, not to promote travel in this particular area. My hopes are to get readers to seek out their own "new" routes, simply by studying the maps you already have and finding where the connections ought to be. It is a great way to discover quiet places where you can really get away, and into the quiet beauty of the land.



*Beautiful Bolger Lake campsite*

# WCA OUTINGS

**WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT  
PRESENTED IN THE AUTUMN ISSUE?**

**Contact the Outings Committee before July 31.**

*For questions, suggestions, proposals to organize trips, or anything else related to the WCA Outings, contact the Outings Committee: Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca; Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca; Geri James, 416-512-6690, geri.james@barclaysglobal.com; Scott Card, 905-665-7302, scottcard@sympatico.ca*

*WCA outings and other activities may have an element of danger of serious personal injury. You are ultimately responsible for your own safety and well-being when participating in club events.*

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## All Season **HAVE PADDLE WILL TRAVEL**

Scott Card, 905-665-7302, scottcard@sympatico.ca ----- Mowing the lawn this weekend because you don't have any trips planned? I paddle whitewater nearly every weekend from spring break-up through as long as the water remains liquid in the fall (or winter). If you want to get out on a river any weekend, just call me to find out where I'm headed. I go wherever there's good water. Longer trips also a possibility. Trip difficulty levels vary from intermediate to advanced. Open canoe, C1, or kayak welcome.

## All Summer **MELLOW SUMMER WHITEWATER WEEKENDS**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca ----- Most weekends of the summer I am at the Gull for the day or the whole weekend. If there is decent water, I'll set up camp at Palmer's to do some paddling and catch some rays. It's a relaxed way to spend an all-too-short summer. Bring the spouse and kids along. If you are looking for an excuse to avoid painting or mowing the lawn, just give me a call & I'll tell you what I have planned. I'm happy to provide a little informal instruction for anyone new to moving water, or for paddlers wanting to work on their roll. Palmers is great for beginners. The run-out at the Gull can be used by novices, but you really need to be a good intermediate to paddle the course safely.

## June 30 - July 3 **OTTAWA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672 or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before June 23 ----- We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practise your skills before attempting this river. Limit six boats.

## July 1-4 **KILLARNEY: HAVE RESERVATIONS, WILL TRAVEL**

Glenn or Carlene Croucher, 416-283-4335 or glenn@olympic.on.ca, book as soon as possible ----- If you would like to share our base camp for a long weekend of leisurely paddling, give us a call. We have no set routes in mind as of this date.

## July 1-4(5?) **RIVER AUX SABLES**

Scott Card, 905-665-7302 or ScottCard@sympatico.ca, book by June 15 ----- the River aux Sables is west of Sudbury, near Massy. This is a long drive from Toronto but well worth the trip for whitewater aficionados, with some of the best technical water in Ontario (class 2 to 4 with some class 5 falls for the adventurers). Suitable for strong intermediate to advanced paddlers. The Seven Sisters canyon section is only runnable by skilled advanced paddlers. Fully outfitted whitewater boats required. Limit six boats.

## July 2-17 **MISSINAIBI RIVER**

Gary & Geri James, 416-512-6690 or wca@sympatico.ca, book by April 15 ----- Plans are in the works to canoe the upper section of this famous Canadian Heritage River from Missinaibi Lake to Mattice. Give us a call for details. Limited to four canoes.

## July 9-10 **INTRODUCTION TO MOVING WATER**

Jon McPhee, 905-640-8819, and Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, book before June 30 ----- This is a two-day workshop for flatwater paddlers who want to develop basic moving-water skills. It should be of interest to trippers who want to become more comfortable negotiating the moderate moving-water they often encounter on river trips, and to canoeists who want to



determine if whitewater paddling could be for them. We will focus on the basics of moving-water boat control and manoeuvres, water reading, and safety. Both tandem and solo paddlers are welcome. The weekend will be spent at Palmer Rapids on the Madawaska River, one hour northeast of Bancroft. The location offers some of the best novice to intermediate whitewater in Southern Ontario. In order to be able to work closely with participants, registration is limited to six boats.

*Prerequisites:* Participants must be able to steer a canoe competently on flatwater. A Royalex canoe with supplementary floatation (air bag, air mattress, inner tube, etc.) to simplify recovery when you capsize is mandatory. If you need to rent a canoe, you should register and reserve the boat immediately as there are very limited numbers available with outfitters. Vest-type PFD's, helmets, and square-bladed, T-gripped whitewater paddles are necessary. Lastly, you must feel at home in the water to enjoy these workshops.

*Recommended:* While not required, a wetsuit will make floating in the river more pleasant. Reviewing a whitewater instructional book or video before we meet will familiarize you with the important concepts so you can get the most value out of your river time.

#### July 22 to 24 **CANOEING CHRISTIAN ISLAND**

Richard Steinberg, 416-262-2785 or work 905-671-5495, or Steinberg.Richard@Emeryworld.com, book as soon as possible ---- Leave Friday evening. Enjoy a relaxing weekend on Georgian Bay, day tripping from my cottage property over to Christian Island. Picnic and swim before returning to my cottage. Flatwater with the possibility of rough waves.

#### July 29 - August 1 **GEORGIAN BAY**

Richard Steinberg, 416-262-2785 or work 905-671-5495, or Steinberg.Richard@Emeryworld.com, book as soon as possible ---- We will be leaving Friday evening to explore the scenic 30,000 Islands area north of Parry Sound, Bayfield Inlet area. It's mostly flatwater, but winds can make it rough even in summer. You need to be a strong enough paddler to cope with this possibility.

#### July 30 - August 1 **OTTAWA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672 or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before July 23 ---- We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practise your skills before attempting this river. Limit six boats.

#### August 6-14 **KILLARNEY-GEORGIAN BAY CANOE CAMPING**

Richard Steinberg, 416-262-2785 or work 905-671-5495, or Steinberg.Richard@Emeryworld.com, book as soon as possible ---- An exploratory trip into this region. Route not finalized at time of publication. Open to ideas or if you know this area. Please call to indicate interest. As Georgian Bay can be rough at times, you must be a strong paddler. Food will be communal.

#### August 11-17 **FRENCH RIVER/GEORGIAN BAY**

Don Andersen, 716-873-4476 or dhandersen@aol.com, book before July 15 ---- Join us on an exciting trip that will be honouring the history of canoeing in Canada by exploring the Western Outlet of the French River, taking the Old Voyageur Channel, connecting to the more remote areas in the Cross Channel and then to Georgian Bay. Depending on conditions we will be spending some time on the nearby Bustard Islands and then return via the Pickerel River to our starting point at Hartley Bay. In addition to reviewing the history of the region, we will be looking for goatsuckers and cranes. This trip is suitable for competent novices who can manage windy conditions, waves, and lift-overs. Limit six canoes.

#### August 26-28 **ALGONQUIN PARK FAMILY CAMP**

Geri and Gary James, 416-512-6690 or wca@sympatico.ca ---- We are unable to confirm date and site until March 26, please check the WCA website for additional information. Join us at the Whitefish Group Campgrounds on site # 17 where we will circle the tents on a large site to ourselves for games, canoeing, and hiking. Limited to 40 people, so let us know as soon as possible if you are interested in attending.

#### September 3-5 **OTTAWA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672 or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before August 26 ---- We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practice your skills before attempting this river. Limit six boats.

#### September 30 - October 2 **CROTCH LAKE - THANKSGIVING TURKEY DINNER CANOE TRIP**

Anne Lessio, 905-686-1730 or alessio@istar.ca, or Gary James 416-512-6690 or wca@sympatico.ca, book by July 15 ---- Crotch Lake is described in Kevin Callan's book *Gone Canoeing* on page 109. Last year we explored this beautiful lake and found a nice large island site that would hold 20 people. We are going to once again cook a full turkey dinner. Check out the spring 2003 issue of *Nastawgan* if interested in a review of our last celebration. Advance food planning and equipment is needed for this trip, so book early.

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*FOR SHORT-NOTICE TRIPS, CHECK THE WCA WEBSITE BULLETIN BOARD*

Suddenly find yourself with a free weekend and want to go paddling? Need a partner for an upcoming trip? Take advantage of our website bulletin board (<http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca>) to post notices for impromptu trips or partners required. Also, bookmark this page to regularly check for new posted outings. This service is a valuable addition to our regularly published quarterly outings list. We encourage members to use it. However, please note that only members may post notices. As these activities are not pre-screened by the Outings Committee, they are considered privately organized affairs and we can take no responsibility for them.

## REVIEWS

**PADDLING THE BOREAL FOREST: Rediscovering A.P. Low** by Max Finkelstein and James Stone, published by Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., P.O. Box 95, Station O, Toronto, Ontario, M4A 2M8, [www.natural-heritagebooks.com](http://www.natural-heritagebooks.com), 2004, softcover, 299 pages, \$26.95 CAN or \$19.95 US.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Sinclair

Considerable research by Max Finkelstein and James Stone reveals a great Canadian who has largely been forgotten. This book aims, primarily, to educate and entertain us a little along the way, with oft-humorous and humble mention of the authors' current retracing of a canoe route followed by A.P. Low.

Albert Peter Low (1861-1942) made important contributions to Canada as a geologist, geographer, ethnographer, climatologist, conservationist, naturalist, bureaucrat, author, explorer, surveyor, and cartographer of Labrador and Quebec. His skills awarded him posts as geologist and director for the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC), commander of the Neptune sailing ship, founder and deputy minister of the Ministry of Mines, and briefly, senior bureaucrat in Quebec and Labrador,

The book is written in Max's familiar and earthy style. It has much ambition as a biography, a history of exploration and development in Labrador and Quebec, an ecological treatise on the bounty of Canada's wilderness and man's ravages upon it, and a trip report that seeks to relive the subject's experience and, perhaps, complete the journey that Low had to abandon. So detailed is the biographical and historical focus of this book, that the reader can lose track of the current trip. It begins with a background and account of Low's mapping of vast amounts of shoreline (almost 1,400 miles). Emphasised is his contribution to the GSC and his skill and stamina in wilderness travel by snowshoe, sled, canoe, and sail. In chapter 9, Max and Jim drop from a Twin Otter to pick up the trail where Low had to turn back ("Low's Gap"). Their route is Lake Naococane to James Bay via the Eastmain and Rupert rivers (Quebec Hydro will dam the Rupert in the near future). Their advantages are the 1:250,000 map and plenty of modern equipment, (though certainly not the weather).

This carefully studied work is much more about Low's contributions, his dedication, competence, and accomplishments than the authors' self-effacing travails and triumphs in the wild. Not a quick read, the book (first edition copy-editing needed) merits inclusion in a library of Canadian history for its illumination of a Canadian hero.

**EVERY TRAIL HAS A STORY: Heritage Travel in Canada** by Bob Henderson, published by Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc. (address see review above), 2005, softcover, 286 pages, \$26.95 CAN or \$19.95 US.

Reviewed by Toni Harting

The author is a well-known member of the outdoor education profession and is published regularly in various journals and other publications. In his numerous travels throughout Canada he has amassed an impressive collection of stories and other information on a wide range of subjects, some of which he presents here in his enthusiastic and charming style. The range of subject matter is impressive indeed and covers all seasons. It deals with diverse activities such as canoeing (but no trip reports), skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, exploring, story telling, you name it. Who would not be curious to read a story with the intriguing title, *Dog Sledding: Old Canadian Ambiance or Hermits I'd Love to Have Met?* Obviously there is a tremendous amount of research required in producing a book like this, which is made clear by the approximately 40 pages of notes/references and extensive index.

The many black-and-white photographs range from so-so to adequate. The quality of the reproductions in the books is barely acceptable too much of the time, which unfortunately is sometimes the case in books published by Natural Heritage. The 15 maps are excellent, though.

In his Preface the author writes: "There is an adventure of the spirit I am hoping to convey in these pages." He certainly is successful. All in all, a remarkable book, filled with knowledge and insight, that demands to be widely enjoyed. As James Raffan concludes in his Foreword: "It's just the thing for a long winter's night or a long lingering read by campfire light." More than that, it's a fine book to read anywhere, any time.

## MAPS

Looking at them again. Maps, that is. Just can't understand my fascination with them. I see one and everything else stops. Talking, working, eating, everything. Mesmerized is the closest word I can think of. Maybe even hypnotized.

I spend lots of time tracing rivers on maps. Seeing which way they flow. Figuring out how to get into one of the headwater lakes. Wondering how to pronounce names of landmarks along the route of travel. Estimating distances to a likely takeout point. And most importantly, planning out how to get back home from a trip ending in Hudson Bay, or maybe even the Arctic Ocean. You see, our trips usually start far upstream and end in salt water.

Rapids or lakes or hills or other distinguishing landmarks on the map sometimes have French or Native names to describe them. To us, just more compelling reasons to go there. Who could not hear of Collines Hades, or Chute Au Granite, or Canyon Eaton and not want to travel there? For an early French trapper, a Hudson's Bay

Company factor, an Oblate missionary, or a Native hunter to have a name for a place, it must have stood out to them.

Standing in a named place adds history to wilderness canoeing. We stand where they stood. We see what they saw. We feel what they felt. We travel the ground they travelled. The times we each live in are as different as two epochs can be, but in the wilderness at least, we are moving about using the same muscle power just as they did. We are comrades in the wilderness. We both have paid the same dues. It's as close to being there with these earlier travellers as you can get.

Count it as another one of the many benefits of wilderness travel. Since signs of man's presence on the land are few, it's easy for the mind to move between eras, to imagine being with travellers from that era, to understand the fears and joys of living in that era.

You can't relive your own history, but sometimes in the wilderness, you can relive theirs.

Greg Went

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## 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, ON
- Suntrail Outfitters, 100 Spence Str., Hepworth, ON
- Smoothwater Outfitters, Temagami (Hwy. 11), ON

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

**WCA MERCHANDISE** We have a wide selection of WCA merchandise available for purchase at all WCA events (but not by mail order). Items available include WCA mugs (\$5), crests (\$3), and decals (\$1). We also have WCA clothing in a range of colours and sizes. Each item is a high-quality product that has been embroidered with a colourful WCA logo. At your next event plan to purchase one of these garments and proudly represent your organization. Golf Shirts:\$30; Fleece Vests:\$40; Fleece Jackets:\$60. (Cheque or cash only.)

**DRIVE-IN SHUTTLE SERVICE** is available for the Dumoine, Noire, Coulonge, and Petawawa rivers. **ACCOMMODATION** is available at the Eddy Inn. Contact Valley Ventures at 613-584-2577 or vent@magma.ca

**CLASSIC SOLO CANOEING CLINICS** From May until October, Becky Mason runs solo paddling clinics at Meech Lake in the Gatineau Hills, Quebec. Contact her at P.O. Box 1735, Chelsea, Quebec, J9B 1A1 or 819-827-4159 or redcanoe@istar.ca. Also find information about her Classic Solo Canoeing DVD at www.redcanoe.ca

**SMOOTHWATER** Whether you are looking for the adventure and majesty of Temagami's backcountry canoe routes, the quiet relaxation of our lodge, or the stimulation of a learning workshop, we know your next Temagami visit will be a memorable experience. Let us know how we can help. Smoothwater Outfitters & Ecolodge, Temagami Adventures in Heritage & Recreation, Box 40, Temagami, Ontario, Canada, P0H 2H0, temagami@onlink.net and www.smoothwater.com, tel. 705-569-3539, toll-free 888-569-4539 (Can. & U.S.).

**SURVIVORMAN** For the latest information on Les Stroud's many intriguing activities (TV shows, music CD, magazine articles, Survivorman book, and more), contact him at: 457 Chapman Drive East, Burk's Falls, Ontario, P0A 1C0, canoe@surenet.net and www.wildernessfilms.ca

For up-to-date information on these and other Products and Services items, go to the Bulletin Board of the WCA website: [www.wildernesscanoe.ca](http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca).

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