



SUMMER 2003

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OUT FIT 113



— Michael Peake

THE HEART OF IT- - It was the core of a wilderness experience. North of the Thelon River in the Akiliniq Hills, Geoffrey Peake and Peter Brewster track their canoe up a small unnamed stream enroute to the Back River in 1985. This area, and other are celebrated by Alex Hall in his new book *Discovering Eden*.

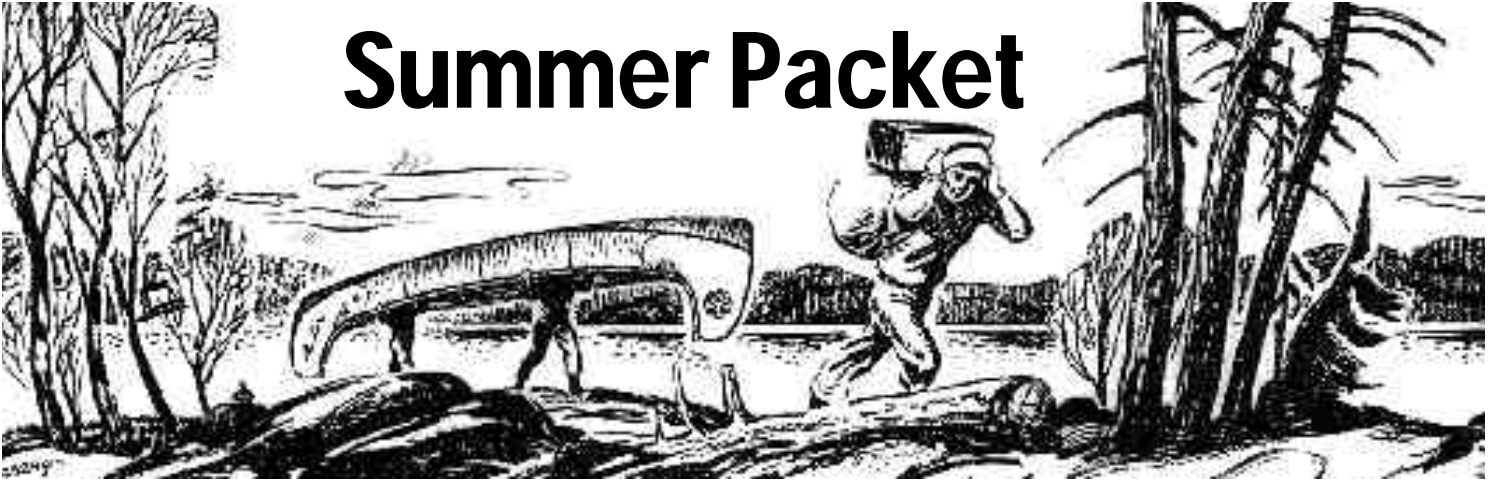
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Summer Packet



A couple of trips of note for this summer that have passed our way. Not surprisingly they both involve former HACC trips that people are doing and have sought us out for info.

Daniel Pauzé and his girlfriend **Susan Barnes** from Toronto are tackling the Palmer-Korok trip that was part of our 2001 Labrador Odyssey expedition. That Web page is still active at www.canoe.ca/labrador2001.

This will be a tough slog for a two-person crew but we have told them all about the hard parts and headed out at the beginning of August. (Ed. Note: Funny, they don't seem as hard as they were two years ago. But I remember what I said to myself!) In fact, there's a further connection to the HACC as they even bought one of our old canoes for good luck. Daniel notes he has renovated the old Old Town Tripper for their trip north.

The pair plan to get a boat ride from up the Labrador coast to Nachvak Fjord. But the notoriously unpredictable boat operators have only guaranteed getting them as far as Saglek Fjord with a chance of Nachvak. That leaves a 40 mile open ocean run. It's a tough go up the Palmer and we wish them both the best of luck.

Also doing another very remote river is **Sylvie Michaud** of Montreal. Her group will be going down the Payne River in northern Quebec also known as the Amaud. Syvie said she only had trip reports from us and Dr. Rousseau who did the crossing in 1948 and Robert Flaherty when went through in 1912. Not a wealth

of travellers in that part of Nunavik. Sylvie promised some photos of the trip when they are done.

And **Bill Layman** is at it again with a smaller trip that's already been on the Web at www.out-there.com. This year he and wife Lynda Holland paddled a smaller route that crossed the upper Dubawnt then heading south down the wild Porcupine River to Black Lake and Stony Rapids. As always Bill intertwines a great deal of history in his adventures. This year's trip included way more white water than planned.

Stewart Coffin, Labrador legend of paddling, has not been north since a double knee replacement a few years ago. He wrote recently, while renewing his subscription, to tell us that he had found a publisher for his northern paddling memoirs titled *The Black Spruce Journals*.

Natural History Press, who recently brought out Max Finkelstein's *Crossing a Continent*, will publish Coffin's book next spring.



Susan Barnes and Daniel Pauzé pickup their HACC Tripper in Toronto. — Michael Peake

Stewart described it as almost an "annotated photo album, for it contains almost 60 of my best black and white photos." That good news because Stew, son of a photographer, is a great shooter in his own right and *Che-Mun* has published a couple of those great images over the years including shots of the George and Romaine rivers in Quebec.

It was distressing to hear from Stew that he had lost all of his negatives in a move five years ago. Yikes! That's a big blow to a photog. But he had good quality prints of most of his shots and has scanned these into a digital format. Stewart has also promised *Che-Mun* a look at some more photos and you can bet we will keep you up to date on everything regarding this upcoming volume.

The book will feature chapters on a number of remote and rugged rivers including the Ugjoktok, Magpie, Ashuanipi, Ste. Marguerite, Romaine, Naskaupi. Incidentally, the ascent of Naskaupi was recently by a young English woman and lone Innu guide following in Mina Hubbard's tracks. Coffin's party, which included the ubiquitous Dick Irwin, and four others did a circuitous route which included a stop at Churchill (Grand) Falls and a tough grind over to Lake Michikaumau and then down the Naskaupi - a very tough trip - and were perhaps the last group to go down this river.

I am fortunate to have a copy of the film of the trip made by Dick Irwin and transferred to video. They were also among the last to view the full glory of Churchill Falls and Dick has an awesome panning shot from the brink of the falls. The movie also shows what a tough and rugged river the Naskaupi is with sharp thunderous drops and uneven terrain.

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The horizontal sliver of ice on Carey Lake is a huge pan of ice on this Dubawnt River lake expansion. Sean Peake is seen heading back to our camp just before we began our portage toward the Thelon River in July 1985. We have already portaged across a peninsula in Carey to avoid the ice.

- Michael Peake

A North Pole Web cam started up in April 2002 - and it's online again. The North Pole Web Cam project is part of the North Pole Environmental Observatory, a joint effort sponsored by the National Science Foundation that involves an international team of researchers. The images from the cameras track the North Pole snow cover and weather conditions. The North Pole web cameras are at: <http://www.arctic.noaa.gov> .

Canoesworthy

Igloolik and Hall Beach residents see new hope in a group of companies hunting diamonds within a huge area of the Melville Peninsula. Representatives of the group of companies, who call themselves the "Aviat Joint Venture Project," held public meetings in Igloolik and Hall Beach in June to explain themselves to Amittuq residents.

For many Inuit in the two communities, it was a long overdue consultation. People in the community were beginning to wonder after seeing a helicopter coming in and out wondering, who the people onboard were. But now that they have more information, Igloolik residents generally support the work of the exploration companies.

Almost overnight, the Aviat project has become one of Canada's largest diamond exploration projects. In 2003, the partners will spend between \$4.5 million and \$5 million on exploration activities near Igloolik and Hall Beach.

They'll employ 16 people, eight from each village.

Meanwhile, the upstart coalition of junior mining firms that beat out mining giant BHP in a claim-staking battle over diamond exploration rights in the Melville Peninsula is now joining forces with its former rival.

BHP, the mining multinational that developed Ekati, Canada's first diamond mine, is paying \$7.1 million to buy a 20 per cent interest in the Aviat Project, which takes in 2.8 million hectares of land adjacent to Igloolik and Hall Beach.

The Aviat project was born after prospectors from the Hunter group conducted a fruitless search across the Melville Peninsula in 2001, looking for signs of nickel, copper and gold, but finding nothing.

Using the last of their limited budget, they tested some till samples - or piles of dirt and rock - at a laboratory. The lab told them their samples contained large amounts of what are called "kimberlitic indicator minerals" -

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From the Editor

Well, another summer for your intrepid editor without a northern trip. At least it is not a searingly hot one here in southern Ontario.

My only northern paddling will occur on the suitably rocky shores of Georgian Bay. Where, by the time you are reading this, my wife Margaret along with our seven-year-old son Tom, will be frolicking on a rocky island next to a suitably large body of water. (Okay, they'll be frolicking, I'll be lying down somewhere.)

We are taking up one of my Old Town Trippers, perhaps the 20-footer so we can do some

family paddling into the granite nooks and crannies all along that incredibly beautiful shoreline. The cottage has no hydro and we're relying on solar power, so in many ways it will be like our recent online canoe trips. Only I'll have a softer bed - and a (slightly) better stocked bar.

It will also be a chance for Tom and I to check out Camp Hurontario, a small boys-only summer camp also on an island in the Bay just a few miles south. With my summer camp (Temagami) long gone, I am thinking of Hurontario for my son in a year or two. Many of my friends went there and there seems a strong bond among the campers even after all these years.

Of course, like everywhere, Georgian Bay is a much busier place than in the 1960s. A lot of the favourite camping spots have cottages on them

and the boat traffic is greatly increased. One spectacular rocky island, the last one before "The Open" as they call the vast expanse of the Bay, was a well-loved camper's haunt back then. Now, one of those lucky campers owns the island, and luckily he's a friend so I get to visit occasionally.

Another buddy lives nearby and has also had us up for visits. For someone cut off from his beloved Hide-Away Island five years ago and without a big northern trip to clear the mind and slim the waistline - it's a vital respite.

And for the first time in a while, I have stacked up a pile of books I intend to read purely for pleasure. Not a rushed read for a review.

Wherever you are finding pleasure this summer, please do it safely and we'll all be back to the grind come September.

Michael Peake

Rupert R.I.P?



OATMEAL FEAST -- Oatmeal Falls marks the start of the very steep final 60-mile section of the Rupert. This view from the LG-2 road shows the breadth of the drop. Another falls (below) in the central section of the river just below the only other bridge across the river.

Quebec's mighty Rupert River has lived with a big target on its back for more than three decades.

Originally the first river to be dammed by the massive and ongoing James Bay Project in 1971, the mighty stream was able to avoid attack until recently.

The plan to divert 90 per cent of its flow northward into the already dry Eastmain River and then the La Grande system is proceeding this summer. Unlike 30 years ago, the Crees of northern Quebec are in support of damming the river— their life's blood for millennia.

There is a movement afoot to oppose the new dams but without official native support there seems little chance of success. Of course, not all the Crees of northern Quebec are in favour of the plan - but a majority is.

Rupert Reverence, a Quebec-based group trying to save the river are running a special trip down the

river this summer from July 27 - August 18 with Crees and other volunteers for a run to the Bay and village of Waskaganish from the highway that cross-



es at Oatmeal Falls. Since that distance is only about 70 miles, it's a slow pace and a lot of portaging as

most of the river's big drops occur after Oatmeal. Those would almost completely dry up as the diversion of the Rupert would occur upstream near the village of Nemaska.

The Eastmain-1-A project includes: the Rupert diversion, which redirects most of the water (up to 800 m³/s) from the Rupert River watershed into the Eastmain watershed; the construction of Eastmain-1-A powerhouse on Eastmain-1 reservoir; and the construction of new structures at the outlet of Opinaca reservoir. The project calls for the construction of four dams, 51 dykes, and two diversion bays flooding an area of 395 sq. km, 12 000 metres of diversion canals or tunnels, and two permanent access roads. The cost of this project has been estimated at two billion dollars.

For more info see www.endangeredrivers.net/EndangeredRivers.asp and the Rupert Reverence site: www.infose.com/rupert/STRAng.html.

Mackenzie Valley: Opponents to proponents

They're still arguing, a quarter of a century later, about the Mackenzie Valley pipeline deal. Only this time, it's just about who gets a share of what in a deal that's going full speed ahead and the \$5 billion, 1200 mile pipeline project seems certain to happen.

Back in the 70's, the controversial megaproject required a judicial inquiry and produced the famed Berger Report recommending against the massive pipeline to bring natural gas from the Beaufort Sea south along the banks of the mighty Mackenzie River to southern Canada.

Mr. Justice Thomas Berger travelled to numerous remote native communities to hear their objections. Now, like their Cree cousins in James Bay, the Dene, Metis, Gwich'in, Inuit and others are largely in favour of the project and see it as a key part of their economic future. Indeed, many former opponents are now proponents.

This time, however, natives are a part of the deal with the Aboriginal Pipeline Group clearing the final hurdle for the deal in June. The lengthy regulatory process will now begin.

In May, 1977, Berger's report *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland* recommended that any pipeline development along the Mackenzie River Valley be delayed 10 years, and that no pipeline ever be built across the northern Yukon.

"We are now at our last frontier," the report began. "It is a frontier that all of us have read about, but few of us have seen. Profound issues, touching our deepest concerns as a nation, await us there.

"I discovered that people in the North have strong feelings about the pipeline and large-scale frontier development. I listened to a brief by northern businessmen in Yellowknife who favour a pipeline through the North. Later, in a native village far away, I heard virtually the whole community express vehement opposition to such a pipeline. Both were talking about the same pipeline; both were talking about the same region – but for one group it is a frontier, for the other a homeland."

In the end, it seems the two words were interchangeable.

Boreal Confluencers



— Canadian Press

Members of the Boreal Confluence Expedition stand in front of their birch bark canoe along the shores of the North Saskatchewan River Tuesday, July 8, 2003. From left to right; Vincent Athias, Sylvain Cordeau, Franck Blanchi, Gilles La Niece, Samuel Duc and Sebastien Pandolfi. The group has been making steady progress and there are occasional updates on their Web site at http://perso.club-internet.fr/vincent.athias/boreal_confluence.html

Their route is following in the steps of David Douglas a Scottish botanist who crossed Canada in 1827 and set up one of the first complete herbariums in Canada. Along the way they have been met with the great hospitality of many Americans.

Their quest to take care of their fragile 24-foot birchbark canoe has been a difficult one. The team was delayed for two days in Jasper National Park after the canoe crashed into a bridge on the Athabasca River. The group used hockey sticks to repair the canoe, and the experience gave them insight into the difficulties explorers faced, said member Vincent Athias. And also as this entry from their log indicates along the heavily dammed Columbia River, there's always the unexpected:

"Yesterday, early afternoon, we arrived at the dam of Rocky Island. The navigation was nice, along the Waterfalls Chain that marks the end of the arid plateau of the Columbia. We admired the basalt columns and the frothy flow by the natural little springs.

"We were peacefully having lunch on the bank. The canoe was floating on the water just behind us. A 'Crack' startled us. We knew where it came from, but none of us could have thought it would happen...

"Between the dam we are crossing at present, the level of water can vary ten centimeters in a few minutes. Right at that moment, a drop in the level of water let the loaded canoe lie on the rock. And the bark cracked, widthwise, at the back of the dinghy. It cracked there, whilst at a stop, under a wonderful sun, with no wind, with no waves, with no current. A stupid accident that will cost us many days of repairing."

Their plan is to finish at York Factory on the shores of Hudson Bay in early September.

In the Garden of Alex



— Michael Peake

*Che-Mun is proud to present an excerpt from **Discovering Eden** by Alex Hall, veteran NWT canoe guide. The book will be published in September and will be reviewed in our next issue. It is published by KeyPorter Books of Toronto*

By ALEX HALL

A Close Call

I've spent three or four months a year for thirty years canoeing the river systems of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, mostly in the Barren Lands. In all those years, I've personally never had a scare or a close call on the water. I've only dumped or swamped a canoe once. That was back in 1976 and I don't plan on ever doing it again.

In all my years in business as a professional canoeing guide, I'm proud to say that none of my clients has ever had a serious accident or injury, on land or water. Over the course of a summer, we often run hundreds of rapids, but on average, my clients have upset less than one canoe per year. There are probably a number of reasons for our enviable safety record. The ones I would identify as being crucial would be my experience in assessing my clients' capabilities and my commitment to communicate clearly with them on how to avoid the potentially dangerous situations we encounter en route. Perhaps most important, I take charge

DISCOVERING EDEN -- This remote and rarely travelled area, well north of the Hanbury River, is part of Alex Hall's Eden. And in keeping with his philosophy of secret places we won't say exactly where this is. HACC paddlers Sean and Geoffrey Peake are shown during the 1995 Arctic Land Expedition

of my clients and I never take chances.

Only once have I ever feared for the safety of my clients on the water. It was many years ago, late May or early June, on a river about a hundred miles south of the treeline. The river was in flood. I had gathered my clients together to warn them that just around the next bend in the river was a major rapid that we'd have to line or portage. I told them to keep their canoes in single file and follow me, staying close to shore on the inside turn of the river. After we rounded the bend, we would come ashore using an eddy turn, then tie up to scout the rapid below.

All went according to plan until the last canoe. By then, the rest of us were safe on shore. When the last canoe came around the bend it was way out in the middle of the river. I shouted at the two men in the canoe to paddle like hell and get over to our side of the river. But the current was strong, and they didn't have the paddling skills required to make it to shore.

Just above the maw of the rapid was a small island, now submerged in the high water. All that remained of the island was a clump of white birch trees with the river racing through them. As the men in the last canoe were swept past us, I yelled to them to paddle into the flooded birch trees and hang on. This they man-

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aged to do. They were marooned about one hundred feet from us, but we strung some lining ropes together, threw one end out to them and hauled them ashore.

It was a very close call. They were very lucky that island was there. With the river in flood, the rapid below was a raging torrent. If those two men had been sucked into that rapid they could easily have been killed.

Lost

I've never been lost, but over the years at least four or five of my clients have been sufficiently confused that we had to go find them. In every case, this occurred south of treeline.

Once, when we were portaging along a raging cataract that could be heard for miles, one of my clients, who had been bringing up the rear, went missing. It turned out he'd wandered away from this thundering torrent at right angles. We finally found him some distance away. How anyone could get lost under these circumstances still mystifies me.

On another occasion, we were eating breakfast when I thought I heard someone calling faintly in the distance. I quickly did a head count and determined Mark was missing. When I asked Mark's wife where her husband was, she replied he'd gone off behind their tent to do his business before coming down to breakfast. However, Mark had apparently walked off in the wrong direction when he tried to return to his tent.

I found Mark almost a mile behind our camp. We were close to treeline and the trees were widely scattered. I spotted Mark several hundred yards ahead of me, dashing around aimlessly and yelling his lungs out. When I called back to him he evidently didn't hear me, but he failed to respond again when I was close to him. I finally walked up and put my hand on Mark's shoulder and called his name. His back was to me, and when I placed my hand on his shoulder he spun around. I'll never forget the panicky look in his eyes. He was completely out of control.

As a boy, I'd often heard stories about men getting lost in the bush and working themselves into such a frenzied state that they crossed roads without realizing it. When I saw the wild look in Mark's eyes, I realized those stories were true.

Bushed

Even men who are not lost can go crazy after spending too much time isolated in the bush. I never witnessed this "bushed" condition first hand until 1985, on a nineteen-day canoe trip on the Thelon River. The trip was scheduled during

blackfly season, and it was clear from the outset that Jerry, an American from North Carolina, couldn't handle the bugs.

I provide headnets for my clients, and I make sure they all have the openings on their shirts closed off with Velcro. On this particular trip, the participants brought along their own bug jackets, as well. However, Jerry didn't have one and if ever anyone needed one, Jerry did. I never wear a bug jacket, but my wife sometimes did, so on the second day of the trip she gave hers to Jerry. Unfortunately, he lost it the very next day.

With each passing day, Jerry retreated steadily from social contact. His excuse was the bugs. After several days, Jerry was spending all of his time in camp inside his tent. He only came out to paddle in the bow of my canoe after we

broke camp each morning. The only meal of the day he ate was lunch. By the end of the first week of the trip, it should have been clear that Jerry was headed for big trouble.

On the fourth-last day of the trip, Jerry burst into temper tantrums and became completely irrational. He acted like a three-year-old and we had to deal with him on that level. By then, he hadn't shaved or bathed in two weeks. He looked like a wild man. I remember one lunch near the end of the trip when Jerry rushed in to attack the food, stuffing his mouth with both hands like some half-starved wild animal. The rest of us just backed off and stared in disbelief.

On the third-last day of the trip Jerry refused to paddle. After much coaxing and threatening we managed to get him into the bow seat of my canoe where he sat in silence for hours with his arms crossed. Fortunately, I'm a strong paddler and we didn't have any big head winds.

When the float planes showed up on the last day of the trip, Jerry went berserk! As the first plane circled our campsite, he burst out of his tent-running, waving, jumping and shouting: "The plane, the plane, we're saved, we're saved!"

I've never seen anything like it, before or since.

A Dangerous Swim

It was a hot afternoon in August, and we were camped where a barrenland river funnelled down through a chute in a small canyon that we planned to portage the next morning. The river was squeezed to half its normal width by the canyon's sheer rock walls. The water was fast and full of standing waves, boils and whirlpools. So when Cam asked me if it was all right if he swam through this chute in the canyon, I replied with a firm no. It was a dangerous idea: there was a good chance he'd hit his head on a rock and drown.



Alex and Lia Hall in Fort Smith, NWT.

-Discovering Eden

Discovering Eden



– Michael Peake

A caribou along a river ridge keeps paddlers company north of the Hanbury River.

I don't remember my precise words to Cam, but I know what was going through my mind. Safety is the first priority of every trip leader. Not only that, but if Cam died in that chute, we'd have to lug his body five miles up the river through several rapids and portages to a lake where a float plane could reach us, and once there we could sit for days trying to get a message out to our air charter company on my HF radio. At the same time, we'd have to deal with Cam's grieving wife. The trip would be over-for all of us. An accidental death would be tragic. It would also be bad for business.

I told Cam to stay out of the chute. I thought I had made myself very clear, but I had underestimated his thick-headedness. A few minutes later I heard him shout "Yahoo!" as he leaped off the canyon wall into the river. Several of our party were fishing in the pool below. They saw Cam come through and disappear underwater for what seemed to them as long as five minutes at the bottom of the chute. They didn't think he was going to resurface. It was probably less than minute, but in situations like that time seems to slow down. Cam finally came to the surface, uninjured. He was lucky to be alive.

I was steaming mad. If there had been satellite telephones in those days I would have expelled Cam from the trip as soon as I could get a plane there to pick him up. I doubt that Cam has ever realized how close he came to death that day. He has probably forgotten all about the incident. However, I've never forgotten it and I never will.

The Storm

Summers may be short in the Barren Lands, but they become longer, warmer and drier as you move inland away from the coasts. To someone like me, who grew up in the rather damp climate of eastern Canada, those dry, sunny summers are very appealing. With a climate as dry as Arizona's, the Barren Lands receive just four inches of rain per summer, yet few places on earth have as much water. This apparent paradox is a result of the brief arctic summer, which limits evaporation, as well as permafrost and the Canadian Shield, which greatly inhibit drainage.

Although big rainstorms can come along any time in the summer, they are more frequent in August, when summer changes to fall. Storms that appear quickly can be violent, but they never last long. Conversely, storms that move in slowly on big winds usually last much longer. In the Barren Lands, big rainstorms never end until the wind rotates counter-clockwise into the north and the temperature drops substantially.

Over the years, I've become more skilled at predicting when storms are imminent by observing cloud patterns as well as wind directions and velocities. Blackflies and loons also become much more active before a storm. The best indicator of all, however, is a barometer. I'm indebted to my good friend Kevin Antoniak, who made me a gift of one almost twenty years ago. Now, this little piece of technology is as important to me as my tent or sleeping bag. I wouldn't be caught without it.

When a storm is brewing, the important thing is to avoid getting pinned down in an exposed location. I always take my group to cover in a clump of trees or, if none are present, behind a hill or an esker. In August, when the insects are gone, I make a habit of camping every night in a location where we will be protected from the north and the east.

As in all other aspects of conducting my canoe trips, I live by my three cardinal rules in anticipation of bad weather: (1) be prepared; (2) never take chances; and (3) remember that Mother Nature is always in charge, and her power on the wide open tundra can be an awesome thing. You have to learn to bend like the willow before the wind. You have to know when to hide.

The big storm that roared in over much of western and northern Canada in late June of 1999 caught meteorologists by surprise, I'm told. I don't know why that would be so, because I was pretty sure something big and bad was coming days beforehand. My clients and I were canoeing in the southern Barrens. Five days before the storm struck, the weather became hot, muggy and dead calm. The barometric pressure fell into the basement and stayed there. With calm, clear weather and temperatures in the 80s and 90s Fahrenheit, I couldn't hole up, even though I was certain a storm was on its way. I had no other option but to keep travelling, keep an eye on the sky and try to camp in a protected place each night. On the second-last night of our canoe trip I wrote in my diary that I hoped we'd get out of there before the hammer fell. We didn't. The hammer fell the next morning.

The mood of the Barren Lands is like that of the little girl "with the curl in the middle of her forehead." When she's good she's very good, but when she's bad she's horrid. We were about to find out how horrid she could get. By noon the next day we were experiencing heavy rain and gale-force winds. Although the land around us was flat, open tundra with little to break the wind, our tents were pitched adjacent to a small clump of black spruce growing eight or ten feet in height. This little spruce grove provided a welcome place to get out of the storm. I cooked our meals in there with a canoe braced up on its side as an added wind-

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break for our stove. All was well when we crawled into our sleeping bags that night.

All night long the wind and heavy rain pounded our tents. By the time I arose the next morning some of the things inside my tent were starting to get wet. When I peeked out of the door I was shocked to see two of our six tents flat on the ground. My own tent was secure, but I had reset the pegs before I had gone to bed. I made my way over to one of the flattened tents, which was squarely in the middle of a big puddle of water. Much to my surprise, Tom and Barb were still inside and apparently all right.

While Tom and Barb got dressed, I returned to my tent to call the air charter company in Fort Smith. The planes were supposed to arrive by ten that morning, but visibility was down to less than half a mile. There was no way an airplane could fly in this stuff. I got on my satellite telephone, gave our pilots the news and told them I'd keep them posted. The weather wasn't much better in Fort Smith.

The next order of the day was to re-erect the two flattened tents. Our tents were four-season geodesic domes with vestibules, only four feet high and anchored down with twenty-seven pegs apiece. They could stand up to one hell of a wind. I'd been using this model of nylon tent for quite a few years, and I'd never seen one flattened before.

Our location on the lee shore of a small lake was the best campsite around for miles. Although the topography was gently rolling with little shelter, we were on a well-drained bench of sand nicely covered with tundra vegetation. Normally, such tent sites would see us through the worst of times, but this was shaping up to be something a little beyond that.

The real problem was the continuing, heavy rain. The ground was completely saturated, and that, combined with the high winds, meant the pegs could no longer hold on to the tents very effectively. Once the pegs on the windward guy lines gave way, the tents could be blown flat on the ground. If we could have replaced those pegs with rocks, the problem would have been solved. However, we were camped in one of those unusual places where no rocks were handy.

Tom and Barb's tent, though undamaged, was so wet that we just stuffed it into a pack and moved them into two other tents. Most of the tents held two occupants, but could sleep four in a pinch, so there was easily enough room to add another person to each. The spare tent I always carry was no help because the wind and rain were driving so hard that there wasn't any chance of getting it up successfully.

So much rain had fallen by the second morning of the storm that the tundra was turning into a giant swamp. Caribou trails had become creeks. There were streams capable of floating loaded canoes where only dry ground had been before. Pools of water lay everywhere. In fact, a lot of those pools were ponds. Our protective grove of spruce was now flooded out, part of a newborn stream that roared across the beach and into the lake we were camped on. The lake itself was rising steadily.

I was able to cook breakfast that morning, thanks to the thicket of black spruce that still sheltered what was left of a strand of sand beach along the lake. However, the beach was disappearing rapidly. Our tents were getting wet from underneath, so we dug trenches around each one to carry the water away. This was the first time in my life I had ever trenched a tent.

That afternoon, the wind shifted into the north and the rain changed to snow. The wind continued at gale-force velocities and the snow began to accumulate. Late that afternoon, I cleared over a foot of snow off the windward sides of the tents. Somehow, I managed to cook supper again that night. I always carry three extra days of food, so there was plenty to eat. Although no one was very dry or comfortable, we all got through the night reasonably well and without any complaints.

Everyone's travel schedule was now in jeopardy. Our chartered aircraft couldn't even leave Fort Smith that day, let alone reach us in the Barrens. This was the first time in my guiding career that we had failed to return to Fort Smith on our predesignated date. But then, this storm was producing a lot of firsts. All of my clients were ticketed to fly out of Fort Smith to Edmonton at one o'clock the next afternoon, but it was pretty clear now that they would miss their flight. On my satellite telephone that night I learned the weather was improving in Fort Smith, and I was reasonably confident the weather would get better where we were the next day as well.

By seven the next morning, the storm had eased considerably. The wind was down and the snow had changed back to rain. When I telephoned our air charter company, Doug Williamson told me he thought he could reach us later that morning. At noon, just as the last of the rain fell, the float planes swooped in from Fort Smith. We sure were glad to see them. In the previous forty-eight hours somewhere between three and six inches of rain and snow had fallen. Water lay everywhere. Our lake had risen four feet and was still rising. In my thirty summers in the Barren Lands I've seen some bad storms, and certainly some that have lasted much longer, but this was the worst of them all.



Portaging north of the Hanbury heading into Alexville.

– Michael Peake

Updates

CANOESWORTHY cont'd from Page 3

the kinds of rocks that occur where diamonds are usually found.

Air Labrador is fueling up for a second weekly flight between Iqaluit, Nunavut's capital city, and the airline's home base of Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

Recently, the city of Iqaluit voted unanimously to enter into an agreement to twin with the community of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, adding political strength to a blossoming entrepreneurial relationship.

The addition of a weekly flight is only the beginning, come September, the airline plans to add a second aircraft.

The plane currently serving Iqaluit is a 19-seater Beech 1900D, the second aircraft will be the 37-seater Dash 8. The company also plans to replace the existing Beech 1900D with a second Dash 8, bringing the total number of available seats from its current 19 to 74.

Not only will seat capacity increase, but freight service will as well.

This summer, Makivik, Nunavik's Inuit birthright organization, began a search for an Inuit beneficiary to join a University of Ottawa research team and make a historic trek to Mt. Everest's base camp in 2005.

If the participant successfully climbs to the mountain's base camp, he or she will then have a chance to return to the Himalayas and try for the summit. The feat would make the person the first Inuk to do so.

Sammy Kudluk, the associate editor of Makivik Magazine who is publicizing the challenge, said Makivik's involvement is an opportunity to inspire Nunavimmiut.

"Anything to do with Mount Everest is always interesting. It will be a challenge for an Inuk to do that. Also, it's a role model for young people and Inuit. It would be something for Inuit to gain recognition to say they've gone there. It does motivate people even if they themselves are not going to go there," he said.

So far, they have received applications from 18 interested participants across Canada. Makivik is the only Inuit group to agree to pay the participant's \$10,000 fee. But though Makivik may give the participant a free ride, it's not going to be an easy one.

Everest is 8,850 metres high. By comparison, the highest mountain in Quebec, Mount D'Iberville in the Torngat Mountain range, is only 1,646 metres high.

Norway rats have invaded a huge seabird colony on an Aleutian island, consuming countless auklets that nest at the base of a volcano on Kiska Island, the Anchorage Daily News reports.

The rats will just go from one nest to the next - thousands and thousands and thousands of adults and chicks getting their brains and eyeballs eaten from their heads. Since the rats could cause ecological damage on the scale of a major oil spill, biologists are now trying to figure out whether the rats can be eliminated with poison.

Auklets spend most of their lives on the ocean, subsisting on tiny crustaceans called copepods. They only come ashore to nest, seeking protection from predators during the four weeks before hatchlings can fly.

Carried on ships and aircraft, dumped by cargo and shipwrecks, rats have reached more than 80 per cent of the world's islands and driven hundreds of

SPRING PACKET cont'd from Page 2

This is from Becky Mason and Reid McLachlan and while this is too late for letters, we thought you would like info on it for future action.

"Currently because of a legal quirk the CanTung Mine (upstream of Nahanni National Park) may be able to wiggle out of paying their clean up costs when the mine closes in two years. The hearing to rule on this matter is taking place on the July 29th and I'm told letters need to be received from the Canadian public to sway the decision so the mine has to pay for the future clean up costs."

Synopsis

Your letters are needed by July 28th to ensure the clean up costs of the CanTung Mine, upstream from Nahanni National Park Reserve, are fully paid by the North American Tungsten mining company. The mine is only expected to remain open for 2 more years and the company has a current security deposit of less than \$1 million. The Federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND) has identified the liability from the mine at \$35 million and independent assessments put the clean up cost between \$9.4 and \$49.3 million. Without an adequate security deposit, the cost of clean-up will likely be footed by Canadian taxpayers.

Background

The CanTung mine operates on the Flat River, upstream from Nahanni National Park Reserve and World Heritage Site. The surrounding area is important to wildlife, particularly woodland caribou. In January 2002, the mine was re-opened after a 15 year closure. Within weeks of opening, there was a fuel spill of over 23,000 litres at the site. The mine has never undergone an environmental assessment and consultant reports have documented seepage from the tailings ponds. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is concerned about potential water contamination from the mine.

Take Action

Please write to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board and Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Robert Nault telling them:

- That mine clean up is part of the cost of mining, and must be paid for by the mining company. DIAND's own policy requires mining companies to post security deposits to cover the full cost of reclaiming mine sites. In this case, DIAND is ignoring its own policy.
- To require North American Tungsten to post an adequate security deposit to cover abandonment and restoration of the mine, returning the CanTung site to its previous ecological diversity and productivity.
- That an adequate security deposit be a condition of the company's new water license. (Public hearing was on July 29th!)
- You want to see minimal risk to taxpayers and the environment, and want to ensure the wilderness values of Nahanni National Park Reserve and World Heritage Site downstream are maintained now and for future generations.

Write to:

Ms. Melody McLeod

Chair, Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board

Box 2130, 7th Floor - 4910 50th Avenue

Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P6

Fax: (867) 873-6610

Email: melody@mvlwb.com

For more information on protecting the Nahanni wilderness visit

www.cpaws.org/nahanni

Jewel of Ontario The Petawawa

A film by George Drought, 2003
Wilderness Bound Productions
To order VHS: wildernessbound.com

George Drought's development as a filmmaker has continued and he has produced a charming look at the lovely Petawawa River in Ontario's Algonquin Park.

While I was expecting something more straightforward, Drought has reached into the cinematic bag of tricks and rewarded us with an interesting film about paddling the river and those who have paddled it before.

There are some lovely nature and rapids shot and



while the quality still varies widely, it is pleasing. The only time it looks poor are in some of the interviews where the light is bad. The investment in wireless microphones paid off, as people can talk a distance from the camera while paddling the rapids or trudging the portages.

This film starts off with a bang, especially for those of us who have done the river and always wondered what lay beyond the Do Not Enter signs at the takeout. That's where the Army base begins, or more importantly, the firing range where they test shells and ammo! George and friends were allowed into the base to run some of the rapids.

Then the story moves back into the river's headwaters. Petawawa means, 'the noise from far away' and it rises in the eastern half of Algonquin. There are stories of the early logging and a great section on the Stacks Rapids which empty into Cedar Lake where most people think of the river as starting. The classic ancient store in Brent offers a good interview with a man who has lived in the Park all his life, as have many of his forebears.

This theme continues down the river with interviews and rapids and good fun. Drought won a Wa-

terwalker Film Award for this piece and perhaps we'll see it on a specialty TV channel before long.

One minor gripe. The cover of the video box is a very poor quality photo and it's hard to figure why they would slip up there with a wealth of good photos surely available. But it's what's inside that really counts – though you have to make the people want to buy.

**Northern Saskatchewan
Canoe Trips
A Guide to 15 Wilderness Rivers
By Laurel Archer
Boston Mills Press, Toronto
240pp. \$19.95
ISBN: 1-55046-369-1**

The province of Saskatchewan has, in the past year, become one of the best covered areas for wilderness paddling. Last year's great Canoeing the Churchill filled a big void on the great river and now some Laurel Archer's *Northern Saskatchewan Canoe Trips* to add a bunch more.



This Boston Mills effort follows the format and produces a clean, well-written and well-illustrated river guide on 15 rivers. There's a lot of great canoeing in northern Sask. And it may be an area many people overlook when they set their sights north. The Churchill is well-known but many other treasures await like the Fond-du-lac, Clearwater, MacFarlane and Geikie rivers. And there's no shortage of history either. Both the voyageurs fur-trade routes and the later northern explorers up the WWI all used Saskatchewan as the means to get to the NWT. The Clearwater River, carried both generations of northern travelers. It was the terminus of the famed Methye Portage, the vital link from the Churchill to the Athabasca country. It was also the site of the town of Waterways which was

linked by rail and stage to Edmonton. The river cross the border a few miles past the Methye into Alberta. Waterways is gone but nearby Fort McMurray is prospering.

Laurel Archer is a very accomplished paddler who has been many places in her 39 years and written for many leading outdoor mags. We look forward to another of her fine well-written and researched books.

Stranded

A film by Les Stroud
Wilderness Spirit Productions
VHS 39 minutes. \$29.95 - 2003
to order:
canoe@surennet.net or call 705.387.4717

Reality TV being all the rage, it is nice to see the formula done in a very northern Canadian sort of way. No melodrama, no tribes.

Les Stroud, who helped George Drought with his Petawawa film including the lovely music, is the man behind this production and it looks first class all the way. Out of the burgeoning film centre of Burk's Falls, Ontario, Les is producing a steady stream (sic) of enjoyable outdoor videos.

Les has a very compelling TV appearance – *telegenic* is the phrase they use. In this 40 minute TV show made in conjunction with the Discovery Channel in Canada, Les is dropped into the northern bush with nothing but what he is wearing and carrying. Oh, yes, that plus 90 lbs. of television cameras.

It's important to note that there was no TV camera operator with him - he did it all. This is the real survivor and in this case Les is more. Oh, yes, and the moral of the story is ALWAYS carry a Swiss Army Knife!

For eight days we watch him sweat, shiver, itch and work his butt off filming this adventure in Wabikimi Provincial Park northwest of Thunder Bay. Les' winning personality shows though as he battled the bugs and heat and harsh realities of making a fire without a match (it took nine hours-plus!).

There's a cooking section too. Toasted leeches sure made my wife go Yum . . . or was it Yecchh.

It's great fun and very instructive - for Les too as it turns out. He's been teaching this for 18 years and there's still something for the ol' professor to learn.

From the Archives



George Douglas/National Archives of Canada/PA-145189

One of the many great intertwinings of George Douglas' 1911-12 trip *Lands Forlorn*, was the meeting of noted poet and writer Robert Service. He accompanied the Douglas party north out of Waterways, Alberta in the spring of 1911 and is pictured here in his birchbark canoe. The Bard of the Gold Rush was headed up the Rat River following the backdoor to Alaska taken by gold seekers in 1898. Service would not make the arduous trip alone and joined up with a character named Jake Skilley whom he later wrote about in his poem *The Salvation of Tobacco Bill*. The trip was featured in Service's biography *Ploughman of the Moon* written in 1945. More on Service, Douglas and a macabre, and eventually inspiring, event they both witnessed in 1911 which Douglas captured on film - in *Outfit 114*.

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