


CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE NEWSLETTER OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 53

CHE-MUN

SUMMER 1988



A member of the 1950 Royal Ontario Museum research team that officially recognized the Nouveau-Quebec (Chubb) Crater sits atop the rim of this massive meteor-made lake. This

issue of Che-Mun, on pages four and five, tells more about the crater and the two expeditions heading there this summer. (Note the price tag is still attached to the pants.)

Povungnituk 88

In the Footsteps of Flaherty

Page 4

Great Heart

The History of a
Labrador Adventure Page 6

Hydro-Quebec

Power People

Page 9

A Special Quebec & Labrador Issue of Che-Mun

Summer Packet



Bill Simpson is a member of the Minnesota Canoe Association. They produce a monthly newsletter called HUT which has noted canoe authority Cliff Jacobson writing for them on a regular basis.

Bill had some very complimentary things to say about Che-Mun in the latest issue and wrote to say so personally. Thanks, Bill.

He also added, "We are looking at a possible Far North Symposium, we would like to pattern it after George Luste's in Toronto (see Che 52-Ed. Note), and hold it sometime this fall in the St. Paul-Minneapolis area.

"If we get it put together it would be great to have some representation from Canada. Anyone interested in attending or presenting could contact me. I should have more specific details ironed out by July. Bill Simpson, Box 72, Marine on St Croix, Minnesota, U.S.A. 55047.

"P.S. Finally let me apologize for our President and his footdragging on acid rain. Believe me he doesn't represent most of us."

A long-time and valued Che-Mun correspondent Blair Richardson 14319-58 Ave, Edmonton, Alberta, sent an interesting packet of info.

It was a clipping from a Toronto newspaper that Che-Mun somehow missed. (*The Editor was on a canoe trip*-Ed. Note).

The article described a truly hair-raising trip last summer on the Isortuq River which drains the south central coast of Baffin Island. The canoe group was a well-travelled bunch of Canadian canoeists who have paddled together for years.

The Isortuq turned out to be virtually unrunnable and the weather, predictably, was miserable. A lining mishap cost two paddlers their canoe. It rolled over in the teaming waves and was never seen again. Fortunately the group's radio was not among the missing and they were rescued.

It was a sobering experience for all, especially the author who wrote, "When the annual planning and the tense expectations begin in future, I won't have to find excuses. It won't be necessary to admit that creeping age, my bad eyesight and my partner's bad hearing mean we are no longer the men we were.

"Not at all. We have simply lost our stuff, shot out of the saddle. Our annual canoe reunion will still be the boisterous highlight of my social season. Annual canoe

reunion, yes, annual canoe trip, no. I have had my last.

"I wish I could say, at least, that my Arctic canoe career died with its boots on. Unfortunately out two pairs went with the canoe."

Blair and friends however, are still canoeing. This year they are doing the beautiful Fond du Lac River in northern Saskatchewan. They're planning an 18-day trip starting September 2 or 3. One group member had to drop out suddenly and they are searching for a replacement. Serious candidates can call Blair in Montreal, where he is re-locating, at 514/499-8033.

Though it wasn't a letter, Che-Mun recently did talk with George Luste who just returned from a month-long-northern trip and will be leaving on another shortly. Prof. Luste, for those few who don't know, is the organizer of the ever-growing Canoeist's Slide Fest and Historical Symposium, both of which have been featured in Che-Mun.

The last one even got George a mention in Canoe Magazine. George recently returned from Ellsmere Island in Canada's far north where he spent most of April hauling a sled across its hard, snow-packed ground. George was accompanied by Jerry Kobalenko of Outdoor Canada Magazine. The twosome travelled around the area of Grise Fjord at Ellsmere's southern tip in the area of Hell's Gate. The terrain is mountainous and the area is a desert. The northern end of Ellsmere is now a newly designated National Park.

George says the whole island should be made a park. Soon after arriving back he began work on a canoe trip down the entire length of the Thelon with his wife Linda and two other couples; Bill and Joan King and Jan and Suus Tissot, all of Toronto.

George has done almost every major river except the Thelon in a northern canoeing career spanning 25 years. He keeps saying he's getting too old for such adventures. But he keeps going on them.

Incidentally, in our last issue George wrote a story about old books and collecting them. He protested that the headline 'Noted rare book authority George Luste . . .' was incorrect. "I'm no expert", he says.

Sure, George is just an average guy . . . with a P.H.D. in physics, a 3,000 volume canoeing library, whose done television shows and lectures on the history of the north. But not an expert. Heaven forbid! (He'll be mad at this too.)

Gary Dunford is a canoe nut and, of course, a Che-Mun subscriber. In fact he is one of the earliest subscribers under the new regime. Gary is also a most talented columnist with the Toronto Sun. His daily dose of wit and whimsy makes his column one of the most popular in Toronto.

A recent effort of his contained the following; "Is there anything nicer than a night in spring, the peepers singing a Bach suite from a distant ditch? You spread out your friendly green topographic maps of Ontario around you on the floor and sprawl out on your stomach. The nearest is Kawagama Lake.

Gee, you think - your finger tracing along the blue line marked Hoover River - we could go right along here in the canoe and portage over the hill to camp at Ragged Falls.

Maybe you go pour yourself a cup of coffee in a green-enamelled tin cup, imagining how cold that Ragged Falls spray will be in May.

You remember the time you got caught in the last snow of the year on May 8 and squished your way in running shoes across what seemed to be three or four mountains, dragging the canoe like a sled behind you.

Your spirit falters, faint-hearted weekend water rat.

It is then that you need Che-Mun.

Che-Mun the 'Newsletter of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing'.

Che-Mun, chock full of modern adventurers just like you, but they're filing their trip reports from 21 days on the Thelon River, testing themselves at Malley Rapids, bringing late-breaking water bulletins from the Barrens.

They're not counting the number of bugs on the screen door.

Celebrated Canadian canoe chief Nick Nickels founded Che-Mun - the Ojibway word for canoe - as an underground grapevine for wilderness enthusiasts. Under current publisher Mike Peake . . . it carries notes, photos, letters, gossip and canoe-conscious respect for the land that would warm any woodsman's heart.

After reading Che-Mun it's off to the nearest outdoor store, to stock up on more topo maps. I only pray you get there before the Yuppies, the ones who now clog canoe stores and co-ops, modeling down vests and colour-co-ordinating their 'canoe look' in mirrors.

They will never see Ragged Falls or Kawagama Lake.

What a pity.

CANOETOONS

PAUL MASON



Editor's Notebook

The Barrens beckon

As has become custom the summer Outfit of Che-Mun has rolled off the presses a little early. As we enter the main tripping season we want to make sure that the summer issue reaches trippers before they head north for a summer (for the lucky ones) of canoeing.

The Hide-Away Canoe Club will have a busy and exciting trip in northern Quebec as we have detailed on pages four and five. This trip combines most of our favourite elements of a wilderness trip; remote location, historically interesting, great natural features and fully sponsored.

My canoeing slate will be as full as a regular job will allow. Besides our Povungnituk 88 expedition, I will be accompanying Operation Raleigh for a week on the Kazan River in the Northwest Territories in early July. That should serve as a nice warm-up for Ungava.

You may have noticed that Che-Mun has taken a bit of an historical turn in recent issues with stories on Douglas, Hornby and the Hubbard-Wallace saga spelled out in this issue.

We just 'go with the flow' when it comes to editorial content. There is no set plan for Che-Mun stories. We hope to print what you find interesting and informative. We will not become a historical journal anymore than we will be a trip log sheet. Much of what is in Che-Mun depends on our readers.

Subscriber and author Jim Davidson (Complete Wilderness Paddler) was very generous to send us a story on how he and partner John Ruge came to write about the Hubbard/Wallace expeditions in their new book Great Heart. We are pleased and honoured to have contributions like that. If you have something that you think would be of interest to all Che readers please send it in.

While we speak for a small body of wilderness trippers we are also aware of what others write about the pursuit. The current Canoe Magazine carries a story (by a Che-Mun subscriber!) on 'Why a Shotgun is on my Expedition Checklist'

The title is unfortunate and misleading. The story says that they needed a gun while on the Seal River in western Hudson Bay - an area of very intense polar bear activity.

The fact is you MIGHT need a gun on a trip in an area like that. But the headline implies it is a good idea to take one on every northern trip. This is baloney. The fact is, a gun is usually only necessary when you have one.

Take some common sense and experience. They're far more important - though harder to come by.

Michael Peake

Canoe routes requested

Steven L. St. Amour wrote to Che-Mun a while back with an interesting request.

"I am pursuing a project to document and catalog a book on our favourite canoe routes. However I need the input of our canoeists across Canada. I am hoping you will assist me. Please place the attached ad in your next edition of Che-Mun - free of charge."

Steven then went on to ask us to do what we are doing now, that is promoting his research in our editorial section. His objective is to catalog as many canoe routes as possible and give everyone a chance to share their favourite route(s) with other canoeists. We wish Steven good luck in his endeavours but a couple of things come to mind. It would perhaps not be too surprising if a lot of Che readers don't respond - at least not with their favourite routes. After all, who really wants to attract a bookful of people to a treasured spot?

Che-Mun wrote to Steven asking for a bit more info - when was this book coming out - what kind of book is it. No reply. We leave it to the good judgement of all you Che readers out there. The following is his official request. "I am presently documenting canoe routes. I would appreciate if you could take the time to and me all the detailed information on you favourite canoe route(s) and why it is so special to you. Maps, pictures and drawings are welcome. Indicate your name and address to concur and verify information.

The address to write is 121 Rendona Dr., Coquitlam, B.C. V3E 1Z2

Back Pages

The following back issues of Che-Mun are available for \$3 each except where noted. Those with an asterisk are photocopied outfits.

- Outfit 38 - Fort William Rendezvous, Magpie R.
- Outfit 39 - Trans Canada Canoe Exped/D Pelly*
- Outfit 40 - Eric Morse Tribute/Les Voyageurs*
- Outfit 41 - Grand Canal Project/Thlewiazia R.
- Outfit 42 - Morse River Expedition Pt One (\$6)
- Outfit 43 - Morse River Expedition Pt Two (\$6)
- Outfit 44 - Bill Mason & Dog R/Athabasca letter
- Outfit 45 - Rivers Flows/Pipe R. by Eric Morse
- Outfit 46 - Hudson to Ungava/S. Coffin report
- Outfit 47 - Heritage Rivers/Trans Canada canoe
- Outfit 48 - Eric Morse memoirs/Slide fest
- Outfit 49 - Sea kayaking/Hudson Bay sell off
- Outfit 50 - Royals couple canoe the Thelon(\$5)
- Outfit 51 - Traditional canoeing in Quetico
- Outfit 52 - Lands Forlorn, Atomic Arctic

"We were not pioneers ourselves, but we journeyed over open trails that were new to us and with hearts open. Who shall distinguish?" J. M. Thorington

POV 88

In the Footsteps of Flaherty

The 1988 Hide-Away Canoe Club Ungava Expedition

*To the Crater and beyond:
An exploration of Ungava*



After a year away from expeditions the Hide-Away Canoe Club is springing back into action with a full fledged expedition to Quebec's Ungava Peninsula.

Povungnituk '88 - In the Footsteps of Flaherty is the full title of this summer's trek.

Four paddlers; Geoffrey and Michael Peake, Peter Scott and Peter Brewster will take part in the 28-day, 350 mile traverse of the Ungava Peninsula. The trip will begin at the headwaters of the Povungnituk River near the upper northeast corner of Ungava.

The canoeists will head down the Povungnituk a short way and then start heading south towards the meteorologic marvel of Quebec; the Nouveau Quebec Crater.

We plan to spend a few days at this awesome sight after hiking in the couple of miles over some of the five billion tons of jagged boulders thrown up a few thousand years ago by the cataclysmic blast. (See separate story).

Leaving the crater we start the most physically demanding part of the trip; heading south through small lakes, overland and down steep rivers towards Klotz Lake. Once we hit Klotz we turn west and follow a river that is not named. This river flows generally west through several large lakes where it dips down before heading north to join the Povungnituk River just before it enters Hudson Bay.

As usual the trip was dreamed up by HACC Chief Guide Geoffrey Peake, who has led several Quebec trips for our group including the George, Leaf and Rupert Rivers.

Povungnituk '88 is an interesting trip in many ways. For wilderness canoeists the challenge of paddling and portaging through seldom travelled ground is irresistible. This trip will do that.

Ungava, while not north of the Arctic Circle is often called Arctic Quebec. We will travel along the 60th parallel which in western Canada is the southern border of the Northwest Territories. But since the Ungava Peninsula is surrounded on three sides by cold Arctic water; Hudson Bay on the west, Ungava Bay on the east and Hudson Strait on the north it's weather is quite naturally not indicative of its latitude.

Indeed, the tree line on the peninsula is about 57 degrees north. Compare this to 62 degrees in the eastern Territories and 64 degrees in the west. These factors contribute heavily to Ungava's well deserved reputation of having some of the continent's worst weather.

The trip also has much to offer for history buffs. In 1925 Robert Flaherty wrote a book called My Eskimo Friends. Flaherty was the man who a short time earlier had directed the classic documentary Nanook of the North. The book told of his travels in northern Quebec and about the making of the film.

Further study of My Eskimo Friends and other Flaherty articles by brothers Sean and Geoffrey Peake forced this conclusion: Flaherty had not paddled the Povungnituk. He had written how he went up the Payne and down the Povungnituk. But in examining his rudimentary maps and reading his accounts of the journey Sean and Geoffrey concluded that he had descended this more southerly stream - which did end up in the village of Povungnituk.

Such historical discoveries are what wilderness trip planning is all about. We are following what we believe is the actual route taken by Flaherty. We had planned originally to canoe the Povungnituk River but were concerned by the size of the river and the area it drained. Neither was large.

We heard of a party who started down the Povungnituk in 1978 taking two weeks to get the 40 miles to the crater. We have planned on getting there in a few days. We tracked the man down. Andy Rudzitis lived in Montreal and told us of how they waited at the crater for six weeks before luckily getting picked up. There was virtually no water in the Povungnituk. Andy agreed that it was probably a more sensible route to head south and take the river from Klotz heading west.

We later obtained water flow data for northern Quebec which showed that 1978 was an extremely low year. It seemed that the water was down everywhere - up to 66%. Then we heard about a group from France that went UP the Povungnituk in 1985. They ascended 175 miles to the crater and went down the remaining few on the very steep Vachon River. The fact that a group went upstream in 30 days did not seem to indicate there was a great flow to this river. So we opted for the southern route which we believe has not been canoed since Flaherty's passage 76 years ago.

Such a trip is quite naturally expensive and the logistics are tricky. The trip will be in essentially Arctic conditions. We are 200 miles above the treeline. The weather is usually cold and wet. And there are no settlements anywhere along the route.

Even Hydro Quebec doesn't have measuring devices on these rivers. And in Quebec - that's remote.

Official Patrons of the Expedition

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Royal Canadian Geographical Society
Loblaws Foods
Canadian AirLines
Mountain Co-op
Woods Bag & Canvas
Old Town Canoe
Patagonia

A fact surprising to many is that Nanook was filmed in Quebec just north of the village of Povungnituk at the small community of Cape Dufferin. The book also told of his earlier travels. When I was thinking of purchasing this book which I had seen from the catalog was about northern Quebec, I asked the bookseller if there was anything about the rivers in Ungava. He replied that there was a map about Flaherty's trip down the Povungnituk. This was a stroke of luck for that was the river we were planning to do. It was expensive but I eagerly bought.

The Crater

A chunk of the universe falls on the earth. That would certainly make news today. In fact if it's a big enough chunk it will make news for a long time.

Such is the case with large meteorite craters. Until a glacier comes along to sand it down there's not a lot about to change it.

Arizona's Meteor Crater is justly famous. It is approximately 4,000 feet across and 600 feet deep. The Nouveau-Quebec or Chubb Crater is also famous (or was). It is 12,500 feet across and 1,300 feet deep. Interesting - but there's one more fact that makes it even more interesting.

The Arizona crater is impacted into sandstone. The Quebec crater is blasted out of solid granite. It would be difficult to imagine the blast that formed this remote and lonely hole in the northeast corner of the upper Ungava Peninsula some few thousand years ago.

There is sat largely unrecognized for eons. It first caught public attention when sighted by American pilots on coastal patrol in World War II. Later, Royal Canadian Air Force pilots would use its lake as a landing rendezvous. A 1946 aerial mapping party took photos while casually commenting on a "crater".

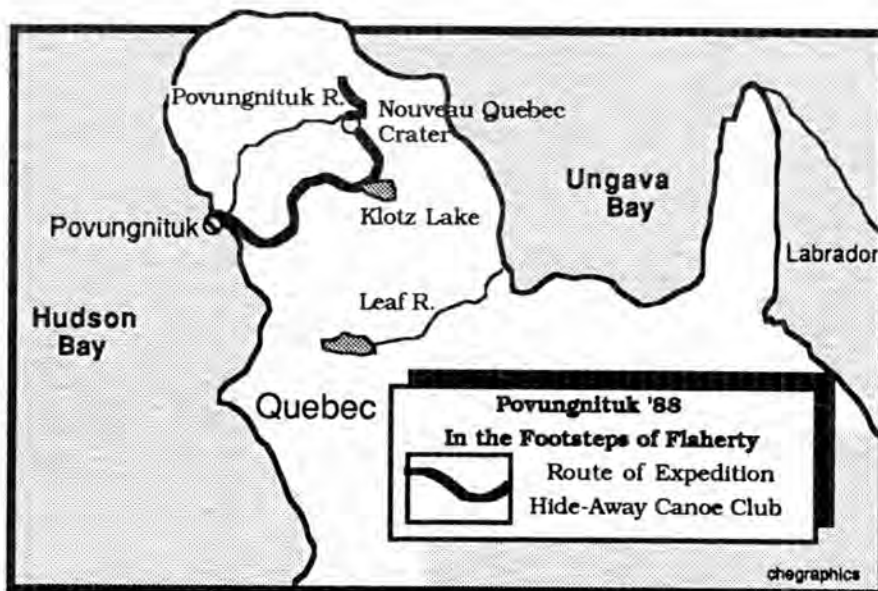
That photo caught the eye of prospector Fred Chubb who saw a potential mineral value. In 1950 a group from Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum flew to Ungava to investigate this phenomenon. The party, led by geologist Ben Meen, declared that this was indeed a meteorite crater. The story was trumpeted in worldwide headlines (World's 8th Wonder in Canada).

The following summer a team from the National Geographic Society investigated further. Their report was carried in the January 1952 issue of National Geographic. A 28 page article described Chubb Crater, as Meen called it, in detail; the lake was 825 feet deep, the crater rim 400 feet high, five billion tons of boulders littered the rippled earth around its approach.

Subsequent arguments abounded over the naming of the crater. Meen insisted on Chubb. The Canadian Geographic Names Board noted that it if was to be named after anyone it should be the U.S. airman who first saw it in 1942. They eventually settled on Quebec's suggestion of the Nouveau Quebec Crater though National Geographic's useage of Chubb in their subsequent world map lead to its general useage.

But for the past three decades no one has called it anything. It has been the forgotten eighth wonder. Meanwhile the Meteor Crater has enjoyed a movie career (Starman) and remains a popular tourist attraction. It pays to have a good location.

However, this summer Quebec's crater will bask in a veritable deluge of visitors. Besides the visit of the Hide-Away Canoe Club there will be a group of 20 from the University of Montreal complete with film crew to shoot a one hour television documentary (in English and French) on the story of the crater. We were relieved to learn that they would be there ten days after us.



And all that planning.

Logistics Every canoe trip group has got them. Which means every canoe trip has got to have a planner - a person in charge of logistics and preparation.

In the Hide-Away Canoe Club that person is me. And the Povungnituk '88 trip provided an ample challenge and ultimately a very rewarding experience.

A major problem for any trip is where to start. Not just in planning - but where to put the canoe into the water. A seemingly simple question but one that the wilderness canoeist must consider carefully.

Povungnituk '88 is basically crossing the Ungava Peninsula from east to west. We originally planned to start at the small town of Wakeham Bay and either paddle or take a ride up the coast to the area parallel to the headwaters of the Povungnituk. While that overland journey is only about 12 miles - it is a tough, steep one. Combined with the huge tides of Ungava Bay and the time it would take to make such a crossing we decided on a different route.

Our problem was how to get into the headwaters of the Povungnituk. Complicating matters is the fact that there are no Twin Otters on floats in northern Quebec and with our originally planned number of six that was the only plane to efficiently use.

A look at our topo maps showed two mines in the area, one right beside the Povungnituk on Raglan Lake. Further searching revealed that the dormant nickel mine possibly had a useable airstrip. We talked to the president of New Quebec Raglan Mines in Toronto and learned there was a good paved runway which he gave us permission to use. Permission that was backed up with a written letter that we sent to our charter company.

We could now charter a Twin Otter from Air Inuit located in Kuujuaq or Chimo about 300 miles away. That created another problem. The cost for such a charter flight? \$5000!

As a photographer for the Toronto Sun I knew that the story would be of interest to the media. The key feature for our group is that we have access to that guaranteed media exposure. Trip member Peter Brewster is the Managing Editor of the Sun. Together we can produce useable pictures and words. Armed with this I started working on corporate sponsors. We had done this same thing in 1985 when preparing the Morse River Expedition.

So I went back to many of the same sponsors who had helped us then. In the end we ended up getting support from Molson Breweries, Loblaw Foods, and Mountain Equipment Co-op. Canadian AirLines International also helped out as did the Toronto Sun (generously).

In 1985 we received a Research Grant from the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. We approached them again and were turned down. Their letter said the trip did "not contain a significant geographic element". I was shocked at this response. And then I realized I had perhaps not fully explained all the elements of the trip. I wrote them again with additional information asking for a review. It worked. They sent a healthy cheque along with their best wishes for the expedition.

Raising money for such a cause is like rolling a snowball down a mountain slope - eventually it gathers a momentum of its own. Other sponsors chipped in; including Woods Packs, Mustang PFD's, Hi-Tec Shoes.

In the end the trip ended up being completely funded. Our costs went from \$3500 person to nothing, barring personal items. I can hear the jealous screams out there already. The thing to remember when approaching sponsors is to tell them what you can do for them before you mention the opposite.

The only problem is what to do when the trip is over. Ah yes. Then the work for the next one starts. And if you're a good planner you will have already thought about that one. And I'm a good planner.

Great Adventure, Great Story . . . Great Heart

The legend of the Hubbard/Wallace expeditions lives on. This spring two books on the subject appeared. In addition to reviewing them Che-Mun presents a look at what interested two of the authors to write about the Hubbards, Wallace and especially George Elson.

By Jim Davidson and John Rugge

For many wilderness paddlers, the story of Leonidas Hubbard's expedition into Labrador in 1903 is a familiar one. Hubbard, an ambitious young reporter for *Outing* magazine eager to make his reputation, determined to cross Labrador by canoe in order to reach the Naskapi Indians. The Naskapi, he had heard, still hunted caribou along the headwaters of the George River with spears, and were one of the last isolated native peoples in one of the last wilderness regions of North America.

Hubbard recruited his friend Dillon Wallace, a New York attorney, to accompany him on his venture; and because he could hire no guides from the Labrador area, also secured the services of a half-Scottish, half-Cree woodsman from the Hudson Bay region named George Elson.

Embarking from the small fur-trading post of Northwest River on July 15, 1903, Hubbard encountered problems almost immediately. Labrador trappers had informed him that the river he wanted, the Naskapi, flowed into Grand Lake "at the far end" of its 30-mile expanse. From there, Hubbard hoped to ascend the Naskapi to Lake Michikamau, a broad body of water 40 to 60 miles long, north of which lay the George River and the Naskapi caribou grounds.

Hubbard proceeded to the end of Grand Lake and up the Naskapi - or so he thought. The friendly but taciturn trappers had not volunteered the fact that several other rivers flowed into Grand Lake in the same general vicinity - nor had Hubbard thought to ask. So he paddled up the "obvious" route, which proved to be a rock-strewn stream known to locals as Susan Brook.

Weeks of hard trekking, enduring clouds of flies, hellish portages and endless tramping through bogs and swamps brought Hubbard to the plateau country of central Labrador with his party's outfit increasingly ragged and threadbare. In September he was pinned down by storms of snow, hail and sleet, his grub nearly exhausted.

Dangerously weakened by starvation, the party turned back in a race against death, which Hubbard ultimately lost. Only Wallace and Elson made it out with their lives - and that just barely.

Wallace returned home to controversy over whether the expedition had been well prepared and in 1905 he published *The Lure*

of the Labrador Wild, his account of the expedition. The book became an immediate best-seller. Far from ending the debate, however, it only fanned the flames and, to Wallace's dismay, led to a bitter falling-out with Hubbard's widow, a high-spirited young woman with a will and strength of purpose to match Wallace's own.



George Elson

By all accounts, Mina Hubbard was unusually devoted to her husband. When Wallace's first telegram announcing her husband's death arrived in the winter of 1904 it shocked her badly, especially because of the circumstances surrounding it. Three men had headed out into the wilderness; two returned alive. Why had Hubbard been the one to die? The more she brooded over the fatal sequence of events, the more she found it impossible to forgive Dillon Wallace for leaving her husband to perish alone.

Wallace, for his part, remained staunchly faithful to the memory of his friend. In 1905 he announced plans for his own expedition to complete Hubbard's mission. But Mina would have none of it. Instead, she angrily blamed Wallace for her husband's death, at the same time determining to launch a rival expedition to cross Labrador. She would lead it herself and George Elson would come as a guide. In June 1905, the two parties set off from the trading post at

Northwest River, both bent on vindicating Hubbard's reputation and hoping to reach Ungava Bay, some 500 miles to the north. The race across Labrador was on.

This, in outline, is the tale as it has been told by the few historians of Labrador who have interested themselves in it. The two of us became intrigued by the story perhaps because of the odd way we learned about it. Jim, who is a historian, might seem the logical one to have been first drawn to the tale, but it was "Rug", a physician, whose introduction had been through three generations of family lore. Many years earlier, well before Rug was born, his grandfather had delivered himself of a modest discourse from behind a kitchen table in Ridgewood, New Jersey.

Grandfather Rugge had long possessed an abiding interest in matters nautical, being a tugmaster in New York harbour. He was well acquainted with the Hubbard controversies of 1904-05 and held strong opinions on the subject. Hubbard's fatal mistake, he once informed his own young son over the breakfast table, lay in his failure to supplement the expedition's rifles with a shotgun, which would have allowed the party to bring down smaller game.

The younger Rugge devoured this bit of oral history - a of course he was meant to - then went out and read Wallace's *Lure of the Labrador Wild*, which by 1930 had become a venerable war-horse on the publishing scene, well into its twenty-third printing. When Rugge grew up, he moved to upstate New York and raised his own son - Rug - in an old log cabin where the Hubbard tales were again passed along over a kitchen table. Wallace's *Lure* was out of print by then but Rug found a copy in a local library.

Together with Wallace's 1905 adventure, narrated in *The Long Labrador Trail*, and Mina Hubbard's *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador*. There matters rested for about 20 years. Rug returned to the Hubbard expeditions briefly when the two of us were completing a guidebook on wilderness canoeing (*Editor's Note - The superb Complete Wilderness Paddler*) in our section on literature of the outdoors, he penned a single paragraph, noting that "when Wallace made it out, Mrs. Hubbard apparently blamed him for her Leonidas' death and resolved to make the journey



Great Heart's authors James West Davidson (left) and John Rugge exam-

ine the plaque on the rock at Leonidas Hubbard's last campsite in Labrador.

properly herself. Wallace retaliated with his own expedition and the race for the mouth of the George was on."

Only after our book was published did Jim get around to reading the Hubbard books. When he did, he became a bit uneasy. Where, he asked, has Rug gotten his information about Mrs. Hubbard blaming Wallace for her husband's death?

"Oh, it's all in the books," Rug replied. But it wasn't. The casual reader who pulls *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador* or *The Long Labrador Trail* off the library shelf will receive not the slightest hint from either book that there was another canoeing party within hundreds of miles, much less parties well known to one another and setting out along the same wilderness route. Neither author so much as acknowledges the existence of the other.

When the two accounts are set side by side, it becomes obvious that hostility of a rare order must have existed between the parties. But how long had Rug leapt to the much more specific - and astonishing conclusion that Mrs. Hubbard had blamed Wallace for her husband's death? After re-reading the books himself, he could only assume that this piece of news had been part of the lore passed down from grandfather to father to son.

Our curiosity piqued, we began looking up New York newspapers of the day. On microfilm we found the headlines and stories which the books did not disclose. (RIVAL LABRADOR EXPEDITIONS MEET . . . MRS. HUBBARD SUSPICIOUS . . . LABRADOR SENSATION) And in 1975, during the early stages of our research, we did as Hubbard did: booked passage with two other friends on a steamer heading up the north Atlantic coast.

In Goose Bay and Northwest River we found that local trappers still remembered the Hubbard saga; they also remained as hospitable yet taciturn as in Hubbard's day, and still called each other "b'y". Of course, if we had been determined masochists (some say this term is synonymous with wilderness paddlers) we would have re-traced Hubbard's route by dragging up the Susan ourselves. Indeed, Jerry Kobalenko of Outdoor Canada recently made the effort with a friend, but even those stalwarts ended up stashing their canoes after four days of torture, instead hiking upstream.

It has always been our fervent belief that the natural way to run rivers is downstream; so we charted a route that took us from Goose Bay via bush plane to Lake Hope through which Hubbard passed and which Wallace later named. Once on the waters of Hope, we paddled to the end of its steep-walled shores, beached our canoes, dug from our packs a copy of Wallace's book and climbed the rise where the 1903 expedition had portaged into the lake. The sight gave us shivers. Before us spread the same vista Hubbard had recorded on film 70 years earlier. The scene had hardly changed at all; even the three stunted evergreens in the foreground stood in their places. The only difference being that the middle tree had surpassed its neighbour by a foot. From the stillness of the spruce forest, we half-expected to hear Hubbard below, launching his canoe.

We paddled down Hope, picked blueberries on a hill where Hubbard had done the same and worked our way into Disappointment lake, continuing north through a series of ponds and streams into the Red-

wine River. The Redwine is actually larger than Susan Brook - and we followed its course back towards Grand Lake.

The rapids were quite pleasant and the landscape striking as the river cut through its own small gorge and increasingly steep-walled valley. At one point, while leaning on a high brace, Rug's shoulder momentarily dislocated, sending him and his partner into a capsize and pinning their canoe under an overhanging rock. A few hour's salvage work recovered the canoe, though Rug couldn't paddle well for another week or two.

Along the lower stretches of the Redwine, we had penciled on our map a possible side trip: a dotted line leading overland ten miles, to Hubbard's last campsite. The trek, however, would have taken at least two days, beginning with a 1500 foot climb out of the river valley and then proceeding through one bog after another to Susan Brook. And this was high summer and a particularly horrendous year for bugs; Rug's eyes had swollen shut from the bites at one point and another member of the party picked up a dose of blackfly fever. In the end, we were not tempted even an instant; we just kept our paddles in the water and continued on towards civilization, content to enjoy the whitewater and the expanses of untamed wilderness.

Quite understandable. At that point we hadn't learned enough about Hubbard; or of Labrador and its ways.

Back home we kept returning to the story and our newspaper clippings. Comparing the version of Hubbard's diary published by Mina and the one appearing in *Outing*, we discovered discrepancies. Some passages in Mrs. Hubbard's version did not appear in *Outing*; many passages in *Outing* did not appear in Mrs. Hubbard's book. Where was the original diary? Had other journals from 1903 and 1905 been preserved by any of the families?

Mina Hubbard's descendants, we were convinced, would be difficult to track down, for she had moved to England and remarried. As for Dillon Wallace, a 1939 obituary noted that he had been survived by a son and a daughter living near Poughkeepsie.

"Why don't you give them a call?" asked JoAnne, Rug's wife.

The two of us - serious researchers by this time - had a fine laugh over the prospect. We didn't even know the son's first name; the daughter had no doubt married; both children had probably moved out of the area. For that matter, how could we even know if either was still alive? While we scoffed, JoAnne picked up the phone, reached directory assistance, and told the operator she was looking for a Wallace.

"First name?" asked the operator.

"Dillon?"

"247-1298," replied the operator.

Not long afterward, Jim was invited to give a talk on wilderness canoeing at Eastern Mountain Sports in Boston. Incredibly, he mentioned the Hubbard expeditions. About a week later a young woman with an English accent and no interest in the wilderness whatsoever walked into the store to buy a bicycle shirt. Waiting for her change, she remarked to the sales clerk that she was a Sagittarius.

Continued

Great Heart *The History of a Labrador Adventure*

"Sagittarius," replied the clerk, "They're explorers."

"Oh, really," replied the young woman. "My grandmother was a real explorer."

So it was that Jim received a call from that young woman with an English accent.

"The bicycling chap at EMS tells me you've been giving speeches about my grandmother."

Gradually we assembled files on all three expeditions. When we visited Dillion Wallace III, he was most helpful, but confessed that his father's Labrador diaries had been lost.

"And we Wallaces are savers," he added with chagrin. "I don't know what happened to them."

As for Mrs. Hubbard, late in her life she had allowed the Canadian Public Archives to microfilm not only her diary from 1905 but also Hubbard's 1903 journals and Elson's 1905 diary. A series of phone calls yielded additional material at the Explorers Club of New York, while we discovered that yet another valuable journal had been located by Stephen Loring, an anthropologist and canoeing friend who worked for the Smithsonian.

And then one June morning we received an excited phone call from Wallace's son. At the bottom of an old cardboard box in his attic, he had discovered three leather-bound volumes - his father's missing diaries. He had a collection of original photographic negatives as well, from 1903 and 1905.

Bit by bit the pieces were falling into place. As we were drawn more and more into the story, we came to regret not making our trek to Hubbard's last campsite. Damn bugs! Why hadn't we pressed on?

Five years later, and now solidly hooked on the project as a book, we headed north on another steamer, this time determined to visit Hubbard's last camp. We passed again through Lake Hope, as empty and silent as before, and one to Lake Disappointment, whose name Wallace chose after it became clear that Hope would not lead them to Lake Michikamau.

The Redwine was much lower this time through: on some of the upper stretches we had to drag and line our canoes through several miles of shallows. And we genuflected with respect at the overhanging rock which five years earlier had snagged Rug's boat. It was now well uncovered by the low water conditions. The jumping-off point for our overland trek was a spot on the Redwine about 10 or 12 miles north of Hubbard's last camp on Susan Brook.

There, he had finally collapsed, unable to proceed any farther. Taking counsel with Wallace and Elson, he sent them downstream in hopes that they might send help in time. After caching our canoes, we climbed upward out of the Redwine river valley through a tangle of spruce thickets and fallen logs, a cold rain drizzling. For a day and a half we bushwacked from one pond to the next, through fields of white caribou moss, fording occasional streams.

Page eight

Finally we struck the Susan a little ways downstream from Hubbard's last camp. Our pace quickened, each of us hoping to be the first to find the site.

"My tent is pitched in open tent style in front of a big rock," Hubbard had written on October 18, 1903 after Wallace and Elson had left him.

"The rock reflects the fire but now it is going out because of the rain. I think I shall let it go and close the tent, till the rain is over, thus keeping out the wind and saving wood. Tonight or tomorrow, perhaps, the weather will improve so I can build a fire, eat the rest of my moccasins and have some more bone broth. I am not suffering. The acute pangs of hunger have given way to indifference. I'm sleepy. I think death from starvation is not so bad. But let no one suppose I expect it. I am prepared - that is all. I think the boys will be able, with the Lord's help to save me."

But help had not come in time. This was Hubbard's last entry and he died later that day. We walked along the Susan for perhaps four or five minutes, each of us looking for a different telltale rock. Then in a small clearing Rug spied it.

In the clearing where the tent had been pitched was the rock on which securely pegged was a bronze plaque.

Leonidas Hubbard, Jr.
Intrepid Explorer
and
practical Christian

John XIV.IV: And whither I go
Ye Know, and the Way Ye Know

Otherwise the campsite contained no surprises. The cut boughs have, of course, long since rotted away. The spoons are gone. There is no longer any sign of the tent. In only a few more years the white lead paint will be worn away and the original chisel marks covered in lichen.

We had expected to find the plaque, for it has become part of the Hubbard legend. In 1913 Wallace made a return pilgrimage to the rock. He had commissioned a memorial plaque but, to his bitter disappointment, lost it when his canoe overturned on the way in. He pushed on anyway and, arriving at the old scene, found the boulder with the charred embers from Hubbard's last fire at its base.

The boughs which Wallace had cut in 1903 to make a bed for his friend were still there, withered but undisturbed. Scattered about were some spoons, Hubbard's worn moccasins and remnants of their tent. Before leaving, Wallace had taken hammer and chisel and cut his simple inscription into the rock then filled the letters with white lead.

Many years later, in 1976, Wallace's son and a companion, Randy Mouro of London, Ontario, returned with a replica of the lost plaque. With drills and bolts they secured the new marker to the rock. Set firmly in place, it would withstand the elements far longer than the chiseled inscription.

As we stood there the sun, which had appeared briefly for our arrival, disappeared under low clouds. The rain began anew. We snapped a few photos and then, turning to leave, took one last look at the spot. It had been cold and rainy in 1903 when Wallace and Elson bid their farewells - much as it was now.

We could not help but think that Hubbard, by dying at that sport and so far from home had ironically succeeded in establishing his fame and fortune far better than if he had managed to come home alive.

For his expedition and the two sequels it spawned have won an enduring place in the lore of northern exploration - a story of good intentions gone wrong, the firm bonds of friendship in times of adversity and a dual rivalry that grew out of a fierce devotion.

And as always, the rain and the Labrador countryside remained heedless of those who passed that way. We set our return course for the Redwine and home.



Mina Hubbard

Hydro-Quebec

A Study in power

The name Hydro-Quebec gets thrown around in these pages with some regularity. Perhaps it is time Chemun took a closer look at this powerful corporation.

We are all faced with dilemmas in our lives. And Hydro-Quebec is exactly that. Their major function as a government utility is the generation of power. With the province's large number of rivers it is not surprising that hydro-electricity is its major source of power. That is where the problems start.

Generating electricity by damming rivers is a mixed blessing. It ruins the river, its inhabitant's lives and the surrounding ecosystem is changed. But it is the cleanest form of power production compared with coal, diesel or nuclear. So the environmentally concerned canoeist is faced with a dilemma.

Hydro-Quebec was created in 1944 through the acquisition of several power companies serving the Montreal area, many more were added in 1963. Hydro-Quebec is a Crown corporation, which means it is a joint-stock company with the Quebec government as its only shareholder. Today it supplies almost three million customers in Quebec and exports 29 billion kilowatt hours to neighbouring Canadian provinces and U.S. states. 96 per cent of the power generated is from hydro-electric sites.

Hydro-Quebec gained attention, especially from environmentalists and canoeists, in the 1970's when it built the James Bay project - properly titled the Societe d'energie de la Baie James. The initial phase of the work was narrowed down to two sites - the Nottaway/Broadback/Rupert River project and the more northerly La Grande River. The latter was chosen because of easier geologic conditions.

The huge construction project involving thousands of men and machines was an engineering marvel and environmental threat. A huge new lake - the biggest in Quebec - was created by the dammed water. Numerous Cree and Inuit were relocated, their villages abandoned, wiping out thousands of years of native history. However, the native groups, especially the Cree, have done well with their hard-fought cash settlement for their lands.

The size of the La Grande complex is staggering - equal to all of Great Britain.

The La Grande River has been transformed into a turbine feeder that not only generates power but money. The dams are designated LG2, LG3 and LG4 for La Grande 2 etc, construction of LG1 was recently announced (see Che 52).

The three current dams on the river generate over 10,000 megawatts or over half the total power of the system. In comparison the huge Churchill Falls project in



A view of the massive spillway at the LG2 facility on La Grande River in James Bay. This is the water which is

Labrador nets 5,200 megawatts. The figures given in mega-watts are for the power which at any given moment can be generated by that plant.

But thanks to some incredibly shortsighted thinking in Newfoundland, Hydro-Quebec has access to most of that Churchill Falls power - for less than 10% of its market value - well into the next century. The Newfoundland government is attempting to challenge that deal in court.

Ironically it was a fault originating with the Churchill Fall project that caused the biggest power blackout in 23 years last month. One small station went out which overloaded the whole system causing a mass power failure. The Montreal Canadiens-Boston Bruin playoff game was played under emergency lighting but only those in attendance saw it - the TV was blacked out too.

In recent years the generation of northern rivers has taken on a tone of political nationalism. Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa has played on these emotions in his return to power. The idea of a Quebec-built, Quebec-based resource is understandably appealing. Many of those thousands of construction workers who built James Bay in the early 70's are in their thirties and forties. That period of building is looked back on with fondness and pride by most Quebeckers.

There is one weak link in the northern generating strategy - the transmission lines. A gigantic picket fence of 735 kilo-volt lines sweeps down from the north to where the

diverted from the turbines when there are no power requirements. (See Hydro-Quebec power map on Page 12.)

power is needed. The energy lost from such a means of transmission is staggering.

A minimum of 7% (that's over 50kv) of the power crackles off into the air as anyone who's paddled under them on the Rupert River will attest. It is a very inefficient way to transport power - but it's all there is until new superconductor technology supercedes it many years hence.

In addition, recent studies have linked these power pylons to several illnesses including cancer and depression.

In the 1984 the publication Forces, which marked the 40th anniversary of Hydro-Quebec, the future was very much on the minds of the editors. Large river potential was divided into four areas; the Northwest; the North Shore; St. Lawrence Region and Ungava. All the major rivers have already been dissected for the power potential; the George River, 2,800 MW; the Kaniapiscou, Koksoak and Larch Rivers, 2,200 MW; the Great Whale River, 2,900 MW and the Romaine River, 1,300 MW.

It is the responsibility of both Hydro-Quebec and the public to ensure that any massive power projects designed to ensure relatively short term need do not abort our future. The need for power is real. It is used to print these words.

But the need for the rivers to run free in a natural environment is also real. Northern rivers must be preserved not for canoeists but for all of society. As the dominant species of the 30 million all told on the earth we owe it to this planet to act responsibly.

News & Notes

ANOTHER LEGEND GONE . . . All canoeists were saddened to learn of the recent death of Omer Stringer. In his later years, Omer was known as the builder of the beautiful wood/canvas canoes for Beaver Canoe of Toronto. But Omer Stringer was a complete canoe man - builder, paddler and innovator. To watch Omer is a canoe was to view the height of the craft in practice. There was no one who had a better and more fluid motion with a paddle and boat. It was a skill crafted by a lifetime in the north. As a builder of birchbark canoes; river driver in the rough and tumble logging days or as a teacher of canoeing to many Algonquin campers, Omer knew the canoe as few did. His public paddling demonstrations were the stuff of legend. One incident said it all. At the opening of the first Beaver canoe store in 1983 Omer was put to a severe test. Held in the courtyard of a fancy mid-town shopping mall, a 16-foot wide portable swimming pool had been erected as the "lake" for Omer's demo. A couple of hundred guests arrived - half canoe trippers, half Toronto trendy social set. Omer did his thing beautifully as usual. The finale - a headstand on a 14-foot highly rockered canoe was mind boggling. The crowd applauded and the party went on. Shortly after, a young preppy with a good summer of canoeing behind her decided she would have a go at Omer's boat. About five seconds later she was fully immersed as the canoe seemingly spat her out. The glaze of silence over the crowd spoke volumes. Each one of the canoeists there knew one thing: not one of them would have entered a canoe in front a crowd when Omer Stringer had just left one. You didn't have a chance. The big difference was - the real canoeists knew it.

...

CANOESIDE . . . Che-Mun was heard coast-to-coast in a recent CBC Radio interview on the award winning Morningside program. Host Peter Gzowski interviewed Che-Mun Editor Michael Peake as part of their continuing small magazine series that focuses on small and unique publications for specialty interests - I guess that's us. Rather than dwell on the mundane aspects of how Che is put together Gzowski wanted to know about Che-Mun founder Nick Nickels and Eric Morse who was a great inspiration to us. The interview also touched on stories of the north including the adventures of George Douglas and the Hubbard-Wallace Labrador expeditions (featured in this issue). The response from the show was heartening with many people writing in for subscription info. Keep spreading the word.

...

EX-EXPEDITIONS . . . The recent northern winter's weather caused the termination of two expeditions heading for the north pole. Three members of the British team led by Sir Ranulph Fiennes were picked up suffering frostbite after they had moved only 40 miles in three weeks. It was the second attempt by Sir Ranulph to make it to the pole on foot - unaided by dogs or vehicles. On the same day Pam Flowers, 43, of Alaska was also picked up cutting short her second attempt to become the first woman to travel alone to the pole. Temperatures in the area varied from daytime highs of -9c (15F) to overnight lows of -60C (-76F)! Meanwhile the Soviet-Canadian team travelling by ski and sled completed the 1,200 miles from the tip of the U.S.S.R. to the tip of Ellesmere Island with no great problems.

...

NEW PACKS . . . An interesting development in the age-old science of developing a better carrying device. Trailhead of Toronto, whose tripping arm, Black Feather, is the leading canoe trip outfitter in Canada, have a new wrinkle in the pack game. Trailhead has procured used Dutch pharmaceutical barrels, bolted on a set of carrying straps and presto - a super canoe pack. The barrels are made from super tough plastic and have an extremely rugged waterproof closure sys-

Page ten

tem. They stand about three feet high with a 14 inch diameter at the widest. They are not what you would call comfortable to carry but are totally bomb (and rapid) proof. They retail for \$120 and are available (with some stock limitations) through Trailhead in Toronto.

BOOK NOTES . . . A couple of items on the canoe publishing front. You will recall the Canexus conference last fall (Che 51) in Kingston, Ontario. The book is nearing completion. Canexus/The canoe in Canadian culture will be a companion volume to Betelgeuse Press' successful Nastawgan. The same format will be followed, a series of 15 essays by such notables as George Luste and George Dyson. Plus, we hear that Bill Mason has created some wonderful pencil drawings to accompany the articles. The book will be edited by Jim Raffan and Bert Horwood - both of Queens University and will be available this fall for \$1995. The much anticipated Song of the Paddle, Bill Mason's follow-up to Path of the Paddle is a bit delayed. The book by Key Porter of Toronto was expected to be released this month but we hear the fall is a better bet. It seems the great number of illustrations are slowing down the production. The book will be the same format at 'Path' and retail for \$29.95(?).

...

CANOELIGHT . . . With one of Tom Hill's canoes, the fight over who carries the canoe on a long portage may not be over - just turned around. You'll be fighting over who gets to carry the boat. Tom Hill is an American canoe builder with a very unique method of construction - mahogany plywood. He takes thin strips of plywood and pieces them together in a style called monocoque which is used on airplanes and racing cars. As a result his 12 foot boat weighs only 25 pounds! The hull's strength is derived from the lapstrake construction that overlaps slightly. It takes Hill about three days to complete a canoe. While these boats are not suited to major wilderness trips they would seem to have their place. Hill makes canoes in a range from 9 to 18 feet in length and charges \$120 a foot (US). If you are interested in attending one of Hill's building workshops, buying canoe plans or reading his book, Ultra-light Boatbuilding, contact him at RR 594-16, Huntington, Vermont 05462.

...

TAKETH WITH ONE HAND . . . The fight to stop a logging road cutting deep into what's left of the Temagami wilderness appears to be over. The Ministry of the Environment has decided to go ahead with the Red Squirrel Road Extension over a loud and celebrity studded protest. A number of prominent writers and celebrities headed a spring meeting in Toronto to fight the extension. Beaver Canoe sponsored an evening which featured Margaeret Atwood among others and raised \$25,000 for the fight. But the fight was over a few weeks later. For now.

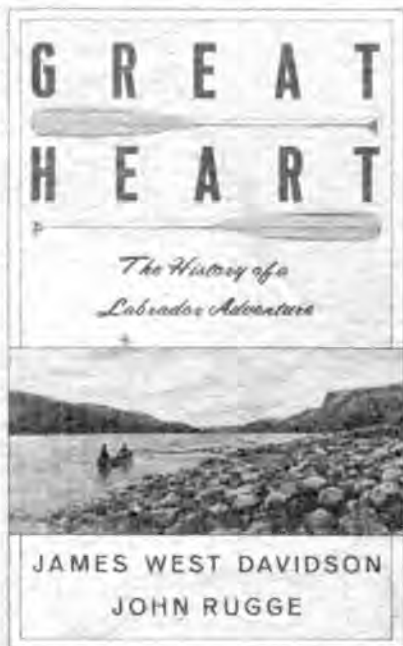
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GIVETH WITH THE OTHER . . . The very same morning the Temagami decision was announced the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources had one too. They dropped the good news. Fifty three new provincial parks will be created bringing the total to 270 covering more than 11 million acres. The key statement was the pricking of the multiple use (or multiple abuse) balloon. "No trapping, mining or hydro development will be permitted in any of Ontario's provincial parks", said the minister. There are other items of concern to canoeists. Wilderness parks will be just that - reserved for wilderness compatible activities. Several new waterway parks have been added to the system including the long awaited extension of the Missinaibi River, which is now fully protected. Other rivers and parts of rivers included; the Winisk, Albany, Attawapiskat, Severn and Pipestone. The fate of proposed changes to the Quetico Park Management Plan review currently underway are not directly affected but we hope the ruling gives guidance to the direction they should head. Some of the changes wanted by Quetico area outfitters and businessmen include an in-park landing aircraft depot at the south end, a road built to a border lake and other ill-conceived notions.

Canoelit

Great Heart

The History of a Labrador Adventure by James West Davidson and John Rugge. Viking Penguin. New York & Toronto. 385pp.



The emergence of a book by the same authors of the wonderful Complete Wilderness Paddler is both a surprise and delight. Jim Davidson and John Rugge delighted all canoeists with their wonderful book 12 years ago. Its practical advice and good humour made CWP a must read.

These two American paddlers obviously only write about what really interests them - and the lure of the Hubbard-Wallace expeditions in the early years of this century proved irresistible.

There are two basic paths to take when doing a book concerning historical fact. You can either write a straight history or a "novelization". The former tends to be drier but usually offers more information. The latter is generally more readable but much trickier to do.

Davidson and Rugge chose the novelization route but had the good sense to make it appeal to both groups of readers. Those who want the straight historical facts and any insights the authors may have gleaned through research and others who wish to be entertained by reading the words of the characters discussed. The matter of making historical characters talk is something many people will not accept.

Understandably, how would any author know exactly what was said by someone when they weren't there? This is where a deft hand is needed. Rugge and Davidson's touch gets better as they proceed - for Great Heart gets better all the way through.

The book tells the tale of the three expeditions involved; the original 1903 sortie with Leonidas Hubbard, Dillon Wallace and George Elson and the subsequent independent trips by Mina Hubbard with Elson, and Wallace alone. Much of this is familiar

ground to many of us. Perhaps this is why the authors chose the method of writing they did.

The first half of the book is pretty depressing, for a tale of failure and starvation is not a happy one. The words of Elson, Wallace and Hubbard seem realistic and not out of place. The second half of Great Heart dwells on the later, and rival, journeys of 1905. This is the most interesting and revealing part of the book. There are many emotions at play in this story and each is carefully handled by the authors. The emotional interplay and undertones were a well-known facet of these trips and their exploration of feelings is as revealing as their exploration of the land.

Great Heart builds to a wonderful finish and moving conclusion. In fact, on the final page, the meaning of the title is made clear - and when that happens it opens a flood of other observations carefully planted by the authors along the way. The story of these trips is compelling; and the work by Davidson and Rugge serves it well. We gain an informed - and hypothesized - insight into the make-up of the central cast of characters.

Great Heart is a beautifully presented book. The cover art is very attractive and the photographs contained inside are especially revealing. There are several never published before. In addition, there are 25 pages of detailed notes at the end of the book - enough to satisfy any history buff that their facts are well documented.

Great Heart can take its place with pride on the bookshelf next to Complete Wilderness Paddler. There's only one negative note on the writing of Davidson and Rugge. Do we have to wait another 12 years for the next one?

Challenge the Wilderness

The Legend of George Elson by Clayton Klein. Wilderness Adventure Books, Fowlerville, Michigan 1988. 425pp.

Challenge the Wilderness



The fact that this book arrived at Che-Mun on the same day as Great Heart is remarkable. The Hubbard-Wallace story has lain quietly for many years. Now two books on the saga arrive simultaneously.

Challenge the Wilderness is the story of George Elson, the famed canoe guide who accompanied both Leonidas and Mina Hubbard on their respective expeditions. Elson has always been a hero of mine. His quiet assurance and steadfast ability shone through in everything ever written about him. More than one person has exclaimed - "I always wanted to write a book about him."

Well now someone has. Clayton Klein, author of Cold Summer Wind, is a private publisher in Michigan. With the recent emergence of personal computer technology small publishers are a thriving business - just look at Che-Mun. Private, or vanity publications, as they're known are never as slick or attractive as the mainstream book houses. The paper is poorer quality, illustrations less lavish and the type not so readable. This was the case with Klein's earlier works but he has come a long way. While the look of Challenge is not in the same league as Great Heart it is much closer than earlier efforts.

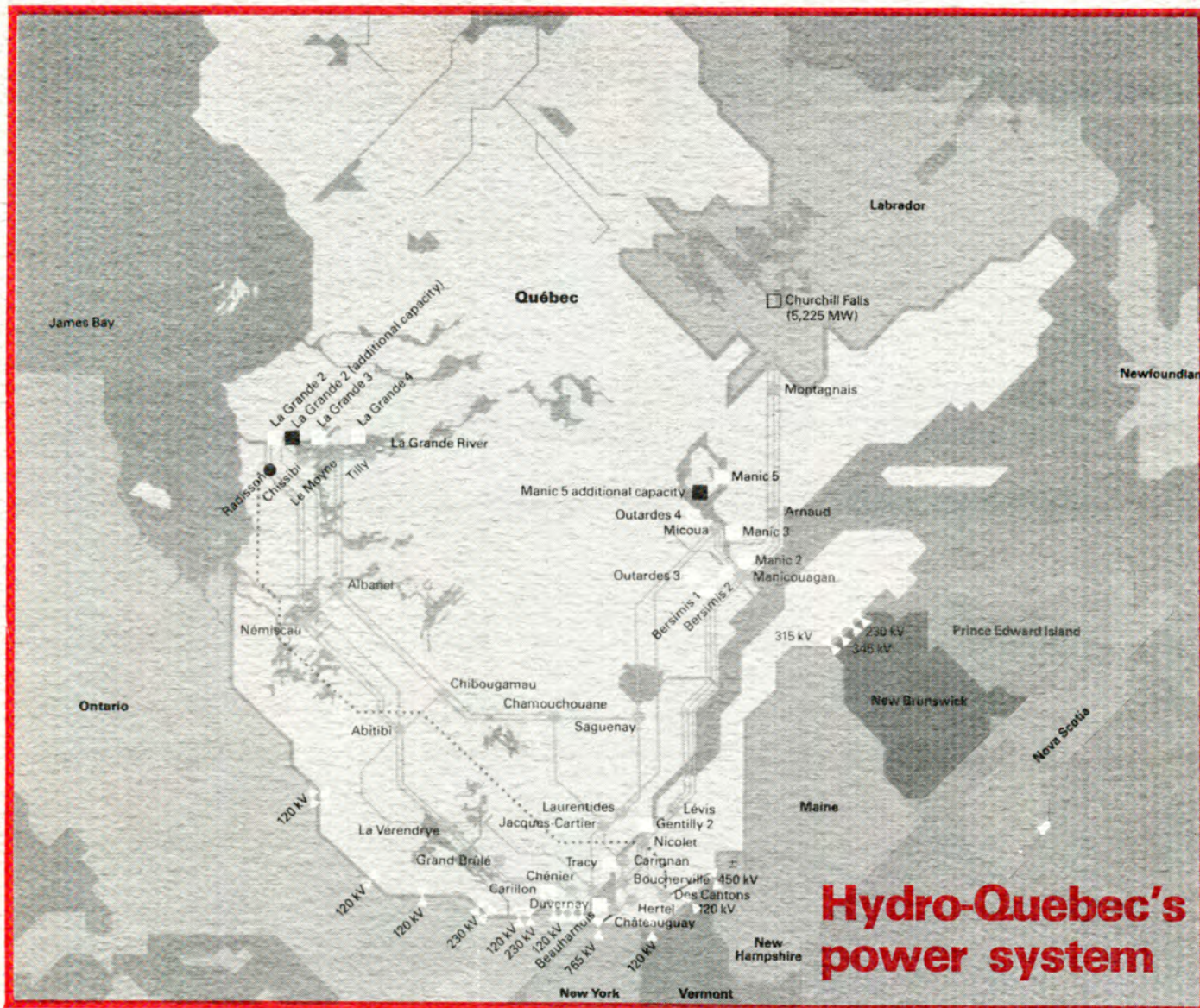
Klein has also chosen the "novelized" approach with extensive dialogue. When I first realized this I was dismayed. In

Klein's earlier books the dialogue was their weakest feature. It was wooden and unconvincing. But Mr. Klein has been working on his style. His dialogue is improved but still no match for Davidson and Rugge. Challenge of the Wilderness concentrates solely on George Elson, and not just his contribution to the Hubbard-Wallace story.

Much of the earlier part of the Challenge goes into needless detail of George's youth in the area of southern James Bay. Klein even throws in some lust, sex and murder to liven things up. George's written dialogue is full of colloquialisms; for is always 'fer', you is 'ya', to is 'ta' etc. which is annoying to read.

Most disturbing is the relationship between Mina Hubbard and George Elson. The subject is handled with grace and delicacy in Great Heart - and, importantly, backed up by historical evidence. Klein's handling of the pair leans more to the romantic fiction of the time period in question than historical fact. Whatever did happen between George and Mina will never fully be known but any historical conclusion ought best to be based on written evidence and not portrayed as soap opera.

There are several interesting photos in this book including one of George in his later years. George Elson was a marvelous guide and outdoorsman about whom nothing had been written. We are hopeful for more.



Hydro-Quebec's power system

Upcoming Che

Outfit 54 will publish the story of the HACC Povungnituk 88 expedition to northern Ungava.

We will also resume "The Classics" series with a look at P.G. Downes' Sleeping Island.

We'll take a Walk through the Woods (plant) with a trip to Canada's most respected maker of canoe packs - and they're still hard at it.

As always, we welcome your comments, suggestions and contributions. Have a safe and adventurous summer.

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