

CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 88

CHE-MUN

SPRING 1997



photo: John Fiske

WHALE OF A RIVER -- Northern Quebec has fewer big rivers than it did 25 years ago but a lot

more really big lakes thanks to the work of Hydro-Québec. But the Great Whale River,

above is one that got away - at least for now. Read all about a trip down this river on Page 6.

*Elliott Merrick
remembers
Labrador*

Page 4

*Paddling a Whale
of a Great Quebec
River*

Page 6

*Come and dip
your paddle in
the Web*

Page 2

Spring Packet



Well, the you-know-what is flying. Letters and e-mails poured in reacting to the feature article in the last Outfit, *Paddle Bound for Arctic Sound* by Chris Morris. It was the greatest reaction we have ever had to an article and will dispense with it here with a few letters, and a response by Chris Morris.

Shawn Hodgins is the Director/Manager Wanapitei Canoe Centre and their 1996 Hood River Guide. He is one of the two people referred to by Morris in the article.

"I am writing in response the article, by Mr. Chris Morris. In fact I am a little surprised that you would bother to publish such slanderous nonsense. I am referring specifically to comments he made about meeting a group from Wanapitei led by myself and Mark Hodnett, both of us experienced northern trippers with many years of experience. Maybe you should have looked into the validity of his comments! I think also that you should send him a copy of the book *"How to Shit in the Woods"*. He certainly needs some lessons in Barrenlands environmental practices and preservation of fresh water (not to mention lessons in humility). Mr. Morris seems to think that having spent two months travelling in the Arctic makes him a wilderness expert and above criticism – I assure you it does not!

"Two months in the barrens neither makes one an expert nor gives one a license to be abusive to the environment, or to fellow paddlers. It's too bad that he chose to respond to our suggestion that he and his group practice environmentally protective toileting with an attack on us. We made our comments to him privately and with positive intent. The advanced experience level of many of our participants and leaders should have been evident to Mr. Morris. He could have perhaps learned something if he had been interested.

"Most of his other comments about our group are an unfortunate reflection on his personality 2.

and ego. He should not pass judgment on our itinerary and other issues regarding our group of which he knows nothing. We were well prepared for the adverse weather and all thoroughly enjoyed our Hood River trip. Our trip was also slightly more than, as he suggests, "merely a float down the river" and interestingly we ran into none of the difficulty on the rapids that Mr. Morris did. We would love to offer him a course in whitewater paddling, canoe tripping and environmental practices when he is next in our area. Wanapitei has successfully been running these courses for 25 years as our participants will attest."

We also heard from the other Wanapitei leader, mentioned in the article, Mark Hodnett.

"I feel compelled to respond to the article by Chris Morris. I am one of the Wanapitei's "rude and inhospitable" leaders who "lectured" the author on how one relieves oneself in the wilderness without filling others with disgust and disease.

"I have done a significant amount of canoe tripping, and seen enough examples of human waste close to or in campsites and water, that the sight now fills me with a certain amount of fury.

"In this particular instance, the offending excrement and plentiful fresh toilet paper was in fact not just close to the water, but IN IT, where the occasional waves from the rapids at the bottom of beautiful Wilberforce Falls were slowly dissolving it and taking it down stream. As this location was less than ten metres from the author's tent and water source, I was surprised to find that he did not share my concern.

"The author disliked our "rude and inhospitable" behaviour. I wonder how he describes the behaviour of the member(s) of his party, that forced us into such an exchange, and to wonder how much of their sewage we might have ingested over the previous several days (they had been closely following us for the previous 5

days). I think that our calm words with the author showed remarkable restraint.

"Even though it is unpleasant, I urge your readers to attempt to educate those who spread filth and disease throughout the wilderness. I hope that as a result of this exchange none of the members of author's party will shit in the water again, and thus won't set a bad example for others they trip with.

"In spite of the author's unfortunate attitude toward this incident, I will give him credit for including the distance that you should go away from water to have a bowel movement (200m)."

One of the trip members from the Morris group also wrote after signing up for a *Che-Mun* subscription and being told there was a bit of a controversy over all this.

David Whyte writes;

"I fear another misunderstanding is in the making, reminiscent of the Russell knife affair. Apart from some emergency urination during some long lake crossings, nobody in our party dumped "in the river" or in any other waterway. (We swam through a rapid but I don't think that's what you met by dumping.)

"Although I didn't carry a tape measure, the vast majority of our dumps happened well inland (maybe even 200 metres inland) for the sake of a little privacy, if for no other reason. We certainly were not interested in drinking, or camping on, or walking in our leavings. I'm reasonably certain that no one else would be interested in doing so either. The spirit, if not the letter of the 200 metres rule was always adhered to.

"I think that what annoyed (and amused) us most about the whole thing was our sudden meeting with a self-appointed bureaucrat after nearly two months of blessed freedom. I might also point out that ownership of the errant turd was not conclusively determined. Wouldn't it be

➔ *Continued on Page 11*



Editor's Notebook

Another spring is upon us – certainly a late one here in eastern Canada. We all hope for high spring runoff but the destructive circumstances around the Red River flooding in Manitoba graphically illustrate the power of nature and water in particular.

Speaking of graphic, we deal, at some length, in this issue with the matter of personal habits while on the trail - or hopefully off it. We had quite a bit of reaction to Chris Morris' piece last issue. We are unable to print all of it but I hope it has raised some issues we can all think about.

We also have a look at Quebec's mighty Great Whale River, which had been slated for diversion – a plan that is now on hold. We had look at doing the Great Whale and the reports we heard seemed to be borne out by John Fiske is his story on page 6. It a very big and strong river with a huge flow, which is no doubt why the dammers were attracted. I hope you'll agree it's a look at a seldom paddled river and may give some of you out there a few ideas.

It has been a busy spring for the HACC Expedition Fund Raising Committee (that's me). We have a very unique and exciting trip on line for this August – something totally new which will allow many of you to participate in your first Hide-Away Canoe Club trip. We'll have all the details in Outfit 89 but you can probably get a good clue of what's ahead by seeing our story on Internet paddling on page 9.

For those of us who are on the web - and please note our new e-Mail address – che-mun@rogers.wave.ca – the growth of the medium is very exciting and beneficial. Never before has there been an easier and more diverse method of information gathering as via the resources on the Internet. Of course, you have to consider the source of your newfound facts - but there's lots there to choose from.

And finally, every so often we get exceptional contributions from exceptional people. On pages four and five, we are honoured to have Elliott Merriek's letter to wilderness paddlers originally written for this year's Wilderness Paddlers Gathering held in Fairlee, Vermont each February. Elliott, now 92, is in frail health but as you will see his writing has lost nothing. The room sat in appreciative silence as Wil Lange read Elliott's words which crackled with the warming comfort of a hardwood fire.

Michael Peake, Editor.

NUNA- Newsline

Countdown to April 1, 1999

"Most of what they required they found here and they didn't have to go anywhere else," Hamburg said. "They knew that films had been shot here before and pretty much knew what's available and what's not available."

Hamburg said the strong American dollar attracts film companies northward to Canada because it's less expensive to produce a movie. Iqaluit and the Arctic have also been promoting themselves to movie producers at trade shows in the United States.

Though many people have heard of Peary's expedition to the North Pole early in this century, few know the role Henson played in that quest. An African-American, Henson has often been referred to as Peary's servant, despite the many citations for his work.

This made-for-television movie attempts to tell the story of this northern explorer, who played an intricate role in the pursuit to reach the North Pole. "They're supposed to be here the end of April, shooting into May," Hamburg said. "I imagine with hotels stays and meals, hiring guys with skidoos to haul people in and out, they'll drop a fair amount in the town."

MACE TO SEE YOU . . . The ceremonial mace of the NWT went on a tour of Baffin Island this spring. And everywhere they went, youth and elders wanted a peek.

People wanted to see the craftsmanship of the Inuit artists who, forty-two years earlier, created the symbol of authority of government in the Northwest Territories. The mace must be in the legislative assembly for the government to conduct its business.

The original, designed with whalebone, copper, gold and muskox, is too fragile to travel so the replica, which took its place in 1959, made the trip. Brass replaced much of the original materials, but muskox horns, porcupine quillwork and a narwhal tusk highlight the replica. In the 38 years it's been in use, the replica's narwhal tusk has broken once. The total replacement value of the replica is about \$60,000. The original is priceless.

Because of its delicate condition, the original is kept in storage at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre located in Yellowknife. Curator of Collections Joanne Bird said it's intact, but needs to be handled with great care.

➔ Continued on Page 11

A memory from Merrick

The following is a letter written by Elliott Merrick to those attending the annual Wilderness Paddlers gathering at the Hulbert Outdoor Centre in Fairlee, Vermont this March. This small gathering of some 80 people is a mini-version and inspired by the annual Wilderness Canoe Association a.k.a the Luste Bunch held every January in Toronto.

We thought Elliott's words were wonderful and asked the 92-year-old author for permission to publish here so you all might enjoy them.

Greetings to wilderness travellers. We all share something in common. I would like to be with you, but I'll soon be 92, and too frail to travel much.

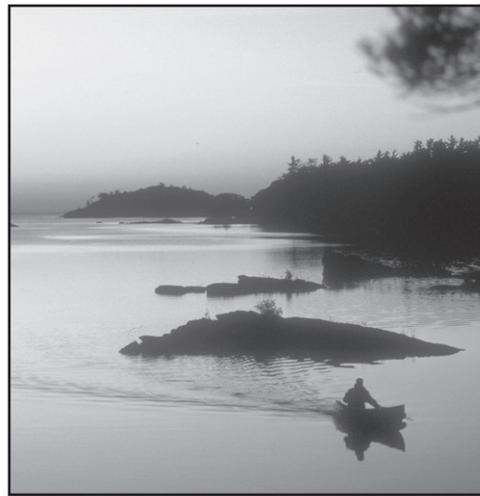
There are few advantages to being old, but perhaps one is that I was travelling in the Labrador wilderness in the winter of 1929-30 — think of it - 67 years ago with native trappers.

It was a different world then, no bush planes in Labrador, no radio telephone, no snowmobiles, long before Goose Bay airbase. The Innu, the Montagnais Indians, came paddling down Naskaupi River to our village of North West River in late June or early July to the Hudson's Bay Company fur post to trade a little fur and get away on the Bay shore from the flies. They camped across the river from the village, about ten tents. They had never heard of outboard motors. They split their paddles out of spruce trees, or white birch, shaped them with an axe, and fined them down with crooked knives. They made the finest snowshoes in the world. The children had little ones like soup plates. They also made canoes, using canvas and paint from the HBC. End of summer they paddled away to spend the winter in the wilderness, furring a littler, but mostly hunting meat.

In this village we were all to ourselves each winter. No stranger came in from October, when the last mail steamer departed the coast and the sea froze, until the following June when the ship came again. An exception was the two dog team mails from South, carrying letters only, no packages. We thought of "the outside", as it was called — that world of cities and towns — as

very remote and of not much importance to us. Most of the part-Scotch, part-Eskimo people of the village had never seen a bicycle or an automobile, or a railroad train, or a plane, and didn't especially hanker to. When I was told that people in the cities pay money for their drinking water, the response was, "I wouldn't want to live in a place like that." It was still the age of isolation.

My future wife and I worked in this village for two or more years, she as a nurse in the Grenfell Mission Hospital, and I as a teacher in the Mission school and maintenance man around the hospital, so we came to know the people, she especially. When the trappers left in their canoes,



first of September, for their trapping grounds up Churchill River, one of them said he would take us with him. We had been getting ready all summer, including buying two 18-foot Chestnut canoes from a group of departing prospectors.

As we were about to shove off from one of the last houses at Traverspine, old Uncle Joe Michelin came down to the sand beach and said, "I want to shake your hand, because I don't ever expect to see you again. Going up a river for pleasure! Some people would go to hell for a pastime!"

Heavily loaded with flour, food, and gear to last us 4 1/2 months, we were one of those months getting 350 miles up Churchill River. Hardly ever had a woman made this all-male trek, but they

had great respect for Kay, who had done so much for their families, and even for them. The rapids were difficult; poling, tracking, lightening loads. The trappers helped us through. We tried not to slow them/

The portage around Churchill Falls took a week, that great cataract of immense volume and twice the height of Niagara. I wrote in *True North* that it was too far, far away ever to be harnessed for power. Since then, it has become one of the world's great hydros, producing some \$800 million worth of electricity yearly. I often say it is hard enough to eat your words, but when you have to swallow the paper too, that's mighty tough.

It was glorious when we were settled into John Michelin's main cabin a long way above the falls. Especially so, as we had never known when we would capsize in a rapid or peter out on this hard driving slog, with the most experienced canoe men and woodsmen you can imagine. We would never have made it without their generous help, as I said. We tried to our utmost not to delay them, as this furring expedition comprised their year's earnings.

John was gone two or three or four days on his traplines. Sometimes I went with him, but more often tended close-by traps for him and did chores. One of these chores was to make a bending, flexible toboggan out of a tamarack tree. It took us a long time, I can tell you. Ever-helpful Kay tended rabbit snares, shot partridges and ptarmigan for food, did all the cooking, and even made sourdough "rose bread" in our small tin stove-pipe oven. One of her proudest accomplishments was a .22 rifle was to down a white partridge running on white snow. We claimed it was luck. All you can see is a small black eye and a tip of black on the tailfeathers. We had to eke out our flour and portaged food, making it last as long as possible.

We travelled some around this height-of-land country with other trappers, even to what we called "Unknown Lake".

The months passed, and we were running short of grub. It was time to start the long snow-

Northern Legends

shoe and toboggan journey down the frozen river. The various trappers were anxious to get home to their wives and dwellings after four months in the bush. They were running short of all supplies, too.

We didn't want to go, Kay and I. We had almost forgotten about the outside world, and we didn't want to go there or even to the village. From the comparative comfort of John's main cabin, we were thinking always how beautiful the winter wilderness can be; the rabbit tracks, the endless forms of frost and ice, the northern lights, the forest and icy stars. We wished we could stay there always. But, of course, we would soon run out of food and cartridges and candles and everything else. We could not live on meat exclusively the way the Innu can. And in summer the bug would eat us alive. So we had to go.

Many people ask me about the hardships, but at night on the trail in our tent with the little sheet-iron stove going and the balsam floor beginning to smell sweet, the partridge stew coming to a boil, we were quite comfortable, even at 40 below. The worst hardship was that these experienced hunters travel so fast. We wanted to linger, to enjoy, watching the magnificent sunsets or rock glens or superb scenery. But we had to keep up. Some days when the hauling was hard, we made only 10 or 15 miles. When the going was good we travelled 20, even 35 miles between pre-dawn and long after dark. This being December, and then January, daylight was short. We pulled down the tents in the morning starlight and set them up again in the dark. The longest-mileage days occurred where the wind-scoured river showed no sign of rapids. It was then we lashed our snowshoes on the sleds and trotted hour after hour. How Kay kept up I'll never know. She remained strong and cheerful, always carrying her little pack to lighten my sled load. She wanted so much to go, to see, to know, and now she was doing it. Every man had a toboggan, but she had none, so that was some help for her. One of the trappers said, "She's as good as a man, and better than some."

John, of course, took half our load on his toboggan. I, however, always kept the tent and stove, some grub, sleeping gear, axe, .22 on mine in case we got left behind, which seemed likely. From the start, we shared all the food with John. We would have let them go, except we

didn't know the river road the way they did, and weren't capable of following it by ourselves — sometimes one bank, sometimes another, sometimes on a narrow ice shelf beside an open rapid, just as they always found it. Once in a traditional place, beside a black and ugly-looking rapid, we had to haul the sleds with long lines up a steep bank and crawl through willows for a long way, leaving the river entirely. Although we were learning fast, we hadn't known the river from boyhood.

Because food was short, we were always hungry. We hoped to get partridges for the evening stew pot, but usually didn't, travelling too fast to spend time hunting. Our main food was a dwindling supply of flour, so it was bannock, bannock, and never enough of that.

As we came down the river, we picked up more trappers from their accustomed hunting



grounds. Now we were ten. In the middle of every morning and afternoon the group stopped for a brief boil-up of tea and a bit of bannock. Kay and I had hoarded some sugar and Bakers semisweet chocolate. A cup of sweet tea and a square of chocolate kept us going on some of the longest afternoons. Our belts were in two holes, as our legs grew bigger and our stomachs flatter.

It was in a jumble of rough ice behind an ice dam that we had our worst experience and got left far behind. Among the maze of crooked, on-edge slabs as big as grand pianos, I stuck my foot between the chunks into the water. We had to warm my foot, then put on dry socks, duffles and

moccasins. It was way below zero and I musn't freeze my foot in the course of this long march. I was making slow progress through this chaos for fear I'd break my toboggan over sharp edges that were curling shavings from the wood. The last thing the boys shouted to us was. "We got to hurry, hurry, she's going to bust again any minute." Water was rising between the chunks and forming shallow stream along the ice beside the banks showing every sign of the increasing pressure.

Kay and I slipped and slid with our snowshoes on, fearful of breaking them. The sled I had made bent and twisted, all joints lashed with caribou sinew, Indian fashion. They all held. Night came on as the water continued rising and we continued slipping and sliding, careful not to break a leg. It was bad, and I mean BAD! We could have been lost that night in Churchill River. When would the river burst? Would it be all of a sudden? We didn't know.

We were lucky. Long after dark we caught the trapper crew in their camp at a flat spot. John, who usually slept in the tent with Kay and me, had set up his sleeping gear in Henry Goudie's tent. They welcomed us in as though we were long lost children, put up the tent for us, lit the stove, covered the floor with balsam tips, and cut up our night's wood. We were too tired to eat.

A couple of days short of home, the rapids past and the river solid, we let them go and travelled at our own pace. John's departing words were, "I'll have codfish and potatoes for you in Traverspine." We had learned a great deal — enough so we could make small winter journeys on our own now, always with a toboggan, axe, tent, stove, grub, .22 rifle, spare mitts, footgear and bedding.

That winter I snowshoed nearly 800 miles with trappers, trying to become a trapper myself. We never wanted to leave there, but I couldn't make a living.

What did it all add up to? I will tell you. We were changed forever by our months in the Labrador wilderness. We will never be the same.

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

Riding the back of a Great Whale



Quebec's mighty Great Whale River offers a rapid and fall-studded ride to Hudson Bay. It's great volume attracted Hydro-Québec's dam planners.

By John Fiske

In 1979, the Eastmain River was diverted into Hydro-Quebec's massive LG 2 hydroelectric development on the La Grande River. Although I know a number of people who paddled down the river, I never did have the opportunity to witness Clouston Gorge, Conglomerate Gorge, Island Falls, Talking Rapids, and the other tremendous cataracts in the lower Eastmain.

Not wanting to miss the chance to see an East Side – east side of James Bay – river before they were all dammed, in 1987 I set my sights on either the Rupert River or the Great Whale River. My friend, and partner on the Winisk in 1986 Dan Cullaty and I (see *Che-Mun* Outfit 84), began to make plans to go down the Great Whale. We decided on the more remote Great Whale because it was slated for hydro development before the Ru-

pert. He planned to quit his job in June. I was self employed and able to take a month for the trip.

Dan's father's failing health prevented my friend from going on the trip, but he was able to drive Patrick Otton, whom I had met quite by chance, and I, and all our gear to Sept Iles, Quebec.

Patrick who was then 34 and I, then 25, rode the train to Schefferville, and chartered a bush flight to the dam on the Caniapiscou River on July 1, 1988. Our plan was to put in below the dam, continue down the Caniapiscou for eight miles, then portage about one mile up to Lac Duralde, the source of the Great Whale.

Hydro-Quebec literature I had obtained asserted that about 25 percent of the Caniapiscou's flow was being diverted into the La Grande project, so I assumed there would be plenty of water to float us eight miles down the Caniapiscou. Wrong

assumption.

The Caniapiscou was dry as a bone, and Patrick and I struggled for two arduous days to get down those eight miles. I wrote in my detailed journal: "The Caniapiscou is a mere shadow of what it used to be. We fought and clawed barely four miles down it today (July 2). Oh, what a chore! The stream (I cannot call it a river) is filled with rocks and shallow rapids. Over and over again we were obliged to unload the canoe and work it through shallow, narrow areas."

After two days on the dried-up Caniapiscou, we did portage up to Lac Duralde through buggy, though fairly open northern forest. It was a relief to paddle without obstructions freely on a lake.

For the next two weeks we followed the watershed across the high Quebec plateau. The weather was sparkling clear, and the winds generally moderate. Day after day we enjoyed easy paddling,

Expeditions

light rapids between lakes, few portages, and lovely campsites.

At Lac Maurel, on the 9th, Patrick sustained a serious cut on his left index finger. He had found a caribou antler and was attempting to saw off a piece to bring home. The saw jumped out and caught his finger. Patrick, who had obtained sutures from his surgeon-uncle in Montreal, bravely stitched the gash closed, without benefit of anesthesia. I asked him if it hurt. "Of course it does," he cheerfully replied. I tied the knots. The injury healed perfectly in only a week.

Later we wound our way down a deep, narrow stream from Lac Maurel into Lac Louet. "the stream is swift," I wrote, "and it weaves its way through a whole series of 15 to 20-foot hills that are covered only with moss. It was fabulous."

On the 11th we reached the vast, island-studded expanse of Lac Bienville. Careful navigation was imperative: to become lost among those hundreds of islands would mean being lost for days.

The Great Whale River begins with violent rapids at the southwest corner of Lac Bienville. The big lake is about 1,200 feet above sea level, and about 200 river miles from Hudson Bay. The initial rapids served to herald the nature of what we were going to encounter in the next two weeks, the second half of the trip.

We started down the river without much understanding of the river's power, and we ran into trouble. On the 16th, after two short portages around heavy rapids, we "were coasting down a fast-water stretch. Around a slight bend to the left was a noisy rapid which featured only a moderate drop in a short distance. One simply had to start left and push through the left side of the vee to avoid a large curl and a line of stacks in the center. There was plenty of room and water to the left.

"But we were lackadaisical about getting far enough left. The curl sloshed over the gunwale amidships and filled it up, and we went under."

I was swept downstream a mile before I could swim the canoe to shore. Patrick had made it ashore quickly and ran down stream shouting and coaching me as I struggled to get the canoe to shore. I was acutely aware of another marked rapids just ahead, and I did not want to go through it with a swamped canoe.

Our loss of food was minimal, but the kitchen wannigan disappeared. As we collected our gear, and took stock of our situation, the next two weeks appeared grim indeed. No pots or cooking utensils. That evening we cooked out of an ammo box.

In the morning we sullenly went about our usual routine and were on the water about 7:00 am. Not even a quarter-mile from our camp, though, we found our kitchen wannigan washed up on the shore. We dumped out the water, discarded some soggy spaghetti, thanked the Lord, and moved on.

After lunch the same day we reached a titanic and as far as I know, nameless, gorge. Foaming water 15 feet deep hammered over 20-30 foot drops and piled up into 10-20 foot stacks which exploded in a frenzy of spray.

"It's a great deal of work getting here. The portaging is incredibly strenuous. The walking is terrible. The alders are thick, and the shore rocks are sharp and irregular. Unbelievable!

"But the reward is the scenery. I can not imagine anything like it. The unbelievable volume and power of the water. The steep, high hills. The vertical walls of the gorge. The spray. It is the wildest scene imaginable."

Below the gorge we had more trouble. After portaging about 400-yards portage around some heavy run-off, the river contracted to a width of 50 feet for about five feet between low rock walls. The water formed a dark vee with heavy stacks below. I was sick of portaging, and the walking was dreadful, and I figured we could manage the last vee.

"I calmly suggested, in a routine sort of way, that we get some speed up and blast through the left side of the vee and catch the calm water to the left of the stacks. Working to the right was impossible because of a heavy curl at the top."

Now, the entire volume of the Great Whale River flows through this single vee. The water is very fast and very deep. We shot across the vee and into the eddy on the far side. And in a single instant we flipped. It happened so quickly that everything stayed in the canoe.

The eddy which flipped us carried us to shore quite quickly and, as Patrick put it, all we lost was some body heat. We were lucky again, but a strong sense of fear crept into me at this point. The river below was strong and fast with all kinds of boils, eddies and counter currents. I didn't want to flip again! But all I could see downstream was this terrible, complex, raging, deep current. My knot of fear grew. We adopted the most conservative strategy to all moving water for the rest of the trip. When in any doubt we lined.

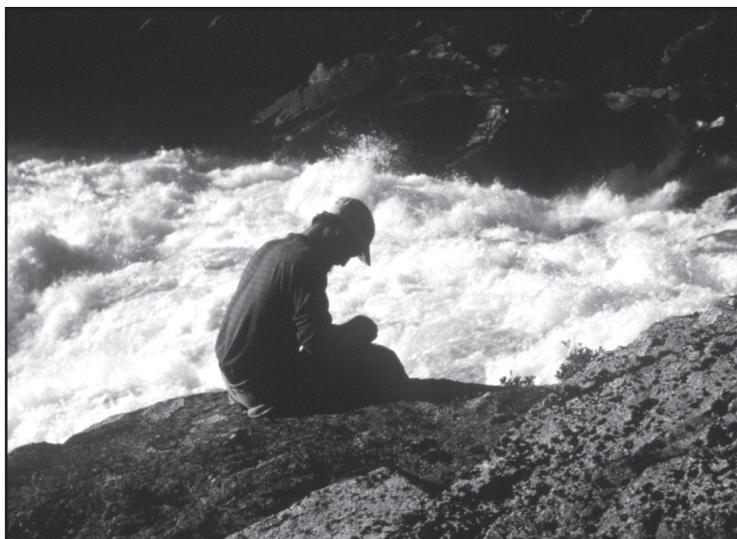
On July 23, I noted: "A tail wind! For the second time in the trip we had a tailwind, and it blew us more than 20 miles. But the southeast winds brought warmer weather, and the warmth brought out the black flies."

A few days later we reached the big falls, where the river drops about 80 feet in a single drop. Above the falls the river is a slow-moving lake-like thing, and the surrounding hills are low and set back from the river. Suddenly, the river quickens, and is gone.

At the foot of the falls, the river abruptly turns to the east, tumbles through a walled gorge, and then doglegs sharply back to the west. We eliminated the falls and gorge with a single difficult portage over a steep hill.

The effort was worth it. We knocked off four portages, and some dangerous river work with the one portage. We camped that night a half-mile below the falls mess beside a narrow and fast sluice.

The water shot over a four-foot drop in a long, slender, black vee that is smooth – until the eddies below. The boils, eddies and holes were as strong as I had ever seen. The river surged up and down by two feet. Huge swirling eddies created holes that would swallow the bow of the canoe.



Expeditions

Continued from Page 7

It was difficult to conceive of the amount of water flowing through that rock-bound passage. It is the same amount of water crashing over the falls, which are a couple hundred yards wide. That means the water is very deep, so deep that it drops over whatever it is – a ledge, rocks – in a perfectly smooth vee. The strength of the water was simply staggering.

It was this power that Hydro-Quebec sought to harness. The Great Whale was to be diverted to the north, and a smaller river, the Little Whale, was to be diverted to the south into a single channel and through a single powerhouse.

However, bitter opposition from the local Cree and Inuit, and cancellation of power contracts in New York and New England led Quebec

Premier Parizeau to announce in November, 1994 an indefinite halt to the project. One more unexpected surprise awaited us: forest fires. We had seen smoke the previous day, and sure enough there was fire. Just below that astonishing sluice, we shot rapids on the right while the left shore was on fire.

“We charged recklessly down the last stretch of rapids, taking water as we went. In the face of this new, and less predictable danger, we seemed to become less concerned with, nearly oblivious to the hazards of the river.”

After the fires, there were two more portages, around a long gorge and a falls we didn’t even see, and we were at the village of Kuujjuarapik, at the river’s mouth. We finished exactly accord-

ing to our itinerary, on July 30.

Patrick was to fly out to Montreal on a “sked” flight in a few days. I flew with the canoe to Val d’Or that afternoon on the back end of an Air Creebec charter. The next day I successfully hitchhiked to Kirkland Lake, and took the train to Temagami to see some friends.

Epilogue: The Great Whale, and the Rupert are still free-flowing rivers. There remain threats, however. When Quebec Premier Parizeau stopped the Great Whale project, he said, “We’re not saying never, but that project is on ice for quite a while.” Quebec sovereignty could spark renewed interest in further hydro-electric development in James Bay. Canoeists and environ-

Canoelit

Great Heart

The History of a Labrador Adventure
By James West Davidson and John Ruggie.
McGill-Queen’s University Press, 389pp \$22.95
ISBN: 0-7735-1657-3

This is a re-issue of one of the great canoeing books of recent years. We originally published this review in Outfit 53.

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 Ruggie 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 Ruggie chose the novelization route but had the good sense to make it appeal to both groups of readers. Those who want the straight historical story 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 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. The first half of the book can be 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 in-

teresting and revealing work in the book. There are many emotions at work 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 the exploration of feelings was 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 Ruggie serves it well. We gain an informed - and hypothesized - insight into the make-up of the central cast of characters.

Great Heart can take its place with pride on the bookshelf next to *Complete Wilderness Paddler*.

Arctic Cairn Notes Canoeist’s Reflections on the Hanbury-Thelon & Kazan Rivers.

Betelgeuse Books, Toronto. 237pp. \$16.95
ISBN: 0-9690783-7-4

This is quite a different type of canoe book and a novel idea. Originally done years ago as an archeological project for official purposes, the book created enough interest to proceed with a proper printing. The book is dedicated to Eric W. Morse, one of the early recreational canoeists in the far north and claimed as the creator of the oft-visited cairn at Helen Falls on the Hanbury River. (Morse said it was there when he arrived in 1962 and it’s true identity is revealed here.)

The entries are shown as they were written and vary widely in interest and legibility. Some nice photos are included including Morse’s. All in all a unique and interesting read of the feelings of passing wilderness paddlers.

Paddling through the Web

Over the past couple of years, the growth of the Internet and the World Wide Web has been the subject of much news attention, much of it negative. However, much of that story is positive and the emergence of this phenomenon has been a boon to information junkies. There has never in the world's history been available at such a widespread level the amount of sheer info from one single and convenient source - your computer.

Of course, the problem is, you can't verify everything you find on-line but by and large and when you consider the source, most of the stuff is bang on. For we lovers of canoeing and wilderness travel there is a wealth of material about the activity. Much of this is commercially centered, companies trying to get you to buy or use their product and services. But there are also a number of true amateurs who use the technology to provide what they might try to publish or just keep for their own records. What the Internet has done is remove the cost constraints for people to make available their expertise. We will have a look at one of these "amateurs" and are happy to provide a list of some of our favourite canoe-related sites. We realize that many of you don't have a computer. Perhaps a story like this will help you realize a productive use for one.

Richard Munn is a *Che-Mun* subscriber from northern Ontario who started up his own website recently. (The address is www.cyberbeach.net/~munn/) We sent him an e-mail and asked him a few questions, in true web fashion, we will let him respond in his own words.

"First, a little background information about myself. I'm 42 years old and have been poking about in the bush on foot and in a canoe for many years. My introduction to paddling came as a kid at John Island (YMCA camp). I get out four or five times a year on short (3-5 day) trips in Northeastern Ontario. Mainly rivers like the French, Pickerel, Wanapitei, Spanish, etc. Every year, I seem to be designated "trip planner" for a number of groups that I paddle with.

Why the website?

First of all, the website is strictly a personal project - I'm just putting it together in my spare time, and using space in my "home directory" at my internet service provider. It's really a labour of love, and I'm putting it together for a couple of reasons.

"1. It's a way to wile away the winter hours when I can't actually get out and paddle! Sitting in front of a topo map isn't as good as paddling, but at least it keeps me occupied while the lakes are frozen.

"2. I seem to collect routes the way some people collect stamps - I love getting my hands on any information pertaining to trips that I might eventu-

ally be interested in paddling. This information piled up until I finally decided to get organized and put it into a filing cabinet. Summarizing the information seemed to follow naturally, and the website came from that.

"3. As I say on the welcome page of my website, it isn't getting any easier to lay our hands on route descriptions. Ministry of Natural Resources offices are getting more and more reluctant to send out documentation on routes they haven't maintained for years. The information that can be obtained varies widely in quality and detail. Also, there are hundreds of great

routes out there that the MNR doesn't even know about. It seems a real shame that there isn't any central clearing house for this valuable information.

"4. Canoe route information isn't exactly a hot item that's going to greatly excite publishers. I must say that it's nice to see some new documentation being published, for example the books by Kevin Callan and Toni Harting by Boston Mills, but I don't think that publishers are going to exactly be fighting over this type of publishing project because of the limited market. That being the case, the world wide web is an ideal forum for putting together this type of information. It's easy to enter and modify route information, and that information is instantly accessible to all. Another plus is that it enables two-way communication paddlers can easily e-mail me with new routes and corrections/additional information on the ones that are there.

"Where is it going to go from here?"

"Who knows! I am working hard to enable the message forum feature on the website. This will work just like a newsgroup. Paddlers will be able to post questions or comments, and

anyone visiting the site will be able to respond to these questions or comments.

"It would be nice to have downloadable detailed route descriptions. The information that's on the site right now is sort of a "thumbnail sketch" of the actual route. It's intended to be enough to enable someone to see if the route is the right length, duration, difficulty and provide enough detail so that somebody can follow the route on a topo map. For most of the routes, I have much more information than that, but space and time constraints prevent that degree of detail.

"I'd love to extend the information base to include other provinces. For the time being though, it's going to be tough enough finding the time to get information entered on the 300 or so Ontario canoe routes I have on file. Beyond that, I'm willing to respond to the wish list of paddlers that will use the website. I'm hoping to get some feedback once the site is completed that will enable me to fine tune it.

A few of our other favourite web places:

- www.canoe.ca/allaboutcanoes/che-mun.html Yes, that's right, it's *Che-Mun* online! And a lot more, you can view colour pics from our 1992 Heart of the North trip in the Photos section.
- www.mcs.gen.me.us The Maine Canoe Symposium site with bios and schedules.
- web.idirect.com/~hland/index.html Here's a neat site for northern scholars. Arctic Dawn is the edited text of Samuel Hearne's Arctic journeys.
- www.otccanoe.com Check out all the latest models and features of Old Town Canoe.
- www.wcha.org/index.html The Wooden Canoe Heritage Association's thorough and interesting site.
- www.gorp.com A large and diverse site with hundreds of outdoor and canoeing related entries.
- www.nunavik.net and apa.nunamet.com These two sites give you the lowdown on Arctic Quebec and Nunavut (NWT), a great way to stay in touch.
- www.cangeo.ca The interesting site of Canadian Geographic magazine and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society.
- www.edt.gov.nt.ca/guide/index.html The tourism people of NWT and their Virtual Vacation.

News & Notes

QUEST FOR THE COAST . . .The awkwardly named *Quest-Sea/Enquette-Mer* canoe trip dropped us a note somewhat after the fact but we thought you might be interested. This 64 day, 110 mile trip followed a route from the Boundary Waters to Hudson Bay and finished last September. They believe they might have been the first to have followed Quetico waters to the Bay, rather than the usual portage into the Hayes River.

This routing may sound familiar to many perhaps recalling Eric Sevaireid's famous trip in the same area in the 1930s. A unique feature of this trip was that for their final leg, they took the Nelson River down to the Bay. The Nelson is a very big - and dammed - river which was not part of the usual historical route.

Two solo paddlers made the trek; Anna Shallman and Jim Dale Huot-Vickery both of Ely, Minnesota. Huot-Vickery is a well known local writer who used to go by the surname Vickery until recently. He traces his routes back to New France in 1670.

The trip was made in memory of Ernest Oberholtzer, Sigurd and Elizabeth Olson and Bill Mason, all of who spent much of their lives defending wild country.

COME AND SEA . . .The 10th annual Inland Sea Symposium will be held in Bayfield, Wisconsin from June 19-22 at the Red Cliff Tribal Grounds.

The event will feature primarily sea kayakers but Lake Superior is such an amazing place for canoeists as well, we though you should know about it. The weekend features talks and workshops from many including British kayaking master Derek Hutchinson who will weave tales and images of his North Sea crossing. Olaf Malver will present *Sea Kayaking on the Edge of the Earth* which features his travels to Indonesia, Vietnam, Portugal and southern Greenland.

The weekend will also feature a pow wow with the Red Cliff Ojibwa. For more info contact the Inland Sea Society, Box 1202, Bayfield, WI USA 54814 or call 715-779-5714.

ANYPLACE WILD . . .We told many of you about the PBS series we filmed two episodes of last fall formerly called *Backcountry* and now christened *Anyplace Wild*. We received great news from the producers recently. A large amount of the two shows Michael and Geoffrey Peake appear in have been made into the series premiere on Wed. June 4 at 8 p.m. on your local PBS affiliate and titled *Anyplace Wild: The Special*.

Those two 30-minute shows will also appear in full form during the 13 show regular rotation. *Canoeing the Borderline* is a trip through the Boundary Waters including a loaded jaunt along the 9-mile Grande Portage. And *In the Wake of the Voyageurs* is a trip on Lake Superior in a 36-foot voyageur canoe.

Other shows include winter climbing in New Hampshire, kayaking the Green River in Utah and a whitewater ride down Maine's Machias River.

Our Back Pages

The following back issues of Che-Mun are available at \$5 each including postage. Those denoted by an asterisk are photocopies of the original issue.

Outfit 38 - Voyageurs trip to Old Fort William
Outfit 39 - Caribou drown in Quebec, Cross-Canada canoeing*
Outfit 40 - Eric Morse and The Voyageurs*
Outfit 41 - Grand Canal Project - Thlewiaza River solo
Outfit 42 - The Morse River Expedition Part One
Outfit 43 - The Morse River Expedition Part Two
Outfit 44 - Bill Mason & the Dog R., Athabasca letter
Outfit 45 - Pipe River by Eric Morse, River flow chart
Outfit 46 - Hudson Bay to Ungava, Stew Coffin report
Outfit 47 - Heritage Rivers, Trans Canada Expedition
Outfit 48 - Freshwater Saga - Morse R. memoirs, slide fest
Outfit 49 - Queen Charlottes kayaking, HBC sell-off
Outfit 50 - Royal couple canoe the Hanbury/Thelon*
Outfit 51 - Traditional canoeing through Quetico Park
Outfit 52 - Lands Forlorn review, Atomic Arctic proposal
Outfit 53 - Chubb Crater in Ungava, Hubbard & Wallace
Outfit 54 - Povungnituk 88 - Ungava, Sleeping Island rev.
Outfit 55 - Memories of Bill Mason, Twin Otter gone
Outfit 56 - Canoeing stamps, Hanbury review, WCA slidefest
Outfit 57 - North American Canoe Symposium, book reviews
Outfit 58 - Churchill River trip, The Lonely Land rev.
Outfit 59 - Tyrrell brothers, Water & Sky, Alberta Pulp wars
Outfit 60 - Via Rail, Missinaibi River, James Bay, HBC exit
Outfit 61 - Inside LG2, Aki on the Barrens, Grey Owl
Outfit 62 - Across Ungava via Kogaluk & Payne rivers, Flaherty's book

Outfit 63 - Canoeing in the 1930s, Hydro-Quebec chairman
Outfit 64 - Rupert R. 1914, Keewaydin Guide, Fur Trade Canoe Routes
Outfit 65 - Churchill River hydro, Robert Perkins, James Bay
Outfit 66 - Lands Forlorn, HACC in Japan, Needle to the North
Outfit 67 - NWT division, Canoe Museum, James Bay
Outfit 68 - Charles Camsell, Barrens Wedding, Book reviews
Outfit 69 - Sig Olson Remembered, Historic riverflows
Outfit 70 - Great Bear to Coppermine, Ungava photos
Outfit 71 - Coppermine planning, Land of Feast & Famine
Outfit 72 - Eric Morse River List, Ungava Journey, J.B. Tyrrell
Outfit 73 - Petawawa River, David Thompson map, NWT regs
Outfit 74 - Pukaskwa River, Helen Falls cairn, Quetico trip
Outfit 75 - Tyrrell pictures, Hearne's route, Heritage Rivers
Outfit 76 - HBC money, MacDougall Pass, Sig Olson, Tyrrell
Outfit 77 - River stamps, Exploration of N. Canada, Book reviews
Outfit 78 - Across the Arctic Mts, LaVase Portage, Food drying
Outfit 79 - Book reviews, Thompson journal, Great Whale stopped
Outfit 80 - Warburton Pike, Wabakimi Park, Merrick's True North
Outfit 81 - Arctic Land Exped, David Hanbury, Diamond development
Outfit 82 - Arctic Land Expedition report, Book reviews, Nunavut
Outfit 83 - Jacobson's Caribou River, *Canoescapes* rev, Franklin's journal
Outfit 84 - 1955 Moffatt Exped., Winisk R., John Rae's effigy & Cloak-boat
Outfit 85 - Rocky Defiled, Grey Owl movie, Bill Mason bio, Canoe Museum
Outfit 86 - PBS's Backcountry, E. Merrick's Labrador photos, Summerwrap
Outfit 87 - Across the Barrens to Arctic Sound, Dr. John Rae, Cree wisdom

Winter Packet. *Continued from Page 2.* ironic if it belonged to some happy-go-lucky third party who remains blissfully unaware of the resultant tempest in a toilet bowl?"

Christopher Morris replies:

As my friend Dave Whyte notes, the offending refuse did not belong to our group, and about that I wish only to say that we had two helicopter pilots as our guests throughout the storm, who were not equipped with rainwear, who would have laughed heartily at any version of a 200m rule, and who most certainly would not have followed it given the weather and their clothing. But our annoyance at being wrongly accused is really beside the point.

"I am confused by Mr. Hodgins argument, which is both invalid (bad logic) and unsound (faulty premises). He concludes that my observations about his group's itinerary follow from my alleged self-image as an expert. Observations are simply observations, and I just recounted what I saw. I note that Mr. Hodgins has not disputed the facts about his abilities in planning and guiding a

two-week trip, such that he was unable to make his pick-up or choose a camp in a sheltered spot.

"No wonder his advanced experience level wasn't obvious to me! But it is unclear how this is connected in any way with my expertise or lack thereof. With regards to that, I suppose that I've never really considered myself an expert, and it isn't clear at all why he would impute that. I sometimes tip over in rapids, get lost, or make any number of other mistakes when I trip. I certainly make no secret of them, and I'm sure that they will continue, although I do try hard not to make the same ones twice.

"With Mr. Hodnett I disagree deeply, but although his views anger me, I can nonetheless respect his sincerity. When it comes to the wilderness, I am a libertarian first and an environmentalist second. I go to the wilderness not to break rules, but to be in a place where the only constraints are those imposed by nature, and which do not lend themselves to rules mindlessly conceived and applied. I sometimes see people doing things in the wilderness that I find offensive, but I would never consider giving them unwanted

advice, be they hunters, pilots, or canoeists.

"Where the wilderness is concerned, I value nothing more than the freedom of spirit and action that it offers, and I deeply resent those whose views require them to impinge upon that freedom. I realize that this idea needs a longer defense, but here I simply don't have the space. Mr. Hodnett clearly feels strongly about his minutely prescribed wilderness rules; strongly enough to attempt to foist them on others. Perhaps guiding cattle trips requires the sort of regimented behaviour that is so fundamentally out of step with the natural rhythms of the barrenlands. I wouldn't know, and don't want to. Although I cannot abide Mr. Hodnett's views, and will resist the likes of him whenever I meet such people, I do respect the sincerity with which he holds his beliefs.

"I consider it a privilege to have been asked to contribute to *Che-Mun*, and hope to do so in the future. I have tried here, to make it clear that what I wrote did not spring from trivial motives."

Nunavut Newline continued from Page 2

NEW NUNAVIK NUMBER 1 . . . Quebec's northern Inuit have given Makivik president Zebedee Nungak an overwhelming mandate to lead them into the 21st century.

The favorite heading into last week's three-way race for the presidency did not disappoint odds makers, taking 79 percent of the Nunavik-wide vote. The results were announced during Makivik's annual general meeting in Kangiqsualujjuaq (George River).

Just over half of eligible beneficiaries – 4,347 – bothered to exercise their voting privileges.

Nungak said he considers his election to a new three-year term as a clear mandate to pursue talks with the federal and provincial governments on issues such as self-government and offshore claims for Nunavik.

An agreement-in-principle with Ottawa over Makivik's claim to offshore rights in the Hudson Strait and the Labrador Sea could be weeks away, Nungak said.

NUNABUCKS . . . Quebec Inuit leaders ushered in a new era in Nunavik's development this spring. Since December, when Hydro Quebec made its last \$1 million compensation payment, Makivik's financial future has been entirely in its own hands.

The significance of this milestone was not lost on delegates to the birthright corporation's annual general meeting in Kangiqsualujjuaq in April.

In his opening remarks to community representatives, board members and a small delegation of elders, Makivik president Zebedee Nungak referred to the great challenge facing this 22-year-old organization: to preserve

its \$91 million compensation fund.

At the same time, he said Makivik must respond to growing demands to do something about social issues. High unemployment, coupled with a high birthrate, continue to challenge Makivik's economic development initiatives.

Most of the 8,600 people in this vast territory, a region covering 660,000 square km, a third of the surface area of the province of Quebec, still live below the poverty level, a problem magnified by the high cost of living in the North.

Makivik's largest subsidiary, First Air, continues to generate lots of money for the Corporation. But now, confronted with tragic social problems that continue to plague their communities, profit margins in themselves don't seem to offer a great sense of cultural security.

Makivik has budgeted \$864,919 this year for spending on social issues. That's up from about \$550,000 last year.

A crew of about 100 will descend on Iqaluit this spring to begin filming the story of Matthew Henson, the man who accompanied explorer Robert Peary to the North Pole.

Regional Tourism Officer Rick Hamburg said scouts from Turner Network Television came to the town to find out if the area is suitable to film Henson's story.

Hamburg said they were looking specifically for pressure ridge ice, open water and general landscapes, similar to the type found in north Ellesmere Island and Greenland. They also wanted to be able to transport film and supplies easily and house their staff.



photo: John Fiske

CLOSE TO WATER -- The many big falls on the Great Whale river make Quebec enroute to the village of Kuu-juarpik on Hudson Bay.

Upcoming Events

- * The 12th annual Maine Canoe Symposium will be held at Camp Winona in Bridgton, Maine June 6-8. Call 207/647-3721
- * The Vermont Canoe and Traditional Small Craft Day is at the Hulbert Centre, Fairlee, VT. (802-333-3405)
- * Adirondack Museum's No-Octane Regatta for wooden boats. June 13-15, Blue Mt. Lake, NY. Ph:518-352-7311.

CHE-MUN

Founded in 1973 by Nick Nickels

The Journal of Canadian Wilderness Canoeing

**Box 548, Station O
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4A 2P1**

Phone: 416/789-2142 Fax:416/ 789-7553

E-Mail: che-mun@rogers.wave.ca

Subscription rates:

One year: \$20

Two years: \$36

Note: U.S orders in U.S. dollars

Che-Mun appears quarterly

A publication of the Hide-Away Canoe Club.

