

CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 81

CHE-MUN

SUMMER 1995

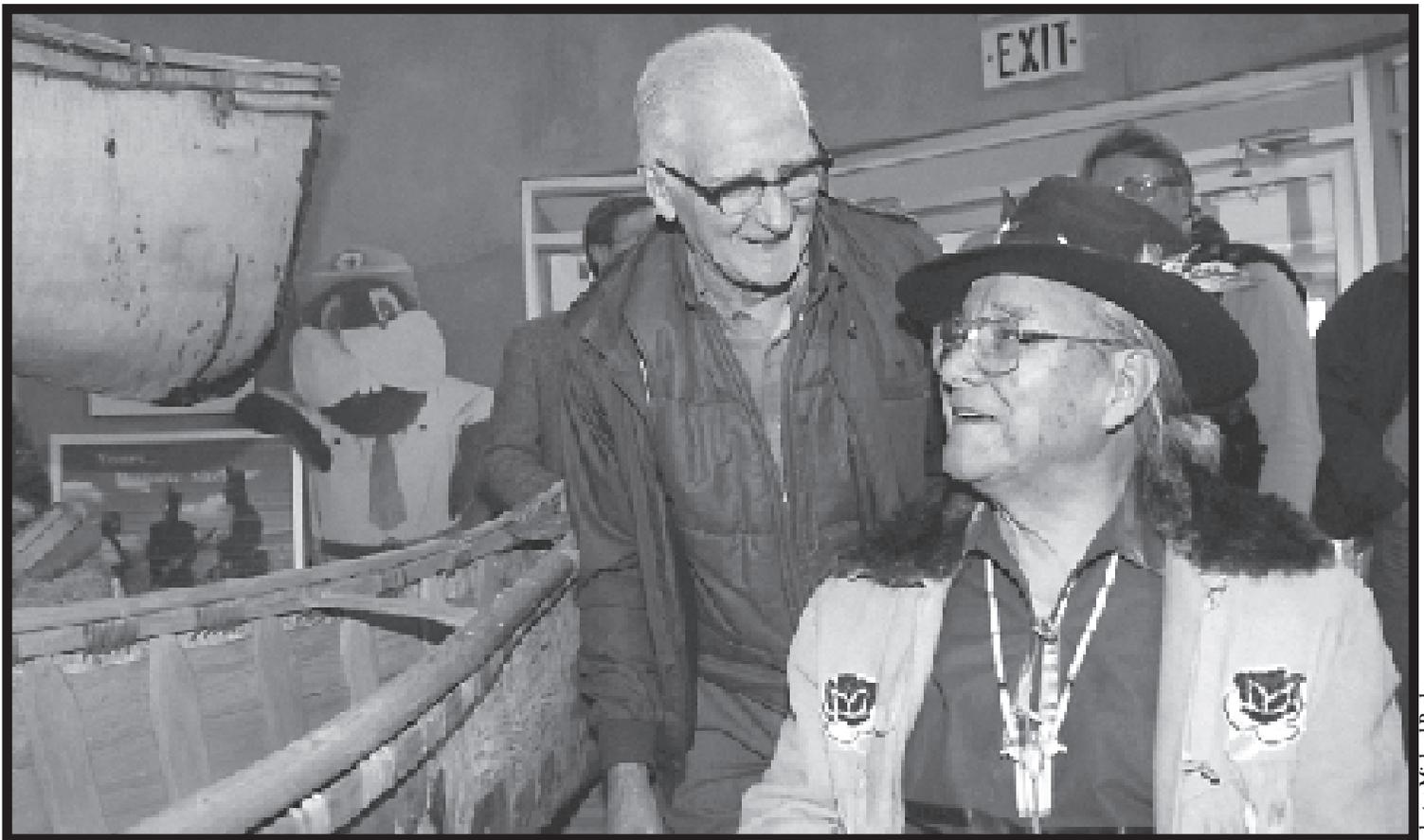


photo: Michael Peake

THE CANOE KINGS -- Two of the giants of canoe making in this century are shown here having a chat at a special meeting of the Canadian Canoe Museum held last April at the Liftlock Centre in Peterborough, Ontario. Walter Walker of Lakefield,

Ont (left) and William Commanda of Golden Lake, Ont are both in the canoe museum's builders Hall of Fame. Walter was inducted in 1994 and Commanda this year. He has been making superb cedarstrip canoes for more than 60 years. William

Commanda is the pre-eminent birchbark canoe maker. Some of his work is seen on the left of the frame. The pair represent the best of two schools of canoe making and we are happy to see they were honoured while still with us.

HACC's Arctic Land Expedition

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Stew Coffin - our first centrespread

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Wither wilderness - an NWT view

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Summer Packet



The above photo shows the perils of canoeing down south. It was sent by subscriber **Stephen Loring** who works for the prestigious Smithsonian Institution in Washington. He wrote;

"Like you guys I've had my share of delicious northern adventures, river trips cleverly disguised as archaeological fieldwork and I haven't closed the book on my northern wanderings just yet.

"But I don't want you guys in Toronto to think it's all a piece of cake in the lower 48. You don't have to worry about sliding around a sharp turn to find a 10-foot alligator on her nest - and pissed off. You don't have to worry about "rains" of snakes - mostly cottonmouths - falling into your boat when you are trying to push a route up a tree-choked channel. You don't have to worry about beer-drinking redneck fishermen (ALL of whom are armed), nor about mosquitoes the size of baseballs. Anyway, here's your 16 bucks. Thanks for a great job"

Thanks for the comments Stephen. You're right we don't have to worry about those things. And we damed glad we don't. The biggest biter up here is taxes.

Barry Hansen of Echo Bay, Ontario sent this letter along with his renewal this spring.

"Last summer me canoeing chum and I did the Soper River on Baffin Island with my sons and a friend. While technically not very challenging, it is a

beautiful area of Baffin Island. After the canoe trip we were fortunate to travel to Pond Inlet and hike for several days.

While not travelling the trips of the Peakes, Bob and I have travelled the Burnside and Coppermine rivers

in the NWT as well as the Bloodvein, Missinaibi, Steele and Moisie rivers over the years. Usually the just the two of us, which does limit, to some extent, the rapids we run.

"We did have an interesting trip down the Coppermine in 1993 when it was in full flood. We were told at the town of Coppermine that the river was six feet above normal. It made for some interesting runs through the canyons. This year we're headed for the Hood River, teaming up with two guys from Scotland, whom we met on the Burnside in 1991."

"I had the misfortune of canoeing the Missinaibi last summer with my wife and two other ladies. It was the first time I had been on the river since 1981 and I was appalled at the changes. The number of people and the amount of human garbage and excrement were unbelievable. The prime culprits appear to be the youth camps now using the river for wilderness tripping. They appear to have no concept of wilderness etiquette. Perhaps it is something you could editorialize about since I only see it getting worse. At least as of yet the northern Arctic rivers are yet to be polluted by these groups though I'm sure they're on their way."

We like to hear from our subscribers; what trips they've done and what trips they're planning. In that regard we were happy to hear from Richard Reed from Regina, Sask.

"Enclosed please find my subscription for two more years. I find your publication very interesting and I read all the articles at least once before putting it down. Keep up the good work!

"My son Darren, myself and two friends Chris Coolican and Scott Wainke canoed the Clearwater River last August.

"The Clearwater runs out of Lloyd Lake in Northwest Saskatchewan and ends at Fort McMurray in Alberta. This is a Heritage River and hopefully will remain wild and free forever. It is one of the most beautiful and wild rivers in our province and can only be enjoyed by those who learn the skills required to travel in remote places.

"This year we are planning a trip down the Foster River in North Central Saskatchewan. We are looking forward to this new adventure but it will have to be really special to even come close the the Clearwater. I hope we get the chance to meet you someday. Until then, keep paddling and keep publishing."

Here's a portion of a letter received by Gwen Hayball author of the book on Warburton Pike (see Outfit 80). She wrote to thank *Che-Mun* for the mention of her book which was already getting orders.

"I found the two issues of *Che-Mun* very interesting reading and read them both at once. I too have a story to tell about my experience in the Richardson Mountain (Ed Note: She is referring to the MacDougall Pass story in Outfit 79) but it must wait until later. Suffice to say the Dempster Highway has a special place in my heart, I've been on it four times. In addition to my ten visits to Bathurst Inlet Lodge.

"Having poured over maps of the Canadian Arctic, every time names like McPherson, Aklavik, Great Slave Lake, Reliance, Kathawachago Lake etc. crop up in correspondence of books, I get a lovely whiff of the vast open wilderness which they induce. I know of no person in my area with whom I can share experiences of the Canadian north, so it is wonderful to



Editor's Notebook

This Editor's Notebook is one of the last things I'll write before I head off my what has become a regular ten-year deliverance. It was a decade ago when through the good graces of my employer, The Toronto Sun, I embarked on my first company sabbatical. Those 12-weeks of paid vacation enabled me to take part in the Morse River adventure, a trip that changed my canoeing life forever.

It was just a few months before when I had taken over Che-Mun and canoeing was becoming a second - and unpaid - vocation. Now another ten years has passed and the sabbatical program is kicking in again - this time with 14 weeks off.

You can read all about this year's trip, The Arctic Land Expedition, on pages 4 & 5. I realize we'll never be able to duplicate the magic that was the Morse trip - and it would be foolish to try. This year, the Hide-Away Canoe Club is doing a trip that crosses paths with that 1985 trip and finishes near the mouth of the Morse River. Incidentally, the name Morse River now appears on topo map 66F - Pelly Lake. It was extremely gratifying to see Eric's name officially printed and rewarding to know that I had a part in it.

I hope you enjoy seeing our cover photo of two of the great canoe builders of the century talking to one another. I had the honour to attend both the investitures of Walter Walker and William Commanda into the Canadian Canoe Museum Hall of Fame. It was a privilege to take their picture together.

We hope to bring you more about the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough soon. The massive project is moving ahead at glacial speed but they should be set for an announcement soon. We are all hoping for great things from the premier collection of canoes and canoeing memorabilia - most collected by Kirk Wipper - over a lifetime of dedication of the pastime.

I will be gone until the end of August, so keep that in mind if you have written or are trying to get in touch with Che-Mun. I'm looking forward to immersing myself in the Barrenlands once again. We both have only so many years left.

Michael Peake, Editor.

Tony Lovink

A 'Voyageur' is gone

One of the great figures of Canadian wilderness canoeing, A. H. J. Lovink, the former Dutch ambassador to Canada, died on March 27 at the age of 92.



Antonius Hermanus Johannes, or "Tony", Lovink, along with Eric Morse, Sigurd Olson and other members of *The Voyageurs*, retraced forgotten historic canoe trails in the 1950s and 60s.

A tall, athletic man with a fine physique, Tony Lovink was proud of his

northern canoe travels and once had to hide his hands - blackened by scrubbing pots on his latest trip - from the Queen of the Netherlands whom he was attending at a state dinner.

Born in The Hague on July 12, 1902, Tony Lovink began his career in the diplomatic service in 1923. He was the last Governor-General of Indonesia in 1949, and his many postings, several as ambassador, included Germany, China, Australia, Russia and, of course, Canada where he served as the Netherlands Ambassador from 1950-57 and again from 1960-67. In Ottawa, he was Dean of the diplomatic corps and a well-respected man in many circles.

It was his posting to Ottawa that would greatly change the course of his well-travelled life. It was here he began his association with a group of men who became known as *The Voyageurs*. The beginning of the group was at a 1951 dinner party in Ottawa, as Eric Morse recounted in his memoirs, *Freshwater Saga*.

"After dinner, in a spirit of gentle banter, some of the Canadians were asking the diplomats how they could possibly learn much of the true Canada on the cocktail circuit. They should experience what it was like to paddle the Canadian lakes and rivers, trudge over portages, feel the spray of rapids, camp among pines and face the insects. In the end the diplomats said, 'Okay, show us.'"

Eric Morse, Dr. Omond Solandt and journalist Blair Fraser took three diplomats on a 10-day trip organized by Morse. Of the three taken on the Gatineau and Lièvre rivers, one, Tony Lovink, remained a lifetime friend and canoeing companion of the group.

Over the next two decades these men paddled fur trade routes that had seen virtually no traffic since historic times. Their mode of travel - as modern adventurers with a respect for the land and a keen sense of history - set the standard for

HACC 1995

The Arctic Land Expedition

By MICHAEL PEAKE
Che-Mun Editor

The search for interesting, historical canoe routes to undertake has been a passion of the Hide-Away Canoe Club. For 16 years, we have been researching and re-doing some of Canada's most interesting canoe journeys. Our Director of Research, Sean Peake, pulled out a plum when he discovered the genesis of this year's trip - The Arctic Land Expedition (see complete map of route on Page 12.)

The ALE, as we call it, has roots related to the well-known expedition taken by Capt. George Back in 1833-34 which culminated in the descent - and ascent - of the Back River. Back's surgeon on that trip was Dr. Richard King who went on to publish his own version of the trip - one that was somewhat critical of Back and the route chosen.

Back's expedition was an arduous one which came in the middle of what is now called the Little Ice Age. This period, from roughly 1830-50 which coincided with the a great deal of sailing activity in Canada's north, was one of long, cold winters and brief cool summers. That made northern travel by boat particularly difficult.

Dr. King, who appears to have been a highly outspoken man, published *Narrative of a journey to the shore of the Arctic Ocean* in 1836. One of his criticisms of Back was the route to the Arctic Ocean which was full of large lakes - lakes that were late to break up or did not melt at all. King said that Back's party met a "very intelligent Indian called by the traders 'La Camarade de Mandeville'" who possessed considerable knowledge of the area through which they wanted to travel. La Camarade drew a map of the route (reproduced here and in King's book) which showed the area. King said the natives were "unanimous and positive on one point" and that was the many advantages of the Fish River (Thelon) over the Great Fish River (Back).

"The former was described as being a broad and noble stream, decorated on either bank with tall pine and birch, and flowing in uninterrupted tranquility to its journey's end. The latter was graphically portrayed as abounding in rapids, narrows and dangerous shoals, destitute of wood, even for fuel, full of dangerous cascades and, after a course more tortuous

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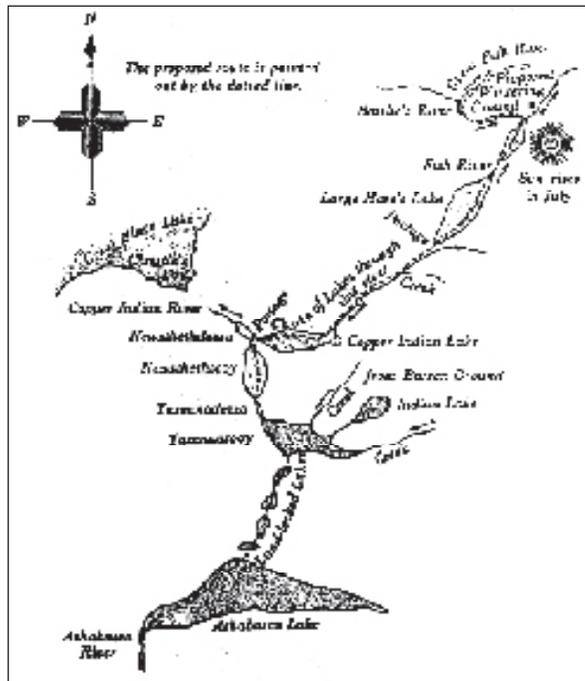
river would end up where he wanted to go, i.e. the Arctic Ocean. Back's original mission had been to search for the missing Ross party but those plans were changed when Ross returned safely. Back was now ordered to map the Arctic coastline for as far as he was able.

Back's descent was tortuous. They had to drag their large skiff-like boats over 200 miles of ice which considerably slowed them. King insisted that by wintering near the headwaters of the Thelon they could have been paddling that whole time since the Fish River contained no large lakes except at its headwaters which he called Large Hares Lake. This is either Whitefish or Lynx the two large lakes at the head of the Thelon which are separated by about three feet in elevation and are well known as trophy fishing lakes.

In 1845, just as the final Franklin expedition was preparing to depart, King sent a series of letters to the British Admiralty insisting that yet another Polar Sea expedition was folly. King resurrected his route and tried to get permission to get two officers and 13 men to accompany him. The tone of his letters to Sir John Barrow, Secretary to the Admiralty, were somewhat saucy. His letters were printed in *The Athenæum*, a popular journal of the day. Some excerpts follow;

"And now let me call your attention to the . . . Polar Land Journeys - those fruitful missions, but for which you would have been deprived of some one or another of your favourite Polar Sea Expeditions. A short survey of the Polar Land Journeys will afford a standard of comparison with the Polar Sea Expeditions and develop the true position. The publication of the travels of Hearne, the fur trader. . . demonstrated that the

Polar Sea could be reached by way of Canada and the successes which attended the first government expedition proved that the opinion which had been formed was in every way correct. The distance between the Coppermine River and Point Turnagain, as Sir John Franklin named the point of his retrograde movement, was thus made known to us. A second expedition added the distance between the Mackenzie and the Coppermine . . . A third expedition eclipsed all, and left to be surveyed but a small portion of the North American boundary of the Polar Sea.



than that of any river known to the oldest and most experienced of their tribe, tumbled over its northern barrier in a foaming cataract into the sea."

The native reports were, of course, essentially correct. later they met a Metis named La Prise at Fort Resolution who confirmed those thoughts and mentioned the promise of abundant game along the Fish (Thelon). The Indians also believed that the two rivers' mouths were not far apart, which was wrong. Capt. Back decided to take the Great Fish route as he did not believe a wooded

Expeditions

“Is this not sufficient encouragement to send a fourth? The fruits of the ten Polar Sea Expeditions will not balance with those of the last three Polar Land Journeys. . . Even the little that has been done by the Polar Sea Expeditions is of doubtful character. Bank’s Land, North Sommerset, the North Georgian Group of Islands and the boundaries of Barrow Strait are still problems. It is not so with the labours of Franklin, Richardson and Simpson; the footing they made is permanent, while Croker’s Mountains have dissolved, and islands threaten to be continents and continents island, the natural consequence of discovery in ships. . . Another fruitless Polar Sea Expedition, and fruitless it will assuredly be, if not well digested, will be a lasting blot in the annals of our voyages of discovery.”

Whew! There’s little wonder that King did not endear himself to the Admiralty, who after all were all about ships, with a letter like that. Needless to say, King did not get his expedition or anything else. He did have the dubious satisfaction of predicting the failure of the final Franklin expedition and he continued to write about the subject until his death. In fact, he later offered to lead an expedition by his proposed route to search for the missing Franklin group. As it turned out, his route would have gone to the mouth of the Back, very close to King William Island where the final remains of the Franklin party lie.

It would be some time before King’s route resurfaced again. In 1914, Charles Camsell, working for the Geological Survey of Canada mentioned it in *An Exploration of the Tazin and Taltson River, Northwest Territories, Memoir 84, GSC, 1916*. While Camsell noted that Hearne was the only person who left written records of travel through this area, King had proposed it. He noted, “(King’s) route was the same as ours was as far at the junction of the Tazin and Taltson river. . . King’s proposed route was never carried out, but it is interesting as showing that there is a canoe route through this region to the Thelon River that has been known to the Indians and used by them as far back as 80 years ago.”

The HACC trip this summer will begin at the spot where Camsell left Lake Athabasca - Camsell Portage – to do a series of portages up to Tazin Lake.

A similar route through the area was undertaken by Guy Blanchet in 1925 and printed in *The Canadian Field Naturalist, Vol. XL Nos. 4 & 5*. Blanchet’s party travelled up the Dog River which drains into the Slave, to access the Taltson. Three men in a 19-foot Peterborough canoe and a tiny boat for crossing the height-of-land headed up the Taltson and over into Eileen Lake which Blanchet named. They continued

on to the head of the Snowdrift River which lies just above there and thence down to Great Slave Lake.

Their journey of 600 miles proved, as Blanchet wrote, “the ancient Indian route has been given new life and King’s dream of nearly 100 years ago has been proved practicable. The rivers of the interior furnish a highway leading across the height-of-land, which by the Arctic or Hudson Bay coast may be reached.”

The Arctic Land Expedition will be a trip of 50 days and 1000 miles following King’s proposed route. We will travel on seven rivers following our ascent to Tazin Lake via Camsell’s Portage. These waterways are the Tazin, Thekulthli, Taltson, Thelon, Hanbury, Baillie and Back rivers. We will begin at Camsell Portage on July 7 and finish on the Back River on Garry Lake, near the mouth of the Morse River, on Aug 25.

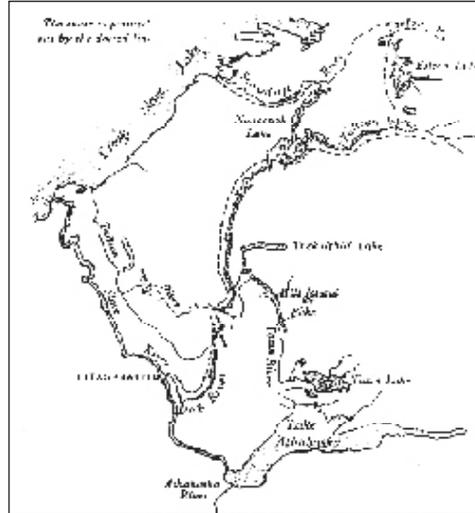
Participants this year are Andrew Macdonald and Michael Peake on the first half which will end at the outlet of the Thelon River at Lynx Lake on August 1. Andrew will fly out on the plane that brings in Peter Brewster and David and Geoffrey Peake. The four of us will descend the Thelon to the junction of the Hanbury, ascend the Hanbury to MacDonald’s Falls

and then head over the height-of-land to the headwaters of the Baillie River which enters the Back.

With three charter flights on Air Tindi of Yellowknife the trip is expensive; but we once again have been able to attract a number of sponsors to help defray costs. **Wood’s Canada, Canadian North, A Division of Canadian Airlines International** and the **Government of the Northwest Territories** are our principal sponsors. Patrons of the Expedition include, The Toronto Sun, President’s Choice, BBS-TV and Clorox Canada.

One of the toughest areas to figure out is the ascent of the Hanbury River which, as far as we can tell, hasn’t been done since 1900. But of you look at Hanbury’s description of it on Page 9 of the Outfit it seemed that he found it no problem at all. People have always wondered how much tougher the old timers were. We will probably have a good test of that this summer.

We are experienced at going upstream but haven’t tackled something the size of the Hanbury as it falls off the Canadian Shield. But the lure of seeing Dickson Canyon and Helen Falls, with the Eric Morse cairn, is too much to resist. Will it be too much to surmount? Stayed tuned the answer will come in Outfit 82!



Blanchet’s map in *The Canadian Naturalist*.

Rooting out just what’s a route

You may have seen the mention about this trip in the ‘Upcoming Che-Mun’ box on Page 12 of Outfit 80. We described it as a never-before-travelled route.

Well, those words got the dander up of one of our faithful readers, who will remain nameless. This reader who knew about our route wrote, and in no uncertain terms, blasted us for describing it so. He insisted that virtually every bit of the proposed route had been canoed by various people over the years - including him. Furthermore, we weren’t fooling anyone by placing those claims on our canoe/ego trip.

It raises an interesting point. Our meaning was that the King route, as proposed by him, had never been travelled from beginning to end in one year. Of

course different people have done different parts. Does that mean that no new recipe can be invented because all the ingredients have been used at one time or another? We feel the answer is no.

Our reader was somewhat mollified and understood our point - but still didn’t agree with it. It’s a semantic question but certainly one worth asking.

As for the ego angle, we’d like to think he was wrong. Yes, we do promote and write about our trips but only as a means to continue doing them. We don’t feel we’re any tougher or better than anyone else - perhaps more knowledgeable. Besides, with so little left to explore, it’s nice to have at least the illusion of adventure.



COFFIN PANORAMA -- We finish our three Outfit series of the photographs of Stewart Coffin of Lincoln, Mass with our first-ever centrespread picture. Coffin gives us the story of this photo - which is actually made up from two different pictures. Stew writes, "My father gave me my first camera, an Argoflex twins-lens reflex, as soon as cameras became available again after The War. I was still

using this camera on our 1967 trip down the George River. The shot was taken from our campsite at the 58th parallel. Quoting from my trip log; 'Camped on a high bluff on the left bank overlooking a two-mile long heavy rapid, one of the finest of the trip. The river is about one-quarter mile wide here. The view from the campsite is spectacular. Sheer cliffs, about 12 in number, line the river to the

Canoelit

Path of the Paddle - Revised

Edition

By Bill Mason.

Revised and updated by Paul Mason.

Key Porter Books, Toronto 1995

200 pages, \$24.95 Cdn

This is the book that changed it all. When *Path of the Paddle* hit the bookshelves for Christmas 1980, canoeists snapped it up and we couldn't believe we were reading such a well-illustrated book about our beloved past time.

It also marked the beginning of the decade of Bill Mason. While Bill has been around doing his thing for many years, this book launched Mason Inc. and propelled Bill to the status of canoe guru - and position he still occupies seven years after his tragic death in 1988.

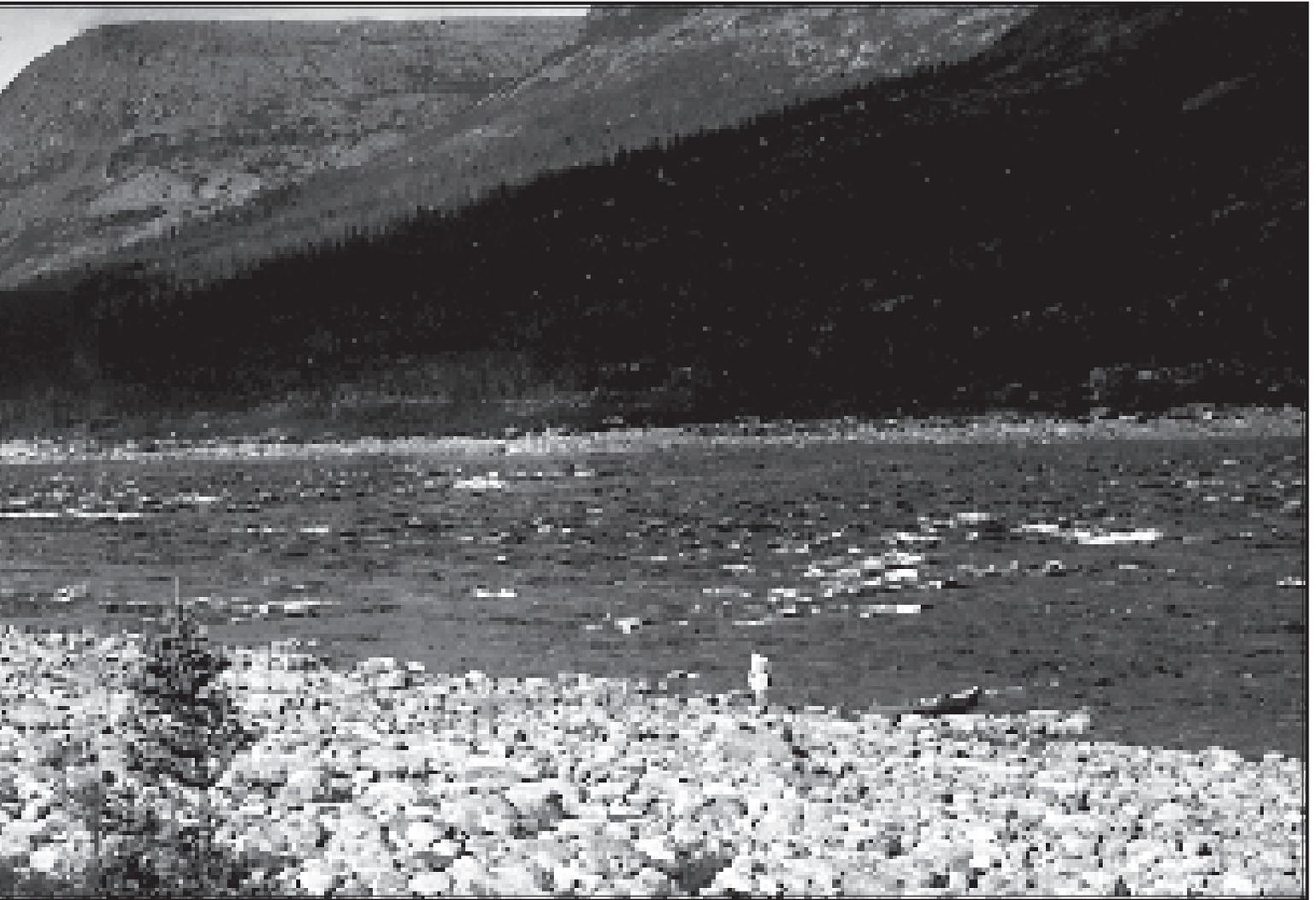
It seems only fitting that Paul Mason, Bill's son and model for many of his photos and films, should revise and update this classic. Paul is an avid canoeist and a very successful whitewater competitor. He was bronze medalist in the 1994 World Whitewater Rodeo. He has also graced the pages of *Che-Mun* for many years with his lively and funny Canoeoons. Unfortunately Paul no longer produces these and we are quickly running out of old stock. (How about a few more there Paul?).

You don't mess around with a good thing

and I am thankful to report Paul's revisions amount to mostly fine tuning. All the wonderful original photos and illustrations are still there. Some of the terms have been update and more medical information has been added.

My copy of *Path of the Paddle* is one of those early first editions with a photo credit error. The pictures of Blue Chute on the French River and a peaceful moment on the Magnetawan River are transposed. It was corrected in the next printing.

But most of all my copy of *Path* has something I will treasure as long as I treasure the memory of that wonderful guy who wrote it. And that is the big Bill Mason autograph in the front of the book along with his trademark sinking paddler cartoon.



eastward. Some are rust-coloured, some blue-gray.' Luckily the sun came out for a few hours late that afternoon for the only time on the trip. The left half of the George River panorama has always been the favourite of all my canoe tripping photos and I have a framed enlargement of it on my living room wall. I always regretted not having taken a panoramic set of photos of that spectacular view. Then I

discovered, quite by chance, that another photo I had taken moments later (or sooner) from nearly that same spot could be made to fit quite nicely after a little retouching, since the clouds had moved slightly. That is my partner Bob Hatton, standing at the river's edge with our Grumman and contemplating the rapid."

Warburton Pike An Unassuming Gentleman

By Gwen Hayball.

Privately printed edition of 200 copies.
Dorset, England 1995. 57 pp. \$14 Cdn.

We told you all about this book in *Outfit* 80 but that was before we'd actually seen it. It arrived along with some nice letters from Miss Hayball who has promised to write some of her memories for *Che-Mun*.

Now this is a modest book but a superb piece of work for a woman in her eighties to undertake. Miss Hayball herself comes from the end of the era of Gentlemen Adventurers when people like David Hanbury and Warburton Pike roamed

across the still relatively unexplored regions of northern Canada.

Miss Hayball has illustrated her small book with some interesting photos and the entire thing is well documented. Since Miss Hayball is a former librarian that should come as no surprise.

Pike was a wandering man. He travelled in Canada on hunting expeditions in the summer and one winter he and a friend, Lord Osbourne, decided to head down the mighty Colorado River - just two men in an 18-foot dory with two oars.

Pike's name dots several geographical features across the northwest. Perhaps the most famous is the gruelling Pike's Portage heading to the Hanbury and Back rivers from Great Slave Lake. This book notes many interesting tidbits such as the fact that the last time Pike used the

portage of his name he had a lobster tree created and he carved his name in the trunk.

Much of Pike's legend deals with the way he died. And it's here that Miss Hayball fills in all the cracks. His bizarre suicide, in 1915, was the final act in a life of individuality and adventure.

We are indebted to Pike for bringing us the famous quote from Saltatha about the beauties of Heaven. And we are indebted to Gwen Hayball for bring us more of this remarkable man.

For copies write to Miss Hayball, 85 Homelake House, Station Rd. Poole, Dorset England BH14 8UD. Prepaid cost is \$14 - but hurry!

In their own words . . .

In our second installment of this feature of explorers' original writings, we look at the comments of Englishman David T. Hanbury on his trip up the Ark-e-Leenik (now Thelon and Hanbury rivers) and descent of the Lockhart River in 1899. They're taken from an article in the London publication *Geographical Journal* for which Hanbury wrote this mid-way through his explorations of northern Canada. He would later publish a book on his full travels called *Sport and Travel in Canada's Northland*. These excerpts are from *Geographical Journal* No. 16 published in 1900. We have retained Hanbury's original spelling

We had now entered the unexplored country. How far and west the Ark-e-leenik river would take us, whether it was navigable or not for canoes, were problems which we had to solve. There was no information to be obtained from the Eskimos, for none of them had ever ascended the river for any distance. So without guides and without supplies of any kind, we started into this unknown country, trusting to our rifles and nets to provide us to a living, and to the good fortune which up until now had come our way. The journey eventually turned out to be absurdly easy, that I more than once regretted it was so, for half the pleasure of exploration is derived from meeting and surmounting difficulties, i.e. providing, of course, they can be successfully surmounted without abandoning most of one's stuff on the way. The main Ark-e-Leenik was explored for a distance of 182 miles, and the western branch of it was ascended for 117 miles. The divide between the waters of the Hudson bay and Great Slave lake and the Mackenzie river was crossed at an altitude of 1394 feet, a short distance beyond which we reached Clinton Colden lake, and our journey of exploration was successfully accomplished. The Ark-e-Leenik is a fine large river about 300 yards wide, having an even steady current of 4 to 5 miles an hour. For the entire distance of 182 miles which we followed the main river, there is not a sign of any rough water which could possibly be misinterpreted into the meaning of a rapid, and it is navigable for a steamer of considerable draught nearly the whole way. About 50 miles from its mouth, wood (spruce) of fair size growth is to be found, and the woods then increase in size and extent until the river divides, the larger branch is coming in from the south, the smaller – which we followed up – joining from the west. The western branch, which we ascended for a distance of 117 miles, has numerous small and some large lakes on its upper water. This branch of the Ark-e-Leenik, although not free from rapids and rough water, presented no difficulties worth mentioning; a few portages of a mile in length, one of 3 miles, and several smaller ones, and the large peculiar-shaped lake dotted in on most maps is reached.

We had long since left the limits of Huskyland and we now (the upper waters of the western branch) well into the hunting-grounds of the Yellow Knives and Dog Ribs from Great Slave lake. Musk-ox were met with in large number on the main Ark-e-Leenik river. There is a stretch of country about 80 miles in extent which no human being enters. The Eskimo do not hunt so far west; it is likewise too far distant for the Yellow Knives and Dog Ribs from Great Slave lake to enter. To penetrate this country in the dead of winter would be simply to court starvation. The deer have all departed, and to

depend on finding musk-ox at the end of the journey would be risky indeed, for not enough meat could be hauled to see the party safely back through the barren and deserted country which would lay behind them. There still remains, I am happy to say, one spot in this Great Barren North Land – which is sacred to the muck-ox into which human beings dare not enter. Here the animals remain in their primeval state, their solitude undisturbed by the hated sight and sound of man. Long may they remain so.

We had good luck to meet the Eskimo from the arctic coast on the Ark-e-leenik river, who resort to this river to obtain wood for their sleighs. These natives had never set eyes upon a white man before, and had no articles of civilization whatsoever. They were all dressed in deerskin, and armed with long bows, arrows and spears, beaten out of native copper. The use of tobacco was quite unknown to them, and firearms they had only heard about. . . They exhibited no signs of fear at our approach. They were a jovial lot, and camped with us that night. In the evening they sang together, rather nicely, I thought. The next morning we parted, with many signs of friendship on their part.

On Clinton Colden lake, a very incorrect Dominion Government map in my possession was the cause of our going close on 100 miles out of our way. From Clinton Colden lake to Fond-du-lac on Great Slave lake, the geography of the country is well known, if not very accurately surveyed. On Artillery Lake we struck the green spruce woods again halfway down, and there we bade a final farewell to the Barren Northland, over which we had journeyed for well-nigh four months, and which had treated us so hospitably. The river flowing from the foot of Artillery lake into Great Slave lake is only passable for canoes for the first 5 miles or so, beyond which distance the river descends torrent fashion through a deep precipitous chasm to Great Slave lake.

We had made several short portages on the unlucky day of the disastrous canoe accident, and already it was getting on for camping time. In letting the canoe down down a small side rapid by a bow and stern line, the stern line parted, and the tail of the canoe was quickly swung out into the current. In an instant it was caught by the rapids and the bow line wrenched from the grasp of the man who held it. It all happened in a second. A cry of despair from one of my men, and we ran wildly down the river in the vain hope of the small craft being caught by some side eddy, and so brought close enough to shore to get hold of. It shot the first rapid broadside on, and even survived through the second without capsizing. A faint gleam of hope sprang up in my breast, but only for a second. A glance ahead down river quickly dispelled any such hopes. The waters ahead, toward which the small canoe was being hurried, were all white, one broad expanse of seething foam, from which the tops of black rocks protruded in ominous fashion. The next time I lifted my eyes to look, the canoe was being tossed about, bottom up, amid one sea of foam, and the stuff, such of it as floated, was being swept away down to the rapids below in scattered directions. My heart sank; everything we possessed had disappeared – all gone! Rifles, guns, nets, axes, instruments, cameras, collections of geological and botanical specimens, note-books, and my precious photos, the result of a whole summer's work irretrievably lost! Even the canoe itself was soon lost sight of, and we were left with absolutely nothing but the clothes we stood in, still staring vacantly at the raging river which seemed to hold us with a certain fascination. My first impulse was to feel in my pockets for matches, and to my joy I discovered nine dry reliable wax matches, each one of which was good for a fire. The meant nine night's fire, anyway. To cut a long story short, the canoe was eventually recovered, also a box, in

Heading down that old road

The following is a letter to the environmental assessment panel looking into the effects of a proposed diamond mine near the headwaters of the Coppermine River. The letter was written by veteran NWT canoe guide Alex Hall.

Dear Panel,

If the BHP diamond mine becomes a reality at Lac de Gras in the Barren Lands of the Northwest Territories it is almost certain to trigger a chain of events that will soon destroy the largest wilderness left in Canada. Although BHP's proposal does not include an all-weather road connecting its mine with Yellowknife, only the naive believe the road will never be built.

The Territorial Government, it seems, is fairly slaving at the mouth over the prospects of diamond mines and an all-weather road to open up mining of all kinds throughout the whole region north of Great Slave Lake. A diamond mine at Lac de Gras will be more grist for the mill of the formidable forces now lobbying for an all-weather road deep into the Barren Lands. Besides a producing gold mine currently served by a winter ice road at Contwoyto Lake, there are a number of other potential mines that have been discovered in the same general area. An all-weather road would make many of these economical to operate.

Roads always breed more roads. In this case, an all-weather road would mean more mines, hydroelectric dams and mines and more roads as far north as the Arctic coast. Much of the western half of the Barren Lands would soon be cut up by roads – “developed”, as they say. The trucks and bulldozers, the miners, entrepreneurs will come by the thousands but the great, wild land will be gone from Great Salve Lake north to the shores of the Arctic Ocean.

How much longer will the Eastern Barrens last? Can it be long before an all-weather road be built from Churchill up the west coast of Hudson Bay to Rankin Inlet and beyond? Most will say we'll be richer for these mines and roads but I also know Canada will be a lot poorer from them too.

The Barren Lands of the North West Territories are the last great stronghold of virgin

wildlands left on the North American continent. Chances are very real that most of this vast wilderness will disappear in our own lifetimes. It will all be carved up into smaller bits and pieces for its mineral wealth and for the all mighty short term dollar. The real tragedy is that mines don't last forever but once the roads are build

I know what it was like to roam across that virgin land for hundreds of miles, as free as the caribou, and to never see another soul or sign of modern man for weeks on end.

- Alex Hall

the wilderness is gone forever. Look what we've done to this garden of Eden of a continent of ours in the past 400 years. We've heaped destruction on the original inhabitants and their land as they knew it. We've overrun North America in our hundreds of millions. We've ruined almost every part of the this continent that we can into croplands to feed those millions, we've cut down the forests, polluted the rivers and paved over much of the rest.

In the United States, south of Alaska, it's impossible to get more than 17 miles from the nearest road. But would any Huron or Iroquois from 300 years ago recognize anything of his or her homeland in present day Southern Ontario or New York State? Would any wandering Assiniboine or Plains Cree hunter from 150 years ago recognize anything of the former Buffalo prairies of the Saskatchewan today?

The Barren Lands and northern fringes of the boreal forest within the North West Territories are the last major part of the North American continent that is still much as it was when the white man first arrived. Matonabbee,

the Chipewyan leader, who guided Samuel Hearne across thousands of miles of that land in the 1770's would still recognize virtually all of his old haunts today from Hudson Bay west to Great Salve Lake and north to the Arctic Ocean. Even here profound changes have occurred since Matonabbee's day. Most of this land is now uninhabited; the huge migratory caribou herds have diminished and only in recent decades have muskox populations begun to rebound after mere extinction in the 19th century. However, the land itself is still the same, still in its original, pristine, natural state.

It seems that is all going to change very soon. Some will say that's progress. The world's few remaining wild places must be tamed and their riches extracted. It will mean more money and more jobs. Perhaps it is inevitable – only a matter of time. But didn't we learn any lessons further south over the past 400 years? Are we going to make all the same old mistakes in the north again in the dawning of the 21st century? It seems that we are and that North America's last great wilderness will soon be gone. Few may mourn its passing for few know it.

I know that country where they are searching for diamonds. I know what it was like before the geologists, claim-stakers, helicopters and trucks on winter roads swarmed over it. I know what it was like to roam across that virgin land for hundreds of miles, as free as the caribou, and to never see another soul or sign of modern man for weeks on end.

Twenty years ago, when I was still a young man, I realized that the giant unspoiled wilderness of the Barren Lands could easily disappear in my lifetime. From the mid 1970's to the early 1980's I worried as mineral exploration heated up. Then it cooled down. Now we appear to be on the brink of losing it all, with the discovery of diamonds. I only hope that my ashes will be laid to rest along my favourite river of the central Barrens before the last of that big, wild country disappears forever.

As for future generations of Canadians, they'll have to settle for the bits and pieces that are left over. And when the great open wild spaces are gone what will happen to the caribou? Who can say?

News & Notes

MCS SUCCESS . . . The Maine Canoe Symposium is alive and well in its reborn state. The annual canoeing fest held under the big and beautiful white pines of Camp Winona in southwestern Maine held its 10th annual weekend. The event started in 1986 and was run for nine years by the good folks at L.L. Bean. Attendance tailed off last year after a disastrous format change and Bean's reluctantly dropped it.

That's where *Che-Mun* subscriber and longtime MCS attendee Jerry Kocher came in. Jerry believed it was too good an idea to die and took on the responsibility of running it himself. Working with Camp Winona, MCS 10 came off without a hitch and had about 140 people attending. In its peak years they attracted some 250+. Most of the same pro staff were back there under the Winona pines. That included Garrett and Alexandra Conover, Beth and Dave Buckley, two Peake brothers, Harry Rock and Bart Hawthaway. Slide shows included Michael Peake's showing of the HACC Across the Arctic Mountains canoe trip and a special show on Eric Morse and The Voyageurs also presenting were Lisa and Jim Licius on their fascinating 14-month canoe trip across America. And a big bonus this year was the new cook at Camp Winona who produced the finest food ever seen there - or any other camp we'll bet.

There was a meeting right after the symposium to determine how to do things better next year - which will mean more attendee involvement. It's a fantastic weekend in beautiful Maine. Mark it

on your calendars for next spring. Che-Mun will have all the details about costs and where to write

MORE SYMPOSIA . . . The people who run the Canoeing the Far North Symposium in Minnesota want you to know about their event which happens every November. The 8th annual Far North gathering will be on Nov. 3 & 4 in Marine-on-St. Croix, Minnesota.

While the list of speakers hasn't been finalized yet, last year's listing will give you a good idea of what happens. Toronto's George Luste spoke on his 1994 solo Barrens trip and also about canoeing among the ice floes in Labrador and northern Ungava (which George loves to do and is doing again this summer). Also, Cliff Jacobson, who's a regular at these things, talked about his Porcupine River trip. Other topics covered included the Nanook River on Victoria Island and canoeing in Turkey and Lithuania. For more info on the far North Symposium contact Bill Simpson, P.O. Box 72, Marine on St Croix, MN USA 55047.

C2C - WE'LL SEE . . . Two young, strong and incredibly optimistic canoeists are trying to paddle completely across Canada in one season. Roman Rockcliffe and Frank Wolf left Saint John, New Brunswick on April 18 and hope to arrive in Vancouver by November. The 2300 mile trip is dubbed the C2C Expedition and is being done to raise money for women and children affected with the HIV virus, the one that causes AIDS.

Their schedule is quite optimistic when you consider that Verlen Kruger and Clint Waddell, two veteran marathon paddlers, took longer than that and they left from Montreal in mid-April although they ended up paddling to the Bering Sea in 1971.

The young pair met with veteran canoeing and political sage Pierre Trudeau in Montreal before leaving. He talked to them for two hours about canoeing and mentioned that he would be paddling a remote Baffin Island river this summer. Trudeau is in his 70s.

Donations can be made at any branch of Canada trust to branch No. 500, Account 506900.

Our Back Pages

The following back issues of Che-Mun are available at four dollars 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 - 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

NUNAVUT

Newsline

Countdown to April 1, 1999

There was a lot of fuss made about the visit to Baffin Island by Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. The pair winged their way north following the G7 Summit held in Halifax in mid-June.

Chancellor Kohl, it appears, is no different than many of his fellow countrymen when it comes to being attracted by the wilds of northern Canada. The

ed quiet 'private' vacation was attended by a support staff of 50, along with a dozen German journalists and 12 RCMP security people.

The political pair visited Cape Dorset, home of superb Inuit print makers. Kohl attended a dinner where he probably got an earful about the European fur ban which devastated the local Inuit economy. They then headed for Pangnirtung where they got a helicopter of beautiful Auyuituuq National Park. The 6-foot six-inch Kohl also presented a problem to local hoteliers. One specially constructed an extra-long bed for their German visitor.



Talks have begun between Parks Canada and the Keewatin Inuit Association on the possibility of creating a National Park in Wager Bay. The very deep inlet off the northwest coast of Hudson Bay has long been a popular, if little visited, region. The deep bay has been visited by sea kayakers and boasts some large and fast tides.

If Parks Canada and the KIA can agree that a park is desirable there, Keewatin Inuit would then be able to negotiate an Inuit impact and benefits agreement under the Nunavut land claims agreement.



The Raglan Lake Mine that we reported on in Outfit 80 has been given the go-ahead by the Kativik Environmental Quality Commission. That was the last step in the process that will allow Falconbridge to proceed with their nickel-rich deposit in far northern Quebec. The mine is located near the source of the Povungituk River at Raglan Lake, the highest point in northern Quebec.

The commission was concerned about the timing of the traffic of ice-breakers, monitoring of water levels and clean-up procedures.

Anatomy of a Che-Mun mailing label

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To dissolve any confusion about expiry dates for Che-Mun subscriptions. You will note the date at the end of the bottom line on your address label. This is when you expire i.e now - Summer 1995. You will be sent one additional issue after that - both will have expiry warnings - in the hope you will keep subscribing.

HACC Appointment



The Reverend Peter John Cheever Scott

The Governor of the Hide-Away Canoe Club is pleased to announce the appointment of Peter John Cheever Scott to the position of Chaplain of the HACC.

Deacon Scott was ordained in Hamilton, Ont, on May 25, 1995. Immediately after his ordination he was asked to be HACC Chaplain and heartily agreed to accept this newly created post. Scott, 34, has been a regular member of the HACC northern expeditions for many years.

He was scheduled to be a part of the Arctic Land Expedition this summer but an unscheduled problem prevented him from coming. Peter is affectionately known as "Pin", a name he has always disliked but we are now sure in his new capacity will be able to forgive us for using it.

Peter will work in St. Luke's Church in Burlington. He is married to the wonderful Elizabeth and they are the parents of the delightful Rebecca who will be one this August.

Over the years Peter appeared in many memorable photos taken on the canoe trips. Perhaps the most interesting, and one that perhaps foreshadowed future events, was the shot of Peter slogging a canoe along an ice-choked NWT lake under the brilliant low arching rainbow.

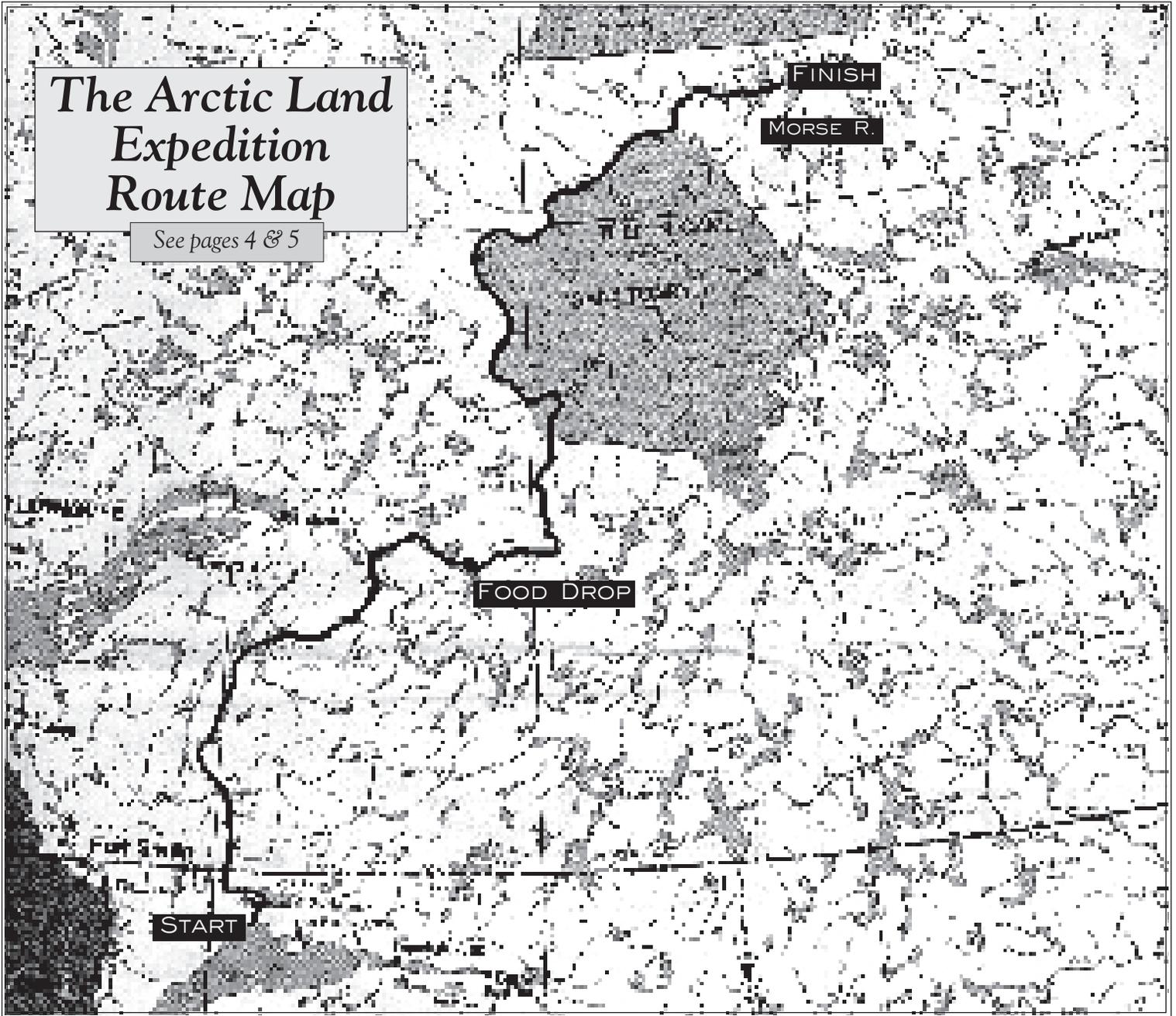
That photo will grace the cover of the upcoming *Canoe Routes of the NWT* being published this summer by the Canadian Recreational Canoe Association.

The Governor, Chief Guide and all the members of the Hide-Away Canoe Club welcome our new chaplain and look forward to his wilderness ministrations along the barren wilderness routes to be travelled in future years.

Good luck, Pin!

The Arctic Land Expedition Route Map

See pages 4 & 5



Upcoming Che-Mun

We'll have a full report on this summer's HACC's Arctic Land Expedition across the Barren Lands.

And look at a canoe trip down the mighty Great Whale River in northern Quebec.

CHE-MUN

Founded in 1973 by Nick Nickels

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WHERE'S THE BANJO?~ The Place. The Moisie River on Quebec's rugged North Shore. The Time. 1978. Canoeists Stewart Coffin, Dick Irwin, Bob David and John Brohan (standing) relax around the campfire after a another challenging day on the Moisie. The photo is

a self portrait taken by Coffin with a camera that had no self-timer. The inventive Yankee devised a way around that. You will notice that Stew is hold a fishing rod. The end of that rod is attached to the shutter of his Crown Graphic view camera. The exposure is probably at least

a second judging by the flame licking the pot. The photo is featured (without the technical info) on page 247 of *Canoeing North Into the Unknown*. Those concerned about Dick Irwin's state can relax. That's how he looks when he's happy.