



CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE NEWSLETTER OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 43

CHE-MUN

WINTER 1985



THE COURSE TO THE MORSE

-JATB-

Journey Across the Barrenlands
Part Two
-and-
Equipment Evaluation

Geoffrey Peake and Peter Brewster track their Old Town Tripper up a shallow stream a few miles from the Morse. This was the fourth of five days of continuous upstream travel from the Ursus Islands. There were many streams like this one in the heart of the Akiliniq Hills north of Thelon River. These beautiful rolling hills were the traditional meeting place for the Back River Inuit and those in the Thelon area up until the 1950's.



Stewart Coffin, 79 Old Sudbury Rd., Lincoln, Mass, 01773 - veteran canoeist and author of the first trip report in the new CHE-MUN (Outfit 38) writes, at last, following a long period silence when we had our wires crossed. Stew recently did an excellent piece in CANOE magazine on the art of lining and tracking. He says he will be spending a good deal of time this winter researching info on Labrador and Quebec for the Appalachian Mountain Club. He asks a lot of questions for which CHE-MUN doesn't have the answers. Perhaps some of our knowledgeable readers do? These include: the status of all major hydro projects either proposed, under construction or operating, and their effects on tripping in the area; is it true that all wilderness trips in Labrador are prohibited without a guide?; what is the status of the QNS&L Railway?; no fishing above the 52nd parallel in Quebec without a guide?

These are some interesting and shocking questions and ones to which a definitive answer is hard to obtain especially through official sources in Quebec. Stewart also laments; "One of my pet gripes right now is parties that fly by charter float plane deep into wilderness area they might just as well paddle in.

Twenty years ago we never gave it much thought, but now we must. There is just too much motorized traffic in what used to be unbroken wilderness. . . Few persons realize how rapidly that beautiful canoeing wilderness is disappearing." Sobering words from a man who should know. By the way, Stewart did the Ashuanipi River in Labrador this summer - without a guide!

Another note from John Lentz, 5424 Mohican Rd, Bethesda, MD, U.S.A. 20816. In his never-ending search for remote, untravelled canoeing spots John found himself on Victoria Island (check those maps) on the Kuujjua River. John describes it as a "super-cooled affair (71-71 degrees north) so it was fortunate we didn't roll any boats." Some very happy news from John also. For the first time in more than 30 years National Geographic magazine will publish a canoe trip story in the January 1986 issue. The piece, by John Lentz, will concern his 1983 trip down the Hood River to Bathurst Inlet. Congratulations John - they are a very picky publication and all wilderness canoeists will be watching your article with a very critical eye. By the way NG's worldwide circulation is 10.5 MILLION.

"OK let's talk," says Robert Hess, Box 2521, Inuvik, N.W.T., X0E 0T0, in response to the invitation in CHE-MUN 41. Bob sent us some local views on a couple of groups that have been featured in recent issues of CHE-MUN. Bob was not too impressed by the 'On to the Polar Sea' expedition. "Living in Inuvik has soured me on canoe expeditions in our north by fast-talking, free spending, self-styled 'explorers' like (that group) who made such a big deal of their trip down the Bonnet Plume in empty canoes; rubber rafts full of supplies and helicopters hidden just out of range."

On the other hand Bob met Alan Kesselheim and Mary Pat Zitzer and was very impressed by them. On northern tourism Bob notes, "The N.W.T. tourist industry has seen the writing on the wall and it spells . . . M.O.N.E.Y.! That's what a tourist industry is in business for whether it's selling rivers and wildlife or postcards and drinks." And finally he offers a quote from Eric Morse for CHE-MUN, "More remote wilderness cannot be protected from entry but at least it need not be advertised by publishing more and more canoe trip descriptions."

Thanks Bob. Are you sure you're not a lawyer?

NEWS & NOTES

PELLYBOOK . . . David Pelly and Betelgeuse Books of Toronto are working on a publication about canoeing in the Northwest Territories. The 24-page booklet with colour photographs is commissioned by the Government of the N.W.T. and will feature rivers of the District of Keewatin - the eastern half of the Territories. Pelly is an experienced traveller of the Arctic in all seasons and is the author of Expedition: A Journey through History on George Back's River. The booklet will feature a couple of photos from Journey Across the Barrenlands and a map by Sean Peake one of JATB members. CHE-MUN will inform readers of publication date and availability.

RAFFAN OF SEELEY'S BAY . . . Jim Raffan who edits CANEWS the publication of the Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association also has an interesting sideline - Wilderness Crisis Management Seminars. Through ED-VIRON Services, Raffan offers talks designed to prepare wilderness seekers for travel in remote regions. It's an analytical look at what can go wrong and how to prepare for it and react to it. He also publishes a small booklet that explains the outline of the seminar. Interested in sponsoring or attending a seminar? Contact Jim Raffan, Box 243, Seeley's Bay, Ontario, K0H 2N0.

WILL CANOES FIT IN? . . . As part of the latest push towards Canadian sovereignty in the north several new landing strips will be built for the new CF-18 fighter jets. These new planes will be stationed in the north and expanded strips are to be built in Baker Lake, Frobisher Bay, Kuujuaak (Chimo), Whitehorse and Yellowknife. As long as we keep the Armed Forces off the rivers with their motorized rafts we're happy. Also, a huge new icebreaker's in the works to patrol the Northwest Passage. Getting crowded and noisy.

Paul Mason's . . . CANOETOONS



SO THAT WAS STAIRCASE RAPIDS EH ?

QUEBEC: Closed for Alterations?

The warning signs are up in the Province of Quebec for wilderness canoeists following the recent election. The River Killer - Robert Bourassa was re-elected as Premier of Quebec ten years after being tossed out in a total electoral defeat.

A major plank in Mr. Bourassa's recent campaign is the resumption of the northern power schemes which dominated his last tenure. The architect of the James Bay Hydro Project has even bigger things in mind. (See CHE-MUN 41.)

Besides the damming of James Bay Bourassa wants to resume the harnessing of the rest Quebec's rivers. First on the list will likely be the Rupert and Nottaway or Broadback. The preliminary engineering studies have already been done on these.

The fact that the cost will be staggering and the demand may not be there appears secondary to the fact that it will create jobs.

CHE-MUN OUTFIT 44

HAS ANYBODY SEEN BILL MASON? THERE'S A VICIOUS RUMOUR THAT HE IS GOING TO DO A TRIP REPORT ON THE UNIVERSITY RIVER.

MORE EQUIPMENT EVALUATIONS FROM JOURNEY ACROSS THE BARRENLANDS — BUT NO MORE PICTURES OF US — WE PROMISE.

CHE REVIEW

NASTAWGAN The Canadian North by Canoe and Snowshoe. Edited by Bruce W. Hodgins and Margaret Hobbs. Foreword by Eric Morse. 232 pp. Betelgeuse Books, Toronto, \$29.95.



Every wilderness canoeist knows there are two types of books; those of interest and those of need. The latter group compose the 'Must' list which is generally given to be fewer than a dozen volumes. That group will have to become a Baker's Dozen because this new release by the small Toronto publishing house, Betelgeuse, is a gem.

NASTAWGAN is a collection of 14 separate stories and essays (by 13 writers) focusing on both memorable and obscure aspects of northern Canadian travel, primarily by canoe. Contributing authors, including George Luste, Ned Franks and Editor Bruce Hodgins, span such topics as; history and travel in the

Barrens, pre-1960 canoeing publications, notable expeditions by men and women including the Tyrrell's, Hanbury, Pike and many lesser know, yet equally interesting explorers, and actual accounts of travel by David Thompson.

Nastawgan is the Anishinabai word meaning the way or route through the country. The Foreword is provided by Canadian canoeing's Grand Old Man - Eric W. Morse - who recounts the changes he has seen in canoeing since his first trip in 1918. Each section of the book is well footnoted a real boon to interested students who wish to pursue some of the obscure and revealing sources. While containing relatively few photographs, a generous selection of lovely ink drawings by Ria Harting provides the right mood for such a book.

Much thought and hard work have obviously gone into this volume from the breadth of entries to the handsome look of the publication. The detailed, but not pedantic, examination of many areas includes; why and what type of man went into the north, the history of Peterborough Canoes and their importance and influence on the world of canoeing, the effect of Ontario's extensive summer camps - the

breeding ground for many of today's enthusiasts.

This reviewer found many of these examinations intensely interesting, well written, and of special and unique interest to that small fraternity of "Northern-philites". It is an entertainingly encompassing work and we are indeed fortunate it has been brought to us.

MICHAEL PEAKE



ORDERING INFORMATION: Since this book will be difficult for many to find and to prevent it from obtaining 'Holy Grail' status to those interested in obtaining a copy, CHE-MUN makes available the following ordering information - For each book send \$31.50 in Canadian funds (\$29.95 + \$1.55 postage) in a cheque or money order to Betelgeuse Books, P.O. Box 1334, Station B, Weston, Ontario, Canada M9L 2W9.

JOURNEY

Across the Barrens

Part Two

By Michael Peake CHE-MUN Editor.

We were all eager to reach Hornby's Cabin certainly a high-point of the trip. The place where Hornby and his two companions, nephew Edgar Christian and Harold Allard died of starvation in 1927, is a shrine for all river travellers.

The cabin is a bit further upstream than you might think, well above the landing beach at Hornby Point. A pleasant surprise awaited me at that landing. A piece of Barrens mail was awaiting my arrival in a cairn on the beach. David Pelly, author of Expedition! (and CHE-MUN subscriber) and Donna Barnett had left the expedition a note when they passed by on July 5. David and Donna were doing some work for the Territorial Government and were the first down the Thelon this year.

We finally located the cabin and neatly tended graves just a few feet from the now decaying structure. We were all silent when finally seeing what we had read so much about. Geoffrey had the notes of Edgar Christian's diary and he read them aloud to the Germans whom we discovered camped just around the point.

Hornby's Cabin

It was very moving to be at Hornby Point and listening to the words of the dying Edgar Christian written only a few feet away so many years ago. We swapped some excess food with the Germans in return for the one item we were almost out of - salt. The river kept flowing quickly with no rapids and the scenery was changing quickly too. The trees were almost gone and steep cliffs appeared every so often along the river.

We had a good look at a mother grizzly and two cubs browsing on some roughage. It was some minutes before she caught our scent and quickly departed - we were 300 yards away - right beside the boats - as close as we cared to get. The rain started up just after the bear sighting and continued the rest of that day and night. Mind and paddle were on auto-pilot.

Bright sunny and cool weather dawned the next day and we headed down from Lookout Point to the Ursus Islands catching a large lake trout just before the Ursus in the shallow, fast current. Another bad, wet, and windy day saw us pounding into four foot waves - going with the current, of course. We finally gave up at the end of the Ursus just before our turn-off upstream. Again it rained all night - about 20 hours straight!

The good day/bad day weather trend continued as we started up the unnamed river that flows into the expansion of the Thelon at the end of the Ursus Islands. Some initial easy upstream paddling gave way to tracking and wading. A lone Muskox sat and watched us from about 50 feet away and we were amazed at his non-chalance. It soon became clear why he was acting that way when he finally got up and hobbled away on his only three good legs, the right hind leg dangling uselessly - badly broken. He was waiting to die.

Herd of Muskox

We waded up through the relatively warm water and did the first of several portages toward the Morse. On that first anonymous lake we saw a herd of 22 Muskox and got a picture of Sean and Bill in front of them. It was as though we had left the 'main drag' of the Thelon and moved into the treasures of the really remote part of the N.W.T. that very few people see.

We paid a price for our remoteness. Several days of tough hauling over a series of small lakes connected only in our imaginations. Each morning we awoke to the sound of dry rain - the pattering of bugs on the tent fly. The strain of double-packing, and living inside a head net was tough but everyone did very well. It is as much a mental problem as physical. The raw beauty of the land the feeling of complete wilderness kept everyone's spirits buoyed. The land we walked through is surprisingly wet. Poorly drained and spongy it was a test for all feet and footwear.

Page Four

On the fifth day after leaving the Thelon we crossed the Arctic height of land and gratefully began our descent to the Arctic Ocean. The terrain took an abrupt turn in this area. The rolling, green hills gave way to an incredible boulder-studded landscape. Millions of rocks, under some of which our watercourse flowed. Several tough portages in this stretch but being so close to the Morse we just forged ahead. Once clear of the final portage we were about to enter the lake which formed what we called the headwaters of the Morse when a big blast from the NW arrived to keep us company while we headed north of the lake.

We finally struggled into our Morse River camp in the growing, rain-filled darkness and rejoiced. We hauled out all the little goodies we had including pate, rice crackers and a bottle of Courvoisier which Eric Morse had given us for "the worst night of the trip". Well this was the worst night . . . and the best night, too. Our planned day off arrived with a crystal clear sky and cool temperatures just what we needed to build a cairn on the west ridge of the lake.

We built a solid six-footer and inserted a plastic bottle with a message of our trip and an invitation for those who follow to let us know. It was a very satisfying moment on July 29 as we stood having photos taken around the cairn. We also indulged in the luxury of the six cans of Molson Canadian beer we had been carrying. They were officially brought to accompany a cairn shot with our major sponsor's flag but unofficially they tasted great!

It was all downhill from here to the Arctic Ocean. The morning we left to actually paddle the Morse a white Arctic Wolf was staring back, 60 feet away, at me as I emerged from our tent. He of course was well gone by the time I got my camera in action. The upper Morse was shallow in the narrows and we had to wade a bit. Another day with wet feet. There were numerous small, but not too shallow, rapids and we made good time. The weather was cold wet and overcast as we sped by the high eskers and open tundra alongside the Morse River. It cleared in the evening and we camped on a beautiful plain beneath a large esker.

The next day dawned clear and sunny with beautiful pristine un-canoed territory all around us. The river slowed and became very sandy, with a nice tailwind and mild current we made good time. A large (40 plus) herd of Muskox was viewed by the major tributary of the Morse entering on the west side. There were two Grade 2 rapids at the bottom of the Morse and we camped much to the delight of the sand flies - the first ones we encountered all summer.

We left the Morse on August 1 and entered the chilly waters of the Back River at Upper Garry Lake. A lunch stop on the point where we turn due north in to Garry revealed an extensive tent ring and Inuit habitation signs including the skeletons of three caribou cached beneath a pile of stones. We headed up the very shallow, sandy south end of Upper Garry (12 inches deep) and made the turn three miles from Father Buliard's Mission and started down endless Garry lake.

Whether it's the curvature of the earth or simply it's size Garry Lake looks much bigger than it is. The endless horizon stretching to the east, however, is quickly erased by simply standing up which brings the far shore into view. We had one windy day with the usual few tense moments. We approached the Back with the greatest respect and caution and no foolhardy moves were contemplated.

We finished Garry in two days thanks to a calm second day and finally ran our first rapid on the Back where Garry Lake empties into Buliard. We camped on an esker in Buliard that had been sliced in half by the mighty river. It was the same spot where George Back had camped 151 summers earlier. The eskers along the Back are very large and the view from this one was excellent.



Bill King and Sean Peake stare back at a herd of musk-ox on a lake north of the Thelon river heading upstream to the Morse.

The next morning we paddled through an Arctic squall and assumed we would be going through quite a few more before our days on the Back were over. The rapids draining Buliard were challenging. Scouting, running, and lining were the order as the river was about two feet above normal level. Contrary to reports we had read, the vegetation did not vanish upon leaving Garry.

The land was remarkably beautiful and we saw lone caribou every day on the lower Back. The weather continued to be beautiful through MacDougall Lake and down to where the rapids got tricky. The section between MacDougall and Sinclair Falls is rock and rapid filled. We were able to do the whole thing with only one 40 yard portage. With the water high we were able to sneak down the right side of mighty Rock Rapids and even Sinclair Falls.

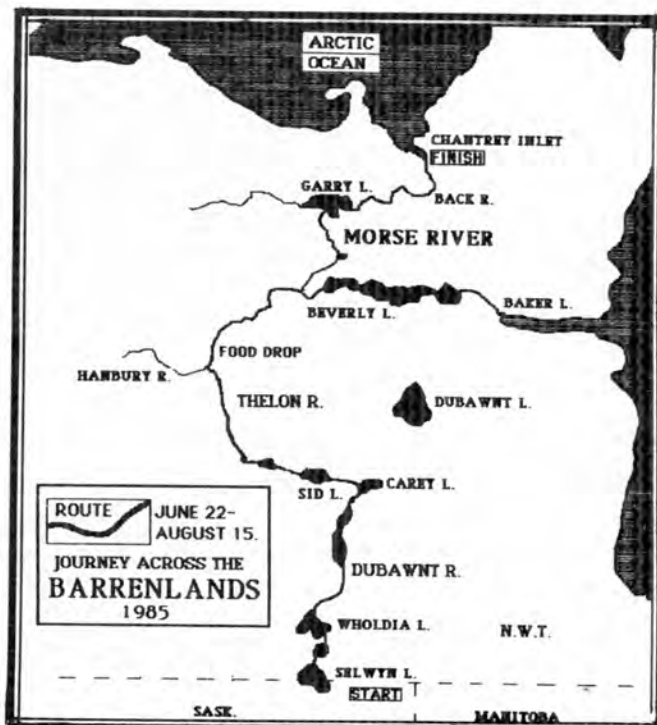
Each rapid was thoroughly scouted as there was definitely some very big water. The water temperature was 46 degrees - cold but not freezing. No one went for a swim - either planned or unplanned. Geoffrey's excellent reading and scouting of the rapids provided a safe and exciting passage through each. We camped between Rock Rapids and Sinclair Falls and decided to have fish for dinner. Peter Brewster hauled in five nice lake trout in seven casts - it took 15 minutes that should tell you a lot about fishing on the Back - it's as good as it gets.

Escape Rapids

Escape Rapids was certainly a much anticipated piece of water and it didn't disappoint. What a rapid! A full mile long, curving gently all the way with some mean holes and a reputation you didn't want to fool around with. We lined and shot the left side including the difficult upper section. We decided to camp half way down and take a day off.

We found time to go looking for the wanigan left by the 1975 trip who lost a canoe in the rapids and had to leave some of their stuff there. The trip was well reported in Canoe magazine, in fact the people who did that trip have just recently purchased Canoe. The wanigan was still there but had been ripped open (by a bear?) and all it's contents were ruined.

(Cont'd on Page Seven)



TRIP TIPS

We all know that feeling of elation when some prized piece of camping gear is purchased at a discount price. There isn't a canoeist alive who hasn't gloated. However, longer canoe trips preclude the use of second rate or "bargain basement" gear. On the long trip, all gear must be of the highest quality. Money should be no object - in theory. But even the most extravagant expeditions have rigid budgets, and our Journey Across three Barrenlands was no exception. We took the best possible gear that could be afforded with our limited budget.

The following is a report of the performance of that equipment:

CANOES: In the past, we have been strong believers in Aluminum canoes. Our views have been somewhat modified on the ideal canoe. We were blessed with the use of three Old Town Trippers, supplied free of charge by Trailhead Outfitters of Toronto and Ottawa. In crossing three heights-of-land, we subjected the canoes to tremendous abuse. They were kicked. They were gouged. They were dropped. They were dragged across razor-sharp rocks. But everything they say about ABS is true. Although the canoes would not have won a beauty contest after two months, they endured the trials and tribulations of a wilderness epic with grace. On lakes the keel-less hull did weave somewhat, but this was a small price to pay for the comfort of cross-ferrying in rapids like magic. They hold 400 lbs. of cargo easily; they are comfortable, stable, attractive. To put it frankly, no canoe could have performed better. Our compliments to the Old Town Canoe Company.

TENTS: Two tents were supplied courtesy of Eureka!. The larger of these, the Denali, was described as a two or three-man mountaineering tent capable of withstanding strong winds, and so a natural choice for the barrens. The Denali was not as wind resistant as its name suggested, unless set-up nose first into the wind, and its dome design required two people for proper set-up. Also an air vent mysteriously placed on the vestibule became an open faucet when it rained. Despite this, the tent weathered the arctic weather well. It was roomy and functional. The Sentinel is a lesser priced two-man tent. It is not a dome, but a modified A-frame with centre ridgepole. It required considerable time to erect; on lesser trips when time is not a factor, this would not be a problem, but on a trip where long days are spent on the water, no one wants to spend the twilight hours toying with a jig-saw tent. Also, the Sentinel was not self-supporting. The loss of stakes would be more than just a passing inconvenience. The third tent was a North Face Pole Sleeve Oval, an incredibly roomy 3 man Geodesic Dome that served as our "base camp" facility. The Oval is a very expensive and sophisticated structure; there are few canoeists who could afford such a luxury. If funds permit, though, get one - you'll never regret it. You need no stakes, no wires, and it stands like a rock in gale force wind. It is a true product of modern technology and design.

CLOTHING: Helly-Hansen, through Mountain Equipment Co-op, supplied us with an assortment of pile - socks, pants, mitts, jackets - the works! For those who are not aware, pile is a synthetic polyester fabric that is fluffed and woven into a bulky material that effectively creates dead air space like wool, but unlike wool the fabric absorbs a slight percentage of moisture when wet. The wearer can dry a garment merely by wringing it out. Pile can be worn through a wider range of climatic conditions than any other material.

Also big on our clothing list was polypropylene - plastic underwear that is much favoured by skiers because it doesn't absorb moisture. Michael found the best clothing combination was a light polypro underwear combined with a pair of wind pants. They were warm enough for most days and most importantly, they dried very quickly, a necessity with the amount of tracking and wading we were doing.

(Much more on equipment evaluation in CHE Outfit 44.)

MORE NEWS & NOTES (Continued)

ARCTIC VIA AMEX . . . An article in a November issue of Business Week, a nationally distributed U.S. publication, extolled the virtues of - "a hot vacation territory" - Canada's north. One destination mentioned is Beechey Island where would-be adventurers could view "two 140-year-old freeze-dried sailors from a doomed 19th Century exploration led by Sir John Franklin." That's interesting, because they had to close the archeological dig on Beechey Island this summer because of the large influx of tourists - some of whom were taking home souvenirs of the place! The article was primarily concerned with tour packages to remote lodges like Bathurst Inlet Lodge. The main selling point was the area's desolation and lack of people. Not for long.

WHERE CREDIT IS DUE . . . As part of an on-going local battle to establish the rights of canoeists on waterways in Southern Ontario the Credit River will be invaded next spring by an army of them. The Credit rises northwest of Toronto and drains into Lake Ontario and is a popular spring run on its upper reaches. The plans call for 1,000 canoes to paddle down the Credit and portage around a dam which is the bone of contention. The land around the dam is owned by a Member of the Ontario Legislature who feels that canoeists do not have the right to use his property or any property adjacent to body of water. The case is still before the courts.

WATERWALKER RUNS . . . The long awaited premiere of Bill Mason's feature length movie Waterwalker was held in Ottawa last month. The evening was a fund-raiser for the Canadian Nature Federation and attracted canoeists from around eastern Ontario. The film was shown at a theatre in the Rideau Center, a downtown mall, where it opened for public viewing the next day. The film is a unique and personal look at canoeing by one of its most accomplished practitioners. Among those attending were, of course, the entire Mason family, along with Eric Morse and wife Pamela, and Kirk Whipper, the founder of the Kanawa canoe museum.

NEW PADDLER ON THE HORIZON . . . A new magazine for Ontario canoeists is in the formation stages. Plans are not yet complete but PADDLER is scheduled for a spring start. Produced in conjunction with Canoe Ontario the 36-page controlled circulation glossy mag will be published in Toronto and be of interest to canoeists and kayakers. PADDLER will embrace a wide spectrum of canoeing and even feature a Fireside Stories section in each issue. Some interesting facts in their statistical package: There are 272,000 canoes in the province of Ontario paddled by about two million paddlers. And the value of all those boats? . . . \$100 million! Good luck fellow Paddler.

NEW BEAVER BOSS . . . CHE-MUN spoke to Chris Dafoe, new Editor of The Beaver - official journal of The Hudson's Bay Company. The Bay has decided, despite financially troubled times, to keep The Beaver going . . . and stronger than ever. They are abandoning their 50-year tradition of quarterly issues and going bi-monthly starting with the Jan./Feb. 1986 issue. They are also dropping the Outfit system and going to Volume numbers. Seems too many librarians had trouble filing something called an Outfit. Chris says they are also restarting the Packet (letter column) which was dropped in 1952. (CHE-MUN already beat them to it - with their own logo.) Chris Dafoe is 49, a native Winnipegger and a journalist for many years with the Winnipeg Free Press and the Vancouver Sun. Editor Dafoe adds there will be no radical changes for the magazine, they will keep an emphasis on social history stories. Chris Dafoe sounds very mindful of the roots of The Beaver - he should - he has been reading it since he was five-years-old.



Across the Barrens

(Continued)

The box itself was still in good shape so we brought it back with us. The owner Jack Wadsworth, works in New York City and is a CHE-MUN subscriber. It will be returned to him in the near future. A herd of Muskox wandered down to graze at the base of the rapids in the afternoon drizzle. They eventually drifted up just behind our camp and out of site over the hill.

The wind was still roaring the next day when we finished the second half of Escape. Very tricky, with the wind doing its best to push us out into the big water. A bit of lining and a short portage brought us to the end of a great rapid.

Rounding the corner the river opened up and we were met with an irresistible wall-of-whitecaps. A NW gale was howling at a cold 45 mph and it was time to submit. It blew all that day and night and all the next day as we saw our chances of making Chantrey Inlet blowing away as well. The wanigan earned its keep as the perfect place to hide the stove away from the heat-diminishing wind. Delicious fish chowders kept everyone warm and we caught up on our reading and journal writing.

The three day blow was true to its name as the dawn of Day 50 was clear and quiet. We had five days to do 170 miles and we were going to need great co-operation from the elements to make it. The river did its part with fast runnable current. Sandhill Rapids was run left and Wolf Rapids was run right. Geoffrey and Peter B. ran Wolf Rapids empty - not without packs - but without people!

They had pulled their canoe well up to scout but a big wave dragged it back. We were cautious of this rapid as it had killed two people in 1967. Peter Scott and I were behind and saw their boat take off downstream and powered to catch up with it. Geoff had jumped in to try and grab it but realized it was futile. He yelled that the rapid looked OK so Peter and I headed down. It was OK, big waves which the spray covers took care of, and strong cross-current that the Old Town Tripper's handled. Running next to an empty canoe was a very weird experience. We finally grabbed the lining rope and towed it in to shore with an upstream ferry. No damage - we were lucky again!

Geoff arrived and said he had pulled the boat up three times to make sure that what happened wouldn't. But it still did. We stopped for lunch and the Back put on a show for us afterwards. We had about 10 miles of seven mph current which really helped the scheduling worries. Below where the Meadowbank River comes in the Back becomes a pool and drop river. We made it from Escape to Mt. Meadowbank in one day and even had time to climb it before camping.

The weather continued sunny and calm and the bugs were very numerous. The insects were unshakeable even on the water they were constantly with us. The set of four rapids at the end of the Meadowbank expansion were great fun. A huge eddy/whirlpool on the right side of the first rapid was incredibly strong. You had to let it throw you out and then get over - really fast!

With the great weather we knew we were getting a view of the Back that few canoeists see. The psychology of running rapids in sunny weather is much more positive than the reverse. We continued to make good time and crossed the Arctic Circle just before lunch on August 12. Shortly after we saw two canoes - coming up river! We stopped and chatted to the foursome from the U.S., Patrick Leonard, Donna Berglund, Priscilla McClung and John Ochi an interesting group who had canoed the whole Back and were paddling back up to Baker Lake. We talked for 90 minutes in the bug-filled sunshine and then went our separate ways wishing each other good luck.

We camped at McKay Peak which was considerably smaller than we imagined - about 80 feet high. Whirlpool rapids was just a riffle but was probably really cooking when Back named it. The high water mark was ten feet above ours. Our last obstacle to getting to Chantrey lay ahead - Franklin Lake. Angled to the NW it could really slow a canoe party down. We were lucky again as the four day stretch of sun ended with a brief shower and wind but not until we were almost off the lake.

The final set of rapids were big and wide. We shot and lined around some big ledges down the right the whole way down to the final drop into the lake by Chantrey Inlet Lodge. We pulled into the camp, closed for the season, at 10 p.m. and hit the tents.

The lodge charges \$3000 a week for fishing here so we thought we'd grab a few hundred dollars worth of time. We could stand on the rock and cast out into the pool for 20 pound lake trout, even the non-fishermen in our group were reeling them in and marvelling at the strength of these beautiful fish. We used a single, non-barbed hook so they all went back except for dinner.

Our final day on the Back was a meteorological treat. Huge cumulus clouds rolled in on a gusty southwest wind. A thunderstorm blew through accompanied by a deluge of rain late in the day. Just before the last rapid we met three Inuit from Gjoa Haven who were waiting to pick up a solo canoeist due any day. They would take him and his boat across the 50 miles of ocean to their tiny community where he could catch a regular flight out on Northwest Territorial Airways. Certainly a unique way to end a trip.

We paddled the final rapid, a mild riffle, and had an interesting final few miles between black skies to the south and northwest. Our goal was the abandoned nursing station where the Hayes River comes in from the east. At 9:50 pm we pulled in and Journey Across the Barrenlands was over!

The next day we searched for the cairn left by John Lentz who led the first modern trip down the river in 1962 and the first all-Canadian group led by Fred Gaskin in 1972. We finally found it - a pile of rubble on the hill west of the old nursing station. It had been knocked down and perhaps used as a hunting blind. No trace of the enclosures was found.

The weather turned sunny and our La Ronge Twin Otter arrived around 7 pm. Despite 55 days on the go I was not anxious to leave. The allure of the land is so strong and we had reached such a regular rhythm the thought of return to "civilization" did hold the appeal I thought it would. A hopeful sign?





Dinner tops off Expedition

The final event of the Morse River Expedition took place in Toronto on November 5. The members, friends, and sponsors of Journey Across the Barrenlands gathered at a formal dinner to honour Eric Morse.

Eric was presented with mementos of the trip including the Expedition flag, a watercolour of the Morse River by Sean Peake, an album of photos and telegrams of congratulations from Pierre Trudeau and John Parker, Commissioner of the N.W.T.

Returned to Eric was the bottle of Courvoisier he had given the members before they left on the journey. The bottle was con-

sumed at the cairn site and later refilled with the water of the river which bears his name. Pictured with Eric are five of the six members presenting him with the official flag. From the left are Sean Peake, Michael Peake, Bill King, Eric Morse, Geoffrey Peake and Peter Scott. (Peter Brewster, the sixth member is missing.)

Also presented at the dinner was a letter from the Executive Council of the Northwest Territories officially stating that the Morse River was named on August 1, and that the new name will be sent to Ottawa for inclusion on future maps of the area.

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