

# CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE NEWSLETTER OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 70

CHE-MUN

AUTUMN 1992



photo: Michael Peake

**ROCKY RIDE AHEAD-** Peter Scott, Sean Peake and David Peake stand atop the 150-foot cliffs scouting the ominous and wild

exciting Rocky Defile rapid on the Coppermine River. This challenging piece of whitewater, which was named by Captain John Franklin in

1821, looks much calmer from above than from the front seat of an Old Town Tripper. Franklin's group ran down it empty and still almost swamped.

**Heart of the North**  
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**UNGAVA**  
*-By George!*  
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# Fall Packet



After a few years of extensive northern paddling, including two overwintering trips. Alan Kesselheim and Marypat Zitzer decided to get married and Marypat even completed a trip while pregnant. See Che-Mun back issues for more info. Their address is: **Box 6328, Bozeman, Montana U.S.A. 5977-6328.** Alan recently wrote Che about this summer's paddling.

"Can't report any Canadian forays for Marypat and myself this year, but we did paddle the length of the Yellowstone River, starting at the Yellowstone Park boundary and paddling to the confluence of the Missouri River - some 550 miles and 25 days.

"Not the wilderness experience that we're used to, but surprisingly scenic and unused. We saw no other canoeists and very few people. The Yellowstone is not only an attractive float, but is the largest undammed river in the lower 48 states. The only things we had to negotiate were occasional diversion (irrigation) dams.

"Anyway, the big challenge for this trip was that we took Eli Kazan, now just nine months old. Lots of problems to deal with - how to keep goose crap out of Eli's mouth, what to use as a playpen (turns out a canoe is a wonderful one!), new safety considerations in case of a capsizing, and so on. We had many doubters, but the trip went really well. Eli is a great little camper, loves to jump up and down in the boat, and must, by now, have an incredible intuitive sense for water.

"We did miss the north, and with so much going on up there - Nunavut, diamonds etc. - we feel a certain urgency to get back, but not this summer.

"We will be in Toronto this fall to show our latest slide show about the last long trip across Canada."

**D**ave and Beth Buckley, 6478 Ashford Hollow Rd., West Valley, N.Y. 14171 have been Che-Mun sub-

scribers for a while but I never met them, or knew they were outfitters until the last L. L. Bean North American Canoe Symposium this past June. They put on an excellent clinic on trip preparation and required talents on the trail. They dropped us a line following a busy summer in the Northwest.

"We had five weeks in Saskatchewan where we were able to run a few wonderful rivers there, more or less one after another.

"The first was the Geikie, a fly-in, drive-out, run about 100 miles north of Missinipi. It's rather a bit downhill, with only occasional placid stretches from Big Sandy Lake to Wollaston Lake. The rapids are tight and technical with lots of big boulders and a few ledges here and there . . . several sets go on forever.

"Virtually everything proved runnable but plenty of water is essential. In a dry summer, there'd be long slippery walks at the bottom of most of those nice rapids - lots of pleasant campsites on high eskers - big pike, pickerel and the odd grayling. Best of all it's very lightly travelled.

"We recorded data and grid references on all the "navigational hazards" and other points of interest. We hope to have it transcribed this fall. We'd be happy to send a copy to anyone interested, (Send a SASE, please.)

"Then we flew into the Fond du Lac River at Corson Lake. Not much volume at the outset, but it gets bigger fast. There are tight C1, II's and III's near the top that require careful positioning and slow eddy-by-eddy descent. Further down the river is mostly ledgy with many wide swooping waves, a few of which are big enough to tempt a walk. Manitou Falls is a real beauty.

"Our third river, the Churchill, has really changed since Sig Olson paddled *'The Lonely Land'* 30 years ago. Now, Route 102 brings easy access, cabins, motorboats - and people. But the smorgasbord of rapids are still there. You can choose your poison, from mild to wild

(and beyond) - all running out of one pool down to the next. What's not to love about the twisting chutes of Mosquito Rapids and the friendly waves of Surf City. Still the jet-boats and the gallery on onlooking campers seem out of place on a great wild river. And you don't drink the water. Whoof! Sig must be turning in his grave.

"Ah, the Clearwater. Still hands down our favourite. Not nearly as much water this time - almost not enough. But for our friends Deb and Michele, in small solo boats, the mellow rapids meant more fun and less carrying. In that respect, it was just about perfect. There were more signs of use this time. No trash, mind you (other than a submerged canoe draped in one of the upper rapids), but more camps, and aluminum and ABS marks here and there. Oh well, it's still a hell of a bargain."

Dave and Beth sent some correspondence regarding Via Rail and canoe transport that we will follow up with in a later issue.

**D**avid Pelly, old friend and veteran Thelon River traveller, was back at his specialty location in the NWT this summer.

"Spent another wonderful summer on the Thelon, very relaxed pace, LOTS of time for hiking, absorbing the place, reading and thinking. My 'raison d'etre' this time was a book I've been commissioned to write on the Thelon, I'll be working on that all winter.

"Among other highlights we met some interesting travellers: Rudi and Ingrid Ostreicher from Germany, veteran traveller in their inflatable kayaks of several NWT rivers; and Kjell and Fina Solvang from Norway, trying to capture some of the experience of their Norwegian hero Inge Helstad (who wrote *The Land of Feast and Famine*). He was a trapper around the upper Thelon 1926-30 and still alive in Oslo, age 92!"

David's latest book *The Kazan* is currently on the bookshelves. Get a copy.

# CANOE TOONS

PAUL MASON



## Editor's Notebook

Well, here we are. Somewhat late again with the culprits being a burned-out Che-Mun computer and the Blue Jays incredible World Series run. Way to go, Jays!

This issue marks the eighth anniversary of the re-born Che-Mun. It's a bit scary to think that this is the 33rd one I've produced while the late Nick Nickels, from whom I purchased Che-Mun in 1984, did a total of 37. The years sure are flying by.

And I suppose that a milestone such as Outfit 70 can cause some reflection on where Che-Mun has gone. We still have a loyal, if somewhat small, following, and there is still nothing that gives me greater pleasure than reading the satisfied comments of readers. Thank you.

As I mentioned, my trusty Macintosh computer finally packed it in for good. I have bought a new one with far greater capabilities since we are now fully in the age of electronic publishing. That also means one other thing. Starting in the new year the price for Che-Mun will go up.

As I've said before, Che-Mun is a labour of love but it has to pay the bills. I have resisted fattening it up with a load of ads which, after all, pay the bills. But it seems that's the irresistible route taken by every other publication. But I want to deliver just the stories that you have come to expect without the same bunch of ads you see everywhere else.

Che-Mun is indeed unique. That means it costs much more to produce. Just to let you know, Che-Mun does not make any money, the full price covers production costs only. No salaries. So get your renewals in before the price goes up - even if you haven't expired. (See what a lousy business person I am?)

This issue highlights the most recent Hide-Away Canoe Club trip, our Heart of the North expedition. We also feature the photographs of George Grinnell and a special story on the Harings-Jacobson, Wedding at Wilberforce.

Last summer's trip was again a welcome experience. It was hard, very hard at times and a challenge to this aging body. But God, it was wonderful. We spend so much of our time in this world making things easier to do. A canoe trip such as ours makes you confront the chores that must be done the old fashioned way - through hard work.

While it may grind on the muscles it does a world of wonder for the spirit. And these soul-cleansing experiences are just enough to get us over winter's hump in time for the next bout of sweet canoeing.

**Michael Peake, Editor.**

# Our heritage rivers live on

The annual report of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System arrived in the mail recently and it's noted that the list of protected and nominated rivers has grown steadily over the last few years.

Thirteen rivers with a total of 1600 miles are designated heritage rivers have been noted. Another eight rivers and 1100 miles are nominated and awaiting designation.

The Designated Rivers and their length of protected areas are:

<b>French R., Ontario</b>	<b>65mi</b>
<b>Alek R., Yukon</b>	<b>54 mi.</b>
<b>Clearwater R., Saskatchewan</b>	<b>116 mi.</b>
<b>Nahanni R., NWT</b>	<b>180 mi.</b>
<b>Bloodvein R., Man. &amp; Ont.</b>	<b>120 mi.</b>
<b>Mattawa R., Ontario</b>	<b>20 mi.</b>
<b>Athabasca R., Alberta</b>	<b>100 mi.</b>
<b>N. Saskatchewan, Alberta</b>	<b>30 mi.</b>
<b>Kicking Horse R., B.C.</b>	<b>42 mi.</b>
<b>Kazan R., NWT</b>	<b>380 mi.</b>
<b>Thelon R., NWT</b>	<b>340 mi.</b>
<b>St. Croix, New Brunswick</b>	<b>120 mi.</b>
<b>The Thirty Mile R., Yukon</b>	<b>30 mi.</b>

The rivers nominated for designation between June 1993 and June 1994 are:

<b>Missinaibi R., Ont.</b>	<b>265 mi.</b>
<b>Bloodvein R., Ont</b>	<b>65 mi.</b>
<b>Boundary Waters, Ontario</b>	<b>150 mi.</b>
<b>Jacques-Cartier R., Quebec</b>	<b>80 mi.</b>
<b>Seal R., Manitoba</b>	<b>165 mi.</b>
<b>Grand R., Ontario</b>	<b>175 mi.</b>
<b>Main R., Newfoundland</b>	<b>35 mi.</b>
<b>Soper R., NWT.</b>	<b>70 mi.</b>
<b>Margaree R., Nova Scotia</b>	<b>85 mi.</b>

Not all the rivers are wilderness and in fact some aren't even rivers. Also, rarely are entire rivers included because of various legal and jurisdictional problems.

Among the nominated rivers the Soaper is the first river from the Arctic Islands to be so noted. The South Baffin Island river has been critical to the life of the Inuit who have inhabited the area for thousands of years.

A popular canoeing route, the Missinaibi River in northern Ontario, is due to be designated next June.

This river is still under great threat from encroaching logging. This situation underscores that the CHRS designation is merely a formality and it does not protect the river in law. It serves only as a guideline.

# The North of George Grinnell

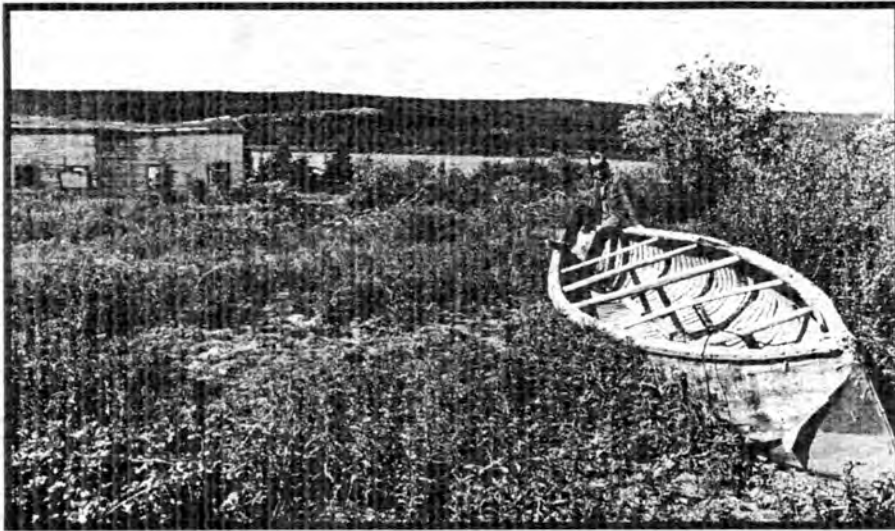


**I** first met George Grinnell when he flew me out to the Magdalen Islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence when I was there to photograph the birth of the harp seals on the gulf ice in 1986.

This interesting octogenarian told me about his love of flying in the north and his experiences in Ungava.

George of course received a copy of *Che-Mun* and soon became a subscriber. One day





*a packet of photos arrived in the Che-Mun mailbox.*

*Pictured top right are George and his nephew who are featured in these varied locations across northern Quebec.*

*Directly above, his nephew looks down on Granite Falls on the Caniapiscau River -*

*near the site of the drowning of 10,000 caribou in 1984 after Hydro-Quebec flushed excess water down the river.*

*The remains of abandoned Fort McKenzie on the Swampy Bay River are shown in the top photo with the old freighter canoe.*

*George's nephew paddles through some heavy rain (George too!) on the left and below is his plane at the float base in Lake Rapid near Sept-Iles.*

*George lives in Derry, New Hampshire and is still flying.*

*- Michael Peake*

# Heart of the North

By GEOFFREY PEAKE  
HACC GUIDE

Our trip began in earnest at 3:00 p.m. August 1, as our Twin Otter, bulging with literally a ton of gear, pulled away from the Air Tindi Dock on Latham Island, just a stone's throw from downtown Yellowknife, and taxied for takeoff.

The plane's cabin was rather cramped, as it contained 12 packs, three canoes (that miraculously squeezed inside the cramped cabin, despite obvious skepticism of the pilots) and six rather white and overweight canoeists. Our destination: McTavish Arm of Great Bear Lake, the start of our 26 day, 360 mile trip to the Arctic Ocean.

This trip marked an unusual occurrence of sorts—the first time all four of the Peake Brothers would be on a trip together. The four of us, Michael, David, Sean, and Geoffrey were joined by two brave and hearty individuals, Peter Scott and Peter Brewster, who dared to travel these remote regions with such intimidating companions as the Brothers Peake.

There are several ways to reach the Coppermine River from Great Bear Lake. The most direct route — 40 miles as the crow flies, goes by way of the Sloan River, heading northeast, descending the Hook River (more like a creek) reaching the Coppermine at Big Bend, 15 miles above Rocky Defile. This route, originally mentioned by Franklin in 1821 as the one that the Indian chief Hook and his band had used, is more feasible as an overland route, since low water would be encountered for most of the paddling season.

The second route that Hanbury, Douglas, Homby and others had done started at Dease Arm, heading up the Dease River, over the divide to the Dismal Lakes and down the Kendall River, joining the Coppermine about 7 miles below Rocky Defile. This route had been travelled by four members of our group last year (Sean and Geoffrey being absent). This year we wanted to travel by a less direct method, heading east from Great Bear, ascend-



Peter Scott and Peter Brewster work their way down the rocky and ragged Hepburn River.

ing either the Tilchuse or Calder River and descending the Hepburn River, which meets the Coppermine about 25 miles below Redrock Lake.

This route is considerably less direct, adding 220 miles of travel over Hook's passage, but as we all know, optimum speed and straight, efficient routes are seldom components of canoe travel, especially in the barrens—after all, this is supposed to be a vacation.

Although we had agreed on the Hepburn part of the route, we could not decide whether the Calder or the Tilchuse would be better access to the Hepburn. One faction of our group felt that the Calder would entail less work, although we would miss any real paddling on Great Bear. The Tilchuse supporters claimed their route allowed 20 miles of paddling on the big lake and more interesting terrain (according to the maps) to boot. Negotiations continued right up until the moment we boarded the plane. In the end we

adopted a route selected by the HACC Guide, myself, that contained about 45 portages totalling 12 kilometers or so (we never did add them all up).

And as we flew over the point where we would have landed for the Calder route, a large forest fire was burning, sending white plumes of smoke into the air for many miles. Some took this as an omen that we had chosen the 'right' route. Others didn't.

We landed on a barren island that juts into the north end of McTavish Arm, across from the Doghead Peninsula, about 10 miles south of the Arctic Circle. The large hill behind camp was magnetic in its appeal, and four of us climbed its deceptively distant summit for a spectacular view of Great Bear that stretched as far as one could see to the west.

Not surprisingly, the water temperature of the Big Lake is low - and most certainly no one went for an evening dip, but at least there were no bugs around.

The next day the weather was clear and the lake dead calm as we headed off toward our first stop of interest, the Arctic Circle Lodge. This must be — or rather must have been — one of the largest fishing camps in the territories, with accommodation for probably 80 or more fishermen. However, the lodge closed in 1991, a victim of the recession, so the grounds were empty when we paddled in and had lunch on the front dock.

The air had now become thick with the smoke of a not-so-distant forest fire. Visibility was reduced to less than a mile and our nostrils were filled with the acrid smell of charred wood. The wind also picked up from the south, giving us a strong headwind. We were nearing the most rugged hills on the whole lake, near where the now-deserted mining town of Echo Bay stands. We camped near here, off the north end of the Vance Peninsula, and not a moment too soon, as the dark clouds that moved our way brought lightning and thunder, and eventually rain. Heavy rain that pelted the tents so hard it was like camping in a car wash. The next morning the wind blew from the north, a chilly day of squalls that would at least put the forest fires out, but kept us tentbound.

Although there is rather sparse vegetation on Great Bear, as soon as we began our climb up and away from the lake, the underbrush increased, with tangles of willow and spruce blocking our path. Our route roughly followed a small river that was unnamed on the map, although the lodge appears to have called it the Whitefish River. Needless to say not many people had travelled up the fair Whitefish, and our portage trails usually followed the ramblings of caribou or moose in rut, when these could be found.

On that day we had four portages, the last one being the worst of the whole trip: over a kilometre long, uphill, through swamp and following a maze of game trails that resembled a tangled ball of string, we groaned and sweated our way through willow and alder that at times seemed to tower above us. How we longed for those Barrenland portages where the tallest tree seldom grows above your ankles. And to top it off, the blackflies were out in full force, giving us the finishing touch on a truly northern scene. Despite this we were able to find a pleasant esker campsite with enough breeze to keep the bugs away and for all of us to take an evening swim.

The next several days were essentially a repeat of this routine. We rise, eat breakfast, paddle and portage, eat some more, more paddling and portaging, then camp, have dinner and



Peter Scott and Geoffrey Peake can just be seen beside the rugged upper part of Bloody Falls.

go to bed. Our daily pace averaged 8 miles a day for the first 11 days. On Day 7 we reached the Tilchuse River, a larger watershed that we hoped would allow us greater navigability. This was not to be. Our first view of the Tilchuse as we came over the rise, looking down the valley for several miles was a boulder choked, broad, shallow streambed, that would have given float-plane pilots nightmares for weeks. We were able to drag and haul our way up for several miles — a nice treat after much portaging, but then it was back to the trails as the river cut through a tight gorge. The terrain here was especially rocky and difficult, and when we finally emerged on beautiful Uhlman Lake, the first named body of water since leaving Great Bear, we felt relieved that we actually had several miles of paddling in the morning without a portage.

The longest portages came at the end of our uphill climb, when even the most negative and pessimistic person would have said the packs were definitely lighter. Half our distance in portaging was done in those three days, and the rigours of the last week of travel began to show on the group. We reached Wentzel Lake on the evening of August 11, at the highest elevation of our trip 410 metres above sea level (we started at 156).

The gain in altitude had brought us into tundra, and firewood, which before had been so plentiful was now a scarce commodity. We decreed a rest day here, and one we had rightly earned, and spent the day baking, reading, and engaging in other frivolous pastimes which our busy schedule had not allowed us. Midday temperature in the tents was 90°F. the perfect time for a swim; none of us could remember swim-

ming so much on any northern trip before.

That night we had a special celebration of Peter Scott's wedding anniversary that included paté and hors d'oeuvres, cigars and martinis, and a fish chowder and brownies. After several rum and lemonade boissons and some chocolate biscuits we philosophized about life in general as the sun set (already 45 minutes earlier than the start of the trip). And the memory of those portages was already far behind us — almost.

The next day, after three easy portages we left the Great Bear-Mackenzie watershed and finally entered the Hepburn-Coppermine drainage area, and the start of our downhill run. We were blessed with a very strong tailwind that hurled us eastward across the lakes like lightning. The river was too small to navigate on this upper stretch so this required about a mile of portaging all together.

We camped on Keskerrah Lake (named after one of Franklin's Indian guides and the father of the alluring Greenstockings, who figures prominently in Franklin's narrative). We had about 40 miles to go until we reached the Coppermine. The most optimistic of us felt we could perhaps make it in one day. The real question mark was the runability of the rapids.

All these questions were of course answered the next day, as we reached the first marked rapids that set the tone for the rest of the Hepburn: shallow and rocky. We were able to make our way down with much scraping and dragging in places, but we were disappointed in the obviously low water. The two-mile "canyon" was only just runnable in places, but would have been fantastic with another foot of water. Despite the record late breakup, the water in this area of the territories was low — as we should

have deduced from the forest fires.

Finally, in the evening of August 15 came the long awaited goal and camped at the esker that marks where the Hepburn discharges into the Coppermine. We remarked with irony that anyone glimpsing the final rapid on the Hepburn, fooled by its absence of rocks and apparent ease, would probably remark "Boy, wouldn't it be nice to run the Hepburn some day". Of course we knew the real truth.

In higher water the Hepburn would be considerably easier and more enjoyable. But, whatever the water level, it was firmly decided by all members present at the Hide-Away Canoe Club special meeting (hurriedly convened at that campsite) NEVER to retrace that route from Gt. Bear again. The hardships of the route were not, like so many other trips we have done, compensated by abundant wildlife or spectacular scenery. We had seen very little wildlife, the fishing was poor. The most positive aspect of that route was that we were all, by this time, in excellent shape — especially our legs, which was a good thing too because we didn't do another portage until Bloody Falls, over 200 miles away. And so ended the 'exploratory' part of our trip.

The next day was our long-awaited day of rapids - real rapids. From the junction of the Hepburn to Fairy Lake river the river drops over 150 feet. After considerable preparation of the spray skirts, waterproofing and lashing in everything securely, we finally set off down a river that at last had some real volume. What a joy it was to paddle in an hour what some days would have taken seven! The river is quite swift and hardly pauses through this section.

The banks are well-treed and the valley has much more an abundance of wildlife and fertility than the lakes we had passed through.

The rapids in this section are easy to run, as long as your bowman (person?) has a keen eye for rocks. The larger rapids end with massive boulder fans that can be fatal to canoes. We witnessed the crumpled hull of one unfortunate Grumman that was squashed like a beer can. One rapid in particular that flows through the bones of an old esker it long ago washed away has left an impressive boulder fan nearly a mile in width. We hugged the right shore, resisting the temptation of the seemingly deeper water in the middle, dragging and wading through the shallows. A good thing it was too as the centre channel was choked with hungry rocks. Not far downstream we found the wrecked canoe.

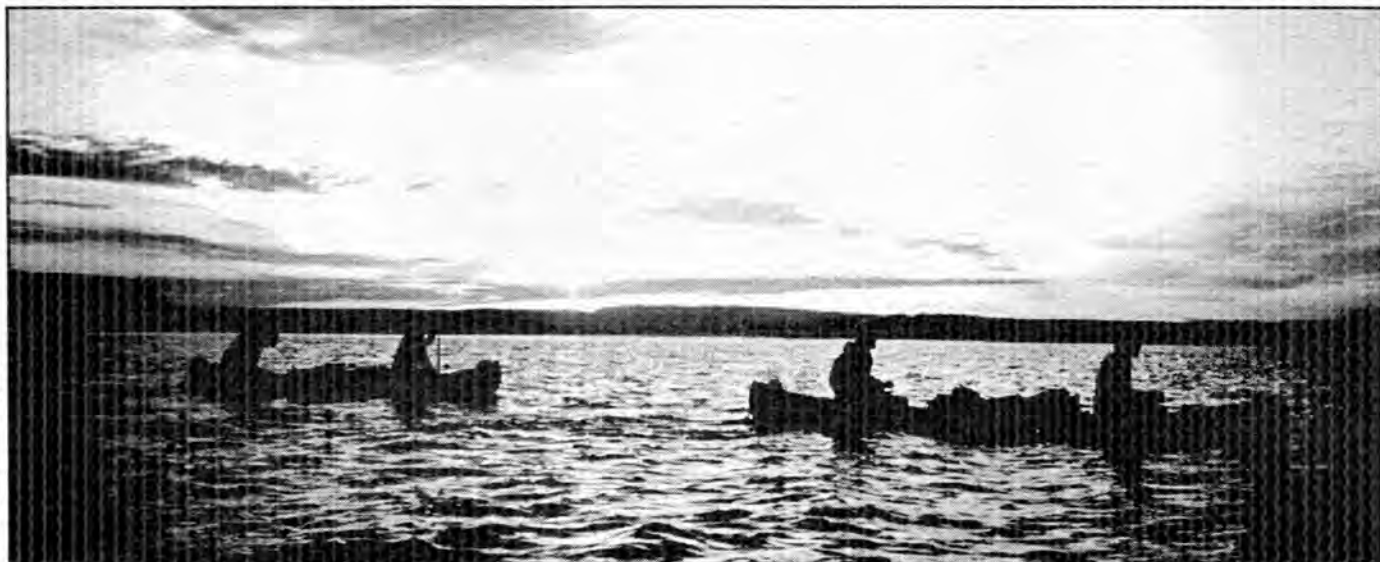
Below this section there are no marked rapids until Big Bend, a distance of about 100 miles. The trees grow sparser in this section and the hills become more pronounced. We saw many caribou and moose through here, not to mention ducks, mergansers, loons, etc. The surrounding banks are quite silty and wet, and the water became more cloudy. Campsites are harder to find. Usually sites look good from a distance but do not pass closer scrutiny. Several times we paddled from one prospective site to another, always hopeful that the next one will be "just a bit better".

The weather turned cold and windy on us on us in this section. Evening temperatures were several degrees below freezing, which finished off the mosquitoes for good. Daytime temperatures were in the low 40's, making lunch a chilly affair. One evening we even had a light

dusting of snow. Needless to say we were wondering if maybe we were paddling a little late in the season. We also noticed the cold weather had increased our appetites; our food consumption had stayed the same, despite the fact we were putting out only a fraction of the energy as we had the first week.

After what seemed like ages paddling slow water, we at last reached Big Bend, and the approach to Rocky Defile. We found this the most interesting and challenging rapid of the whole river. The river flows through a 150 foot deep canyon, making a sharp right turn as it cuts through the rock strata over a distance of about 500 yards. From above the route looks easy, and I suppose it is, but spray covers are most essential with a fully loaded canoe. As we paddled into the canyon the familiar dry mouth before rapids appeared, the sign of a good rapid. The waves that had looked small and inconsequential from the top had suddenly grown in size, and we bounced our way through them; the moment seemed a blur of paddling and bracing, shouting commands to the bow. We managed to hug the right shore, although Michael and David got pulled out into the "rough stuff" and narrowly missed the only real hazard of the rapid, a huge hole with attendant eight foot foaming wave. Rocky Defile provided us with an adrenaline rush that lasted to our campsite at the mouth of the Kendall River and the junction with last year's route. We feasted again on fried char that evening as we watched the sun emerge and shed a golden light on panorama of the September Mountains. A rest day was pronounced for the mor-

➤ *Continued on Page 11*



THE FINAL RUN -- The last few miles of paddling at the mouth of the Coppermine was a picture postcard experience.



# Wedding at Wilberforce

By **MICHAEL PEAKE**  
Che-Mun Editor

**T**he Barrenlands Bride said it was both the best and worst day of the trip.

Susie Harings, who was scheduled to marry Cliff Jacobson on August 12 at Wilberforce Falls on the Hood River, was talking about the first day of their 16 day outing.

As reported in Outfit 69, the social event of the canoeing season on the Barrenlands this summer did indeed take place and we are happy to present you with some of the details.

The party of eight flew out with Air Tindi, the Yellowknife air charter company, on August 1. Two chock-full Twin Otters lifted the wedding and canoe party off to the Hood with all their gear and packs - except one.

It seems that one of Cliff's special Duluth packs had been left behind - and ominous event for any canoe trip but especially so for this one. The pack contained the bride's wedding dress and wedding cake along with dried flowers and even a red plastic bow tie for the ever-dapper Cliff.

One can only imagine, Susie's reaction when the missing pack was, or rather wasn't, discovered. Fortunately, the good people at Air Tindi had another charter going nearby later the next day. So Tindi base manager, Bill Gawletz, dispatched the nuptial pack to what we hear was a very happy bride to be.

The river trip proved less "eventful" and the party arrived at the 160-foot drop of Wilberforce Falls in good shape. They found their first wedding gift - a green plastic Octopus awaiting at their site with a note from a recently passed Canadian group which included Che-Mun subscriber Bill King. They'd left "Ollie" with best wishes for the couple. He ended up being an honoured guest at the ceremony which took place in glorious bug-free sunshine.

We understand that a couple of trappers

who were in the vicinity tromped over to Wilberforce Falls when they heard about the upcoming event. They even brought the lucky couple a wedding present - a toaster!

For the complete story of all the funny and

expansions of the Dubawnt River above (river-wise) Carey Lake and made their way from Carey into the Kazan.

"All the big lakes were in various states of ice," Thompson reports. "So we had a good

look at the maps and made detours through several ice-free little lakes, which meant a lot more portaging."

By the time they made it to the Kazan proper it was in full flood.

"There were times when we looked down to see we were actually paddling over tundra," said Thompson. "And places where there were marked rapids were flat and where there was nothing marked, the rapids were huge."

David reports meeting a solo Ontario paddler who had just spent seven days waiting for the ice to go out.

"He looked in rough shape so he joined up with us for a while and then fell behind. We were all a little worried about him since he seemed to be living on just bannock and cheese."

Thompson reported his concerns about the man to a pilot they met near the end of the river. He was soon picked up and flown to Baker in a state of severe "bush fatigue."

After much exciting rapid running, Thompson and company made it to Baker on the third of August and were surprised to discover they were the first canoeing party to arrive in '92. The big lakes on the lower Thelon had not melted and the RCMP were busy hauling in delayed canoe parties.

The late summer, while felt across much the north, appears to have had its most dramatic effect in the Keewatin District, home of the Barrenlands. Certainly the Coppermine River was well below similar level from the previous year and we hear that the Hood River was about normal.

Several parties from the U.S. showed up in Yellowknife in mid-June expecting to head north bit with no water to paddle on. Some of the trips had to abandon their plans. Remember, always phone ahead!



Susie and Cliff at Wilberforce.

touching details of this canoe/wedding trip look for an article by Cliff in an upcoming issue of Canoe magazine.

Che-Mun wishes Cliff and Susie many miles of happy paddling together. Only Cliff could take the plunge at Wilberforce Falls - and survive.

**T**here was also a lot of other non-nuptial activity as well in the north this summer.

David Thompson, a Toronto lawyer by day - and Prince Andrew's canoe guide at occasional other times - led a less-than-regal canoe party of 12 down the Dubawnt and Kazan Rivers. The group included eight teenagers from Lakefield College School north of Peterborough, Ontario.

David reports a trying and exciting trip that didn't go exactly as planned. On July 10, Air Tindi flew them into the ice choked lake

# News & Notes

**P**OWER OUTAGE . . . Ontario Hydro has asked for a five-year delay of a \$13-billion sale agreement with Manitoba Hydro. The 30-year deal to sell hydro power was signed in 1989 by former Ontario premier David Peterson and Manitoba's Gary Filmon.

The sale calls for the construction of the \$6-billion Conawapa dam on the Nelson River in northern Manitoba and transmission lines to Ontario.

Manitoba's economy could hinge on the \$13.5-billion power sale agreement with Ontario Hydro, but Canada's largest utility has a glut of energy and needs to trim billions of dollars from its budget.

The \$5.7-billion dam, about 800 kilometres north of Winnipeg, is the largest construction project in the history of the province. The deal is the largest interprovincial transaction in Canadian history.

Ontario Hydro's demand for power from the dam is the only reason it is being built for 2001. Manitoba does not need the power from Conawapa until 2012, if not later. Project critics say Manitoba Hydro has no choice but to accept the delay because Manitoba doesn't need its power until at least 11 years after the dam is completed.

A delay may also provide more room for an environmental review, which is months behind schedule and threatens to be a costly disruption to the construction timetable. The two parties agreed in 1989 that Manitoba would sell 1,000 megawatts a year to Ontario, starting in the year 2000 for 22 years at a cost of \$13.5 billion.

The Nelson is already the site of several large dams upstream from Conawapa. The river is very large and has never been a popular canoe route.

**R**AGING FOOTPRINTS . . . Tourism can be just as damaging to the environment as forestry according to the president of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

"Tourism, no less than forestry, will increasingly come under public scrutiny for its damage to the environment," Harvey Locke said in an address to the World Congress on Adventure Travel and Eco-tourism.

Eco-tourism is defined as "directly or indirectly promoting conservation and supporting sustainable development." Locke said the opposite is "industrial tourism," which he said is incompatible with a healthy environment.

He said the town of Banff in Banff National Park "is a tragic example of over-development." Its rapid growth has destroyed one of the most productive animal and bird populations in the park.

Western Canada "has some of the world's finest opportunities for eco-tourism" said Locke. But he warned that "over development of industrial activities or industrial tourism facilities will destroy the wild and the wilderness, eliminating our competitive advantage in the world marketplace."

Mega resorts focused on conventions, golf, skiing and shopping malls should not be allowed in wilderness areas, Locke said.

**L**IMITED APPEAL . . . The federal government is appealing a court decision ordering it to do a full environmental assessment of the \$1.5-billion Eastmain hydro-electric project in northern

Quebec.

"We are appealing because we suggest this (project) is purely provincial, and it is not a federal matter," Yvan Huneault, press secretary to Environment Minister Jean Charest, said in an interview.

The case is to be heard in the Federal Court of Appeal in Montreal. Even as it proceeds with the appeal, Ottawa is setting up a review panel to assess the project as ordered by a federal court judge almost a year ago.

"We have already begun to define terms of reference of the review panel and we have begun a search for panel members," said Darryl Perry, a spokesman for the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office.

"The federal government is obeying the law, it's obeying the court order, that's why we're proceeding."

The main point at issue in the case is whether the federal Fisheries Act can be used to start an environmental assessment. If the court finds that it does not, the scope of future environmental assessments will be much narrowed.

Although the Eastmain project has been overshadowed by the \$12.6-billion Great Whale hydro-electric development, it is also large and controversial, involving the flooding of 700 square kilometres of territory in the James Bay region on the upper and so far unspoiled region of the Eastmain River.

Last October, Federal Court Justice Paul Rouleau ordered Ottawa to do an environmental assessment of the Eastmain project, rejecting arguments that the project was under provincial jurisdiction.

"Areas of federal responsibility such as navigation, fisheries and migratory birds are of concern and cannot be ignored," said Rouleau in his decision.

**G**ONE WITH THE WILD . . . Canada is losing its wilderness at the rate of at least one square kilometre per hour, says the World Wildlife Fund of Canada in a major report released last month.

Opportunities to build a park system which represents the full diversity of Canada's landscape are dwindling quickly, warns the report which is based on information supplied by the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

"Urbanization, mining, agriculture, road building and hydro development are all claiming larger and larger chunks of the Canadian landscape," said Monte Hummel, president of the conservation group, on releasing the report.

"Already 60 per cent of the land base in the country's 10 provinces has been claimed by other resource and development uses."

The amount of protected wilderness area in Canada increased by nearly 100,000 square kilometres over the past year, says the report. But most of the new park land is located in remote northern areas.

"This has led to the suggestion that some of these parks bureaucrats and ministers are establishing areas in what's euphemistically known as rock and ice," said Hummel in an interview.

"Rock and ice in British Columbia has become a code word for 'protect everything except prime, productive forest lands.'"

Less than one per cent of the new parkland is located in productive forest land, said Hummel. Only 3.8 per cent of the country's productive forest is in national or provincial parks, and even some of this may be logged in the future.

"In 91 of the country's 340 natural regions, we've already lost the option to protect the minimum area that's needed," he added. "In the most populated areas, the best we can strive for is restoration."

Despite the diminishing options, Canada still has a greater opportunity to protect wilderness than any other country, he said.

## Heart of the North cont'd.

night as the temperature

dropped to the lowest of the trip - 15 degrees F!

That last week on the Coppermine was surprisingly effortless and care-free - quite an unusual experience for us. Usually we paddle hard right to the last moment of the trip, always struggling to make that plane. We were blessed with perfect weather and were able to take our time through the many rapids of the lower river. Several miles below camp (in the midst of a discussion on fish and chips!) we came upon a small herd of muskoxen grazing at the water's edge. We scarcely had time to notice them before they stampeded up the steep banks and out of sight.

Just past here we stopped to search for signs of George Douglas' Boulder Bed campsite. We combed the area for almost an hour before we found the place. There, on the grass, were two hand carved paddles that Douglas had made. While heading for the Ocean in 1912, his group was delayed here by warm temperatures and melting snow. They broke down their sleds and started building a canoe, but (luckily) the weather chilled off again and they resumed their journey, leaving these souvenirs for us to find 80 years later. The canoe frame had been found in 1987 and taken to the Museum in Yellowknife, but the paddles remained behind along with other assorted bits of sleigh, tent pegs, etc.

Several groups had searched the area for this site (including our group last year) with no success. We were very pleased to find these relics and tried to imagine the scene 80 years earlier with Douglas, Hornby and the Inuit in lively conversation around the fire. So much has changed in the world since that time, but this place scarcely looks disturbed - a good example of the strange time warp you sometimes encounter in the Arctic.

We continued on down easy riffles as the river picks up its pace. Rocks and gravel shoals were the only serious obstacles, and all easily avoided. The first big water was Muskox Rapids, where the river narrows through a small canyon. We were able to run this except at the last drop, where we lined and dragged on the left. Swifts continue several miles as the Coppermine picks up speed before Sandstone Rapids. We reached this just as the golden sunset highlighted the natural reddish hue of the rock. Little more than standing waves, we ran through and camped by a small creek, on the verge of an unnamed set of rapids that kept us on edge all night.

Next morning would be the start of 30 miles of almost non-stop rapids from the word go. The Coppermine drops over 300 feet in this section. Rapids are indistinct as one flows into another, with only the occasional flat section. Spray covers are a real asset because standing waves are everywhere and impossible to avoid.

But a better day of rapids is difficult to imagine; with sunny skies and mild temperatures we were whisked down river through magnificent canyons as falcons and eagles glided overhead. My memory of that day will be of constant bracing and paddling, keeping an eye out for those ever-present rocks, yet wanting to look on the marvellous rolling tundra and stark canyons that ran past us in a blur. Last year's group was surprised how much lower and easier the rapids were, yet even with spray covers we had to bail several times.

The big event of the day was Escape Rapids; this was the last really difficult rapid of the trip and they portaged around it last year. There was considerable nervousness as we approached the great cliffs that guard the

entrance, but scouting revealed the rapid was quite straightforward. We all slipped down easily and through the big waves at the end, thrilled at completing this last rapid, yet almost regretful for now our trip was almost at an end.

We spent two nights at Bloody Fall, fishing for char, which proved to be considerably more elusive than last year, although they were running up the river in large numbers. We watched them swim up river, hugging the eddies, churning around in them as if they were in a washing machine. As they fought the incredible force of water and gravity. At times they came so close to us we could have grabbed them with our hands.

The falls is well used by the residents of Coppermine, nine miles downriver. An obvious fishing spot, this was the site of the infamous massacre that Hearne witnessed - done while they were fishing at this very site. These days the place is somewhat more hospitable. At our site we had several friendly Arctic ground squirrels or sic-sics who took a great interest in

our gorp. Actually they took a great interest in any food we had which shows how busy this campsite is. We were able to spare some Red River cereal for these hungry critters, putting it to what some felt was its only true and proper use.

The final paddle to the shores of the Arctic ocean was done just before sunset. We had a proverbial South Pacific sunset as we drifted into Coronation Gulf and the town of Coppermine at 9:15 p.m. on August 26, exactly on schedule, the sky alight with gold and purple hues.

And so ended our trip: 26 days and 380 miles, for those who like to count. Yet I cannot think of any other northern trip that has seemed like so much of a vacation as that last week on the Coppermine - a total contrast to the first week.

The memory of those portages seemed far away that evening as we pulled up our canoes for the last time, stacked them next to the Hudson's Bay Co. shed, to await another year and yet another northern trip.

## 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 R. 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 - Ungava Crater Exped., Hubbard & Wallace
- Outfit 54 - Povungnituk 88 - Ungava, Sleeping Island
- Outfit 55 - Memories of Bill Mason, Twin Otter gone
- Outfit 56 - Canoeing stamps, Hambury review, WCA slidefest
- Outfit 57 - North American Canoe Symposium, book reviews
- Outfit 58 - Churchill River trip, The Lonely Land
- Outfit 59 - Tyrrell brothers, Water & Sky, Alberta Pulp wars
- Outfit 60 - Via Rail, Missinaibi R, James Bay, HBC exit
- Outfit 61 - Inside LG2, Aki on the Barrens, Grey Owl
- Outfit 62 - Across Ungava via the Kogaluk and Payne rivers
- Outfit 63 - Canoeing in the 1930s, Hydro-Quebec chairman
- Outfit 64 - Rupert River in 1914 remembered, Keewaydin Guide
- 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



**BLOODY FAST** - Peter Scott gets an up-close look at the final drop in the long set of rapids known as Bloody Fall. The site was named in July 1771 by Samuel Hearne for the massacre upon the Eskimos by the Indians with whom Hearne travelled with from Hudson Bay. Many modern historians doubt Hearne's printed account of the attack, but there's still no doubting the immense power and beauty of the great Coppermine River.

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*Trip Planning. 1966 vs 1992. A look at how Eric Morse planned for the Coppermine compared to how Heart of the North did.*

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