

CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE NEWSLETTER OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 69

CHE-MUN

SUMMER 1992



THE VOYAGEURS-- The legendary gang together after doing the Churchill River in

1955. Left to right; Omand Solandt, Sigurd Olson, Denis Coolican, Eric Morse and Tony

Lovink. Find out the inside story on this group direct from one of their own members. See page 6.

The Bourgeois
*An intimate look
at Sig Olson*

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Summer Packet



The summer is now upon us and many of you will be away paddling throughout our vast north. This issue of the Packet will concentrate on who is heading where this summer.

The Hide-Away Canoe Club have another northern expedition planned. Last year we retraced the route of George Douglas in his 1911-12 *Lands Forlorn* trip from Great Bear Lake to the mouth of the Coppermine. This summer finds our Heart of the North expedition doing exactly the same route description but only repeating 80 miles.

Heart of the North follows no historical route until we reach the Coppermine. We begin in the southeast corner of Great Bear near the mouth of the Camsell River. The exact route still has possible variations but the current proposed schedule is to ascend the Camsell (past White Eagle Falls as shown in the Che-Mun 68) and then follow the Calder River up to the height of land between Great Bear and the Coppermine.

We will then descend the Hepburn River (named after the astonishingly tough first mate of the Franklin Expedition).

The Hepburn meets the Coppermine just below Rocknest Lake where the Coppermine is still in a fairly steep phase. Then the big river flattens out for a while before picking up steam past the Big Bend - which the natives used a shortcut to Great Bear (we're not really in a hurry). Then past Rocky Defile where we rejoin last year's route when the Kendall River comes in.

We want to try and take a bit more time on the lower Coppermine. It flows so fast and requires great concentration that it's gone before you know it.

We've heard of a few other trips going

on throughout the north and we want to share them with you. One thing is for sure. The summer began very late. The big rivers including the Thelon and Coppermine were still frozen at the end of June. Things are very late and trippers will no doubt run into ice on the big lakes. We pity anyone who tries the lower Dubawnt this year since Dubawnt Lake (the biggest in the Barrenlands) will probably never even get moist in 1992.

David Thompson, who's best known as guide to Prince Andrew and his wife (when they were together) is leading a group from Lakefield School in southern Ontario to the Dubawnt and Kazan Rivers in a trip starting July 9. David will wisely stay away from Dubawnt Lake and cross over from Carey to the Kazan - a route done by Eric Morse in 1968 and by the Kesselheim party in 1987. They will finish in Baker Lake. Good luck D.T.

The incredible Japanese canoeist Aki Nishimura is attempting his longest trip yet. The indefatigable lone kayaker is doing a 90 day trip that started in mid-June from Stony Rapids. He may be luckier with the ice since he is at a lower latitude. Aki will head over the Chipman Portage and into Selwyn Lake and then to Wholdaia crossing over to Snowbird and Kasba Lake to the Kazan River. He will then make his way to the Maguse River and finish at Eskimo Point on Hudson Bay on September 10. Whew!

New Che-Mun subscribers Jim and Lisa Lisius from Orono, Maine will be doing a historical trip following the traditional route between Quebec's Fort Chimo (Kuujjuaq) and Fort Naskopie. That will mean travel on the Swampy Bay, Caniapiscau and Koksoak Rivers. They have promised a report for Che-

Mun this fall.

Perhaps the most remote trip of the year is on Ellesmere Island running from Lake Hazen down the famed Ruggles River and up the coast to Fort Conger. It's not really a canoeing trip since most of the place will probably be frozen even in the first two weeks of August reports Craig Oliver, one of the eight man crew which includes Che-Mun subscriber Ross Howard. The crew also carries a few political and media heavyweights.

Oliver says they got their canoes up there by icebreaker and that the charter costs are really horrendous. We hope to have a report this fall.

Veteran trippers Fred Gaskin and Rob Caldwell of Cambridge, Ontario have postponed their planned trip on the very remote Thompson River on Banks Island - one of the northern Arctic Islands. The group has already done a trip on the Kuu-jua River on Victoria Island.

Caldwell says he likes the northern islands because there are no trees and no people - and besides his groups have done most of the major routes in the mainland territories. But he warned that the window of runnability is small with those barren rivers often drying up at the headwaters by the time they reach the bottom. Caldwell was able to do a run down the Petawawa River in Algonquin Park with former PM John Turner.

Teri Arychuk of Air Tindi in Yellowknife reports that it is again a busy season for canoeists flying out of the NWT capital. Veteran Arctic paddler Jim Abel flew into the Barrens in early June for a two month trip that will end up in Snowdrift on Great Slave Lake. Teri reports that they are having trouble find-

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CANOE TOONS

PAUL MASON



Editor's Notebook

Months worth of planning are now being realized by thousands of paddlers across the north. The topo maps have been poured over, the supply lists checked and re-checked and still too darn much stuff is left to get into those old, faithful Wood's packs.

The old story about canoe trip planning being 90% of the work - and the actual trip being the other 90% - is being told, retold and discovered by us all.

Perhaps the most secretive canoe trip this summer belongs to Pierre Trudeau, Canada's former PM and a longtime canoeist. Like another former PM John Turner, (why are only Liberals paddlers?) Trudeau has travelled many miles in the north without calling much attention to it. In fact, this year, he wants to keep the whole thing a secret - and we don't blame him one bit. Trudeau will be heading down the Coppermine sometime this summer with one (or more) of his three sons.

We had heard that they were making a film about this trip but have been unable to find out any more details. I hope they don't make a film - only for Pierre and his sons' sake. Filming the trip would be a disruptive influence on the natural rhythms of a canoe trip. I wish them a wonderful normal trip just like the rest of us have. Trudeau receives Che-Mun - though I have no idea of he actually reads it. I hope so.

For he would join what is truly the most remarkable subscribers list of any smalltime periodical. I am proud of all our subscribers. You are a remarkable lot. I know that you care about canoeing and the ethic of the north as espoused by a groups like The Voyageurs whose leader we profile on page 6.

When Omand Solandt told me he would give Che-Mun his story of The Voyageurs I was thrilled. The inside story of this group and especially their Bourgeois, Sig Olson, is the stuff of legend. Though they certainly would not want it that way.

Pierre Trudeau was a late member of that group. He did the Coppermine Eric Morse and the rest in 1966. And now he continues that heritage with his sons. They will know a far different north than was travelled by The Voyageurs. But we hope they will be up to the challenge of defending it from the relentless surge of the economic steamroller. It will flatten everything unless we get a foot on the brake.

Michael Peake, Editor.

H-Q crying power-foul

Hydro-Quebec says the committees reviewing the Great Whale hydroelectric megaproject in Northern Quebec are biased and are asking it to do the impossible in its environmental impact study.

The proposals will receive public comment on guidelines drafted by four federal and provincial review committees in April.

Hydro says it will respond to most of the questions raised in the guidelines, which spell out what must be included in the impact study. But it also accuses the committees of overstepping their bounds on a number of major issues.

Among the studies that Hydro said it would have difficulty providing were:

- The combined effects of Great Whale with past and future James Bay development, in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba;

- A full cost-benefit analysis of Great Whale, including among the costs the changes in traditional use of the land by the Cree and Inuit and the destruction of natural landscapes and rivers;

- A detailed analysis of contracts to export power and to sell power to energy-intensive industries, such as aluminum smelters;

- A comparison of the environmental impacts of alternate designs for the project.

In a brief submitted to the committees, Hydro said some of their demands would require too much time and cost too much money. Hydro's environmental specialists are limited in what they can provide by the extent of current scientific knowledge, it said. A project should not be used as "a pretext to advance science," the brief said.

Hydro complained that the "general tone" of the draft guidelines reflects "an unfavorable prejudice against the project."

The National Audubon Society generally approved of the draft guidelines in a brief submitted last week. The U.S. environmental group applauded the committees for setting out a rigorous test by which Hydro will have to show that Great Whale is needed.

The committees have asked for a detailed review of energy conservation and other possible alternatives to constructing Great Whale. A brief from the Quebec engineering firm SNC-Lavalin, which stands to be a major recipient of contracts if the project is built, accused the committees of drawing up guidelines that would be impossible to answer.

The Cree have not yet responded to the guidelines. Because copies of the guidelines translated into Cree were only made available recently.

A pair of young men stretch canoeing to its limits

When days turn to years

In the spring of 1977, two year-long, cross continent expeditions began. What was it about 1977 that prompted two such long and gruelling trips? We will never really know but it does seem strange that both of them book more than a decade to come to print.

I discovered *Magnetic North* in a Littleton, New Hampshire bookstore on the way to the L. L. Bean North American Canoe Symposium last year. In the *North of Our Lives* came my way after seeing the author do a talk on part of the trip at the annual Wilderness Canoe Symposium - also last year.

I finally decided to read both books together and was struck by their similarities and the circumstances around them. Norment's book is the better of the two. It concerns the travels of a disparate group of six young men who came together on this massive project from many walks of life. The trip began just into the Yukon and ended 14 months later at Chesterfield Inlet on Hudson Bay. The group wintered over at Warden's Grove just below the junction of the Hanbury and Thelon Rivers.

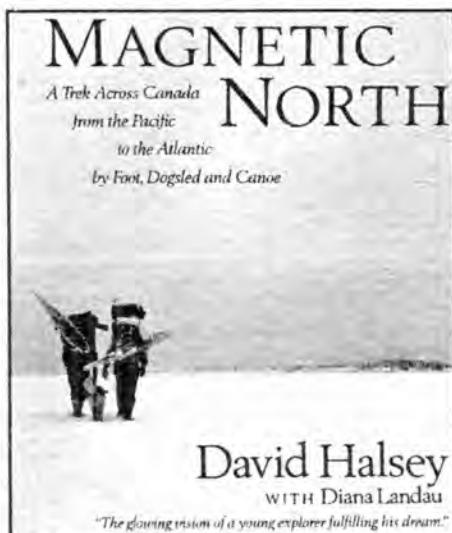
Halsey's story is more tragic in many ways. Firstly because the author committed suicide in 1983, the result of a manic depressive condition. He was a driven young man with a zest for the outdoors but seemingly with too much zest and too little common sense.

I would recommend both of these books to wilderness canoeists simply because they relate directly to ultimate-type canoe trips. These are the kinds of journeys we have all talked about making at one time or another but have never got around to for a myriad of reasons.

Both of these authors did such a trip while they were young which certainly gave them the physical stamina required but they lacked the emotional maturity and wilderness travel experience that would have made both their trips more pleasant.

In each case most of the participants were relatively new to canoeing. They had not built up to these expeditions and indeed there is a line of argument that had they taken the years to prepare other factors would have prevented them from actually doing the trip.

Magnetic North is the more southerly traverse of the two. Halsey set out in May 1977 with three friends from Vancouver on the Pacific Ocean.



Magnetic North

A Trek Across Canada from the Pacific to the Atlantic by Foot, Dogsled and Canoe.

By David Halsey with Diana Landau. Sierra Club Books San Francisco, 1990 252pp.

Halsey, a 21-year-old American from suburban Washington D.C., was the spark for the trip, it was his idea and he had managed to persuade the prestigious and formidable National Geographic Society to donate some film and seed money for the trip. This of course helped line up other sponsors and the group began the trip by hiking up the Fraser River. After only four days the three others spilt with all the equipment. That left Halsey very despondent and without the accomplished photographer that NG said was a must.

That was the first of a harrowing series of setbacks and misadventures for Halsey. He admired the great northern explorers and would soon experience some of the real hardships they endured. After another aborted partner he finally hooked up with Peter Souchuk a photographer from the mid-west. They adopted a stray husky dog named Ki and it was this trio they would ultimately

finish the epic journey.

They switched from backpack to canoe when they hit the mighty Athabasca River which would carry them to Forth MacMurray. From here they began to hike again and later picked up the use of a dogsled team that would take them to the mouth of the Berens River on Lake Winnipeg. They would travel up the Berens and over the height-of-land to the Ogoki-Albany River system to James Bay. Here they wintered over and in the spring paddled over the the Rupert River and ascended that to Mistassini Lake from where they eventually made it down to Tadoussac at the mouth of the Saguenay River on the St. Lawrence River.

The narrative has many ups and downs and there was a lot of head shaking on the part of this reader. The text is very readable, most was prepared by Halsey before his death and the publisher brought in a professional writer to put the pieces together which Diana Landau does quite well.

The trip down the Athabasca River made me feel ill. They made so many mistakes and took so many chances. They dumped numerous times and if they had not been so young would have certainly died of hypothermia. The accounts of these adventures are difficult to read. They are the stuff of a canoeist's worst nightmares. Another thing really bothered me about this book. Halsey professes great respect and love for the native people he so often meets. And while he does interact with them to some degree, you are left wondering what he learned. On their descent of the Albany they come to a big rapid where a family of Indians has just portaged upstream. They tell Halsey not to run the rapids as they are too dangerous. You would think after his many Athabasca dumpings he would listen. But he doesn't and within seconds they have swamped, smashing the canoe and themselves.

Another curious thing is that they always seemed to be running out of food while canoeing - even after their second winter layover when they departed from Moosonee to cross under James Bay which had earlier almost killed them (again going against the native advice). They could have easily packed several weeks of food but for some mysterious reason did not. The final straw for me was when they were battling winds on James Bay and had to decide whether to take an extra day and follow the coast or try to

make an island eight miles out(!) and then angle in. They made it to the island just as they were sinking and it was only the luck of fools that there was a place to beach the canoe in the storm.

It would seem from many of these incidents that Halsey had a death wish. Northern adventure must be tempered with common sense and a respect for the forces of nature that can crush you like a withered leaf.

In the end they made it. National Geographic, not surprisingly, was not interested in the story and this was probably the beginning of Halsey's downward spiral into depression. It is interesting to note that NG Editor William Graves is quoted on the back cover attesting to Halsey's brash and determined nature.

By comparison the 14-month odyssey of Chris Norment and five friends was almost serene. They began their trip with some tough headwater sledding over the Itsi Range and into the upper Nahanni River. Norment was not the originator of this trip that was originally designed to honour the memory of John Hornby who starved to death on the Thelon River in 1927 along with his young nephew and a friend. The trip, dubbed Traverse of the Northwest, was dreamed up by two Outward Bound instructors one of whom had a fixation on Hornby. (That would be enough to make me suspicious.) The group was organized by phone and mail and the six, all in their 20s and early 30s, set off with their donated Old Town Trippers and other gear in mid-June.

The group grunted their way up to the Nahanni and then easily down it to Fort Simpson where they picked up a 24-foot North canoe for the trip up the Mackenzie River to Great Slave Lake. They shipped their canoes and more food to Reliance at the eastern end of Great Slave where they would begin regular canoeing again by tackling the gruelling Pike's Portage over to the Hanbury-Thelon system and eventually down to Hudson Bay.

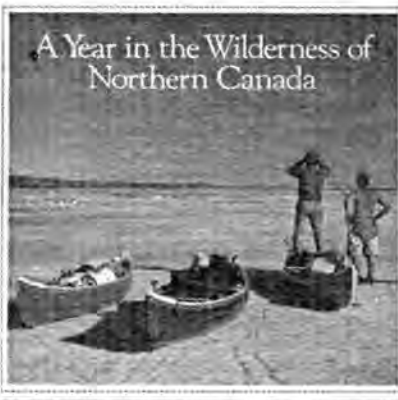
After crunching and dumping their way down the Yukon's MacMillan River, the hard portaging through the Itsi Range brought the group together mentally. But this was still a disparate party, each member had his own reason for going and their lack of experience together was a severe handicap in the beginning. Some of the group thought they were travelling too fast, others too slow, with the obvious friction developing.

Norment writes well, if a bit too clinically at times. He is currently studying for his PhD in zoology and certainly has a scientist's eye. He also has some interesting insights on the state of life at Fort Simpson. Two other logistics members of their crew joined them in paddling Denise, their 24-footer, up the mighty Mackenzie. He notes how large and impersonal the river is, with many signs of life - barges,

markers and garbage-strewn banks. Once on Great Slave they managed to swamp their boat in some big waves but luckily were only 100 yards from shore.

Throughout the book, Norment sprinkles many flashes of humour. One on-going gag is the never-ending saga of the "Bozos Go Canoeing". This involves the Bozos going swimming (in Great Slave), the Bozos Put Out A Campfire - naked at 4:30 in the morning etc. One of his most clever devices (and one I will borrow for myself) is to write some of his log in

IN THE NORTH OF OUR LIVES



In the North of Our Lives *A Year in the Wilderness of Northern Canada* By Christopher Norment. Down East Books, Camden, Maine 1989.

the style of the 19th century British officer/explorer. Here's how he describes the group's arrival in Reliance at the end of Great Slave Lake:

"A five o'clock on the morning of August 2, in the Year of our Lord nineteen hundred and seventy-seven, we hove in to sight of Fort Reliance. Here terminated our voyage up Mackenzie's River and across the length of Great Slave Lake. After twenty-four days of the most fatiguing and arduous exertions, we were at once relieved by the assurance that our trials, if only briefly, were at an end. In honour of the occasion we fired off a round and I ordered a ration of spirits for the men, who were thus heartened."

The group made it to Warden's Grove without incident and prepared to set up for the winter. All had been arranged beforehand, they would be doing meteorological observations for the federal government and had a permit to occupy the site. They had also arranged the use of a dogsled team for the win-

ter.

They decided to use the existing cabin and fixed it up. The place had originally been the wintering spot of Hoare and Knox in 1928 when the pair were doing musk-ox research. The cold winter months drew each man into his own world.

But something happened that would vault this tiny speck on the Barrens onto the front pages around the world. Cosmos 954. This Russian satellite fell to earth and a big chunk of it landed on the ice of the Thelon River just below Grassy Island in January 1978. Two members of the group who were out with the dogs came upon the hole in the ice.

The subsequent investigation by the armed forces and civilian authorities threw the group into a tizzy. They were evacuated from the cabin and sent to Yellowknife for observation. Everyone was OK. They became media darlings for the assembled journalists from around the world and were obviously very disoriented. They are allowed to return a week later but the nearby investigation camp for the search that was now dubbed Operation Morning Light was clearly a sore in the sides of these guys who wanted to get away from it all.

Norment is struck by this absurd vision of Camp Garland sitting plumb in the middle of the Thelon Game Sanctuary. They had movies, booze and food flown in three times a day. He noticed how cut off the soldiers and scientists were from the land and its many pleasures were held in dread by the visiting throng.

One member of Norment's group, the Hornby fan, had by now almost completely withdrawn and seldom spoke to anyone. He headed out on a solo trip to coincide with what he felt was the last one taken by the Hornby party. The Cosmos people leave at the beginning of April and the group is finally left alone. Here Norment writes how his vision of wilderness has been forever changed by the Cosmos event. He knows now that nowhere is safe from the encroaching of technology and the people behind it.

Norment really goes to work on the glories of an Arctic spring. He takes us through the beauty of an awakening land with a scientist's eye. This includes the sad spectre of a slowly dying musk-ox, who upon later autopsy by the group, was found to have her fetus wedged in the womb. A cruel reminder of the harshness of this land and the whims of nature.

The team, now rejoined by the southerly wintering partner, headed to the Bay with few problems. There was much introspection about the motives and rewards of such a trip. They are different for everyone and Norment acknowledges he got something out of it that will last him the rest of his life.

It's too bad David Halsey could have said the same thing.

- Michael Peake

Sigurd Olson

Mister Voyageur

Che-Mun is very honoured to present this exclusive article originally intended for an upcoming biography of Sig Olson. It is written by Dr. Omandt Solandt, one of the original Voyageurs, a group whose tripping exploits and ethic has influenced succeeding generations of northern canoe trippers.

By **OMAND SOLANDT**
Original 'Voyageur'

Sigurd Olson is rightly regarded as one of the world's most distinguished and articulate champions of the wilderness in his generation and has joined the small company of the greatest in history. During his lifetime and since, he received a great many awards and distinctions.

But of all these possibly the one that he cherished most highly was the title of Bourgeois that was enthusiastically bestowed on him by the small company of canoeists that he described so vividly in his classic "The Lonely Land". Because they had set out to re-trace the old Fur Trade routes they came to call themselves "the Voyageurs", so it was natural for them to have a Bourgeois.

The Bourgeois of the fur trade was by no



Sig Olson

means a working canoeist. He was a bureaucrat who went along to look after the general direction of the trip. He rode in splendour in the centre of one of the canoes, slept in a tent and was catered to in every way. Sig was not that kind of Bourgeois. He was not only the active leader of the group, but was also the cook and did his share of all the work. From The Lonely Land onward Sig's writings frequently showed how comfortable he felt in his role and how often he played it.

The Voyageurs were a very amorphous or even non-organization. They began in Ottawa as a plan of Eric Morse to take in a few foreign diplomats on a short canoe trip to show them some important aspects of Canadian life that they would never encounter in the course of their normal duties. That first trip was down the Gatineau River and adjoining lakes near Ottawa.

The route was not too tough but the trip was made quite demanding by Eric's eccentric insistence that we get close to the wilderness by rejecting the sybaritic delights of tents, air mattresses and sleeping bags. It would not have been surprising if the novices had unanimously said "never again". In fact all but one were bitten by the wilderness canoeing bug and never recovered. Eric was already an addict and for Tony, Blair and myself canoeing became a central fact of our lives from then on.

On the second trip four of us (Eric Morse, Tony Lovink, Elliot Rodger and Omand Solandt) set out to go around Hunter's Island in Quetico Park. Eric had been in touch with Sig by mail in planning the trip but none of us had ever met him. He agreed to meet us at the Horse Portage, a trek of more than a mile into Basswood Lake where a launch would take us



BUMPS ON A LOG -- Seated on a log on the banks of the Mackenzie River at the end of a trip that started on the Camsell River in 1959 are: Harry Fast (a one-timer) Eric Morse, Denis Collican, Omandt Solandt, Elliot Rodger, Blair Fraser and Tyler Thompson. Photo by Sigurd Olson.

to the home of F.B. (Brookes) Hubachek where we had been invited to stay for a couple of days to rest, wash, eat and talk.

Our first meeting with Sig was very auspicious. We arrived at the portage landing after a tough day paddling in rain against a headwind and were not looking forward to walking a mile uphill with canoes and packs. Sig and Joe Kerntz, a very experienced local guide who was Brookes' manager awaited us. After a warm but brief welcome they shouldered our two canoes and set off at a brisk pace.

When we got to the end of the portage we found Hub's Tub, a commodious work boat, waiting to whisk us down Basswood Lake to Brookes' establishment while we drank cold beer. When we arrived we had showers and then a huge dinner of steak and apple pie followed by a sauna and bed. No wonder we thought well of Sig, Brookes, Joe and all their friends!

We all instantly felt that Sig was a kindred spirit whom we would like to get to know better. From this wonderful beginning grew an attachment that meant a great deal in the lives of all concerned. Only Sig became a Voyageur. Brookes had been an avid canoeist in his youth but had been forced by a heart attack to give it up. Both Brookes and Joe participated actively, if vicariously, in our trips. They not only supplied the base for our trips in Quetico but also helped with the planning and outfitting.

At Basswood we also met Elizabeth Olson for the first time and began to appreciate the wonderful way she teamed up with Sig. She soon became a firm friend of each Voyageur and before long, of their wives and children. The Voyageurs trips were always for men only but after our more venturesome efforts in the north we began to return to Quetico to take our children out to expose them to the canoeing virus. Elizabeth was a pillar of strength in all these ventures and went along with Sig on at least one trip with the Lovink family. Quite often wives and small children stayed with her at the Olson's welcoming home in Ely while the rest canoed. So we all came to love Elizabeth both for herself and as the other half of our beloved Bourgeois.

Looking back on our first two trips we all realized that we lacked a leader who could make decisions when the need arose in a way that would be cheerfully accepted as final by all. There are many such decisions on a canoe

trip and some can be life and death affairs, especially in the real wilderness where help may be many days away. They include the obvious ones about whether or not to cross a stormy lake, or shoot or not to shoot a dangerous looking rapid, when to stop and where to camp. In a group such as ours everyone joined in the discussion of these vital questions but someone had to make the final decision. There was never any question of Sig's role in all this. We just looked to him to make the final choices. When the discussion was over we always accepted Sig's decision without questions and rarely had afterthoughts. Sig's pronouncements were usually made in the form of a 'ukase' - not really a fur trade term. In making a ukase he often accepted the recommendation of whichever one of us specialized in a particular field. For example, he often took my advice on how the nightly rum rations should be prepared and sometimes regretted listening to me!

Sig was a wise and experienced leader expert in canoeing, campcraft and the psychology of keeping a small group cheerful, especially when the going got rough. A real sense of fun was one of his most useful tools. Sig was also an old-style naturalist. Throughout his years of teaching and of wilderness travel he had accumulated a vast store of knowledge about trees and flowers, animals and birds, rocks and terrain and wind and weather which he was always willing to share with us.

In looking back on our trips together I realize that part of the magic of his leadership was a gift for encouraging each Voyageur to do his thing and to defer to him in his chosen area. For example Sig did not monopolize the role of naturalist. Eric knew more than Sig about flowers and history and Elliot was an expert on birds, especially waterfowl and was also greatly interested in animal tracks.

He had a habit of wandering off after the work was done to scout the neighbourhood and often came back with antlers or other trophies of the chase. He was also unmatched as an assistant to the cook. I established a modest reputation of keeping track of where we were.

Once, after the cocktail hour, Sig decided that he would honour me by appointing me cartographer to the expedition. He had trouble finding the right word and finally decided that the closest he could come was pomographer. So from then on map reading became pomography! Tony shared a tent with Sig and was respon-

sible for pitching it while Sig cooked. Tony was also the uncontested champion pot washer. He was proud of this skill and loved to show his blackened callouses at diplomatic cocktail parties. Blair and Tony shared the honours as fish suppliers to the party and never let us down. Blair and Denis shared the task of diarist in the early trips. Several of Denis' diaries were published in daily installments in the Ottawa Journal and made us local celebrities overnight. Denis was also the powerful and dependable motive power for a high speed front drive, rear steer canoe. Modesty forbids that I mention the name of the skillful steersman! While there was much work to be done everyone kept going and when their job was finished help someone else.

On the earlier trips Sig brought along a small collection of memorable clippings from which he read for a few minutes around the fire after the dishes were done and we were all in a contemplative mood. Most of them dealt with wilderness and many had a religious flavour. He loved a quotation from my Mother that I had given him. "I often feel the need to go camping in the woods. It irons the wrinkles out of my soul." Later, when we were retracing the fur trade routes, Eric who was a historian, would put together excerpts from the writings of early travellers in the area so that each night he could read us their comments on the parts we had just been over or would do the next day.

With very few exceptions the only dams we encountered we made by beaver so rapids and portages were little changed in the 150 to 200 years since most of the writers had come that way. We called these sessions Uncle Eric's Fireside Hour. Sig revelled in them and loved to imagine how the early travellers had coped with the hazards that we encountered. We never really thought of them as explorers because they were always in territory that was well travelled by the resident natives. In some cases these early "explorers" had the good sense to send an advance party to build cabins for them to facilitate their later "exploration".

Sig insisted on being the cook and he was better than good but not quite "cordon bleu". Elliot was his assistant so Sig was not overworked. On our early trips with Sig we let him make out our grub list. He was never much interested in food so it tended to be uninspired. We gradually livened it up - first with snacks and drinks for a cocktail hour when we relaxed after the tents were up and dinner was cooking. Next came steaks and red wine for the first night out. Naturally

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all the drinks were carefully selected by Tony from his well-stocked ambassadorial cellar.

Volumes were always, well almost always, firmly limited by the hard-hearted bartender. I was also able to add some excellent dehydrated food especially meat that was being made experimentally for the Canadian Army. Sig readily accepted these additions but was always against planning menus more than one meal ahead. Modern campers who bag each meal for each person separately are horrified by such lack of preparation.

They occasionally carry more weight and always have less fun. Excellent fishing on our trips added both class and flexibility to our menus and provided the 'raw' material for many tall stories. Sig's pan-fried pickerel (wall-eye) fillets and his pike fish cakes were enough to make any gourmet's mouth water. Lake trout and arctic grayling added to the variety. Sig vowed that he had never run out of food on any trip. We gradually found out why.

His policy was to use the best first and place no limits on quantities. he had observed that the huge appetites of the first few days did not last long. But even with the fish we, as consumers, began to notice that the meals which had been simply magnificent gradually became less interesting until they were finally, in a few cases, downright unappetizing. We then discovered that the rock bottom supplies that he always carried were a big chunk of sow belly (salt pork) and a bag of dried beans. We were never quite reduced to eating them but we were sure they would have lasted a long time.

In the magnificent introduction to the first

book in this series Sig's son Bob commented on Sig's delight in acting a part. He had the sort of vanity that demanded that when he played a role he must completely look and act it in every detail. Since it was obviously not just conceit but a real desire to do the thing properly, it was one of his most endearing characteristics. It showed most obviously in his reluctance to be photographed unless he had the right hat on at the right angle.

Our trip down the Hayes River to York Factory was more than usually eventful. The water was very low and we had more and longer portages than we expected. One day two of the voyageurs got restless and went on ahead. They had a spill and lost all our cooking gear.

In addition it was cold and wet and we all became a bit dispirited. Sig and Tony being the oldest and probably the most industrious in the crew began to feel tired. Sig stumbled and fell on one of the last portages. He was too tired to save himself and knocked out a front tooth. We fortunately found the tooth and Sig took it along.

At that time there was no one living at York Factory and our chartered plane was waiting to take us to Churchill, about an hour's flight north. The Army had just left Churchill and had vacated their various buildings. Other government agencies had moved in and kept the Officer's Mess in operation. I had written to say we were coming and they had offered to have their monthly Guest Night on the day we arrived and to have us as their honoured guests.

When Sig saw himself in the mirror he flatly refused to appear at such a public function. Nothing would cheer him up. Not even the assurance that there would be many gorgeous girls got through to him. Then our host said that the Army dentist was still around and could see Sig at once. They immediately discovered that the offending tooth was a false one on a pin and could be repaired and replaced. After the rest of us had started drinking, Sig made a grand entrance smiling with all his teeth and dressed as a Bourgeois should be. He took the whole party by storm.

Another of Sig's Bourgeois acts had a less happy but funny ending. On the last day of a trip from Reindeer Lake we had come down the Fond du Lac River to Stony Lake. There was a very long portage from Black Lake to the village of Stony Rapids but there was a truck road along it. We camped on Black Lake for our last night before our ceremonial entrance in the town of Stony Rapids and our flight home the next day. The Hudson's Bay factor came to see us at Black Lake and offered us a ride into town with all our gear. We naturally spurned such a sybaritic suggestion but did accept his offer to take one canoe and all our extra gear into town so that the next morning we could shoot the Stony Rapid and arrive in town in style; three in each of our two remaining canoes.

In the morning Sig dressed the part with care, we made him comfortable in the centre of the first canoe and away we went with the whole of the population of the village watching

↳ *Continued on Page 11*



THE BOURGEOIS AND HIS BOYS -- At Fort Garry after the Hayes River trip to the Bay in 1962. Elliot, Blair, Sig, Omand, Tony and Denis.

Onward to the sea

By **MICHAEL PEAKE**
Che-Mun Editor

It looks about as plain as a book can. The eight by eleven inch paperback contains not one photo or illustration. In fact, with the exception of a few pages of type at the beginning, the entire 167 pages consists of nothing more than numerical computer readouts.

Yet this apparent monument to boredom should be able to vividly spark the imagination of most northern wilderness canoeists. It contains the stories of millions of rapids from mighty rivers that span over one million square miles.

The title will reveal more info - *Historical Streamflow Summary of the Yukon and Northwest Territories*. This publication from the Water Resources Branch of the Water Survey of Canada which is part of the Canadian Environment department. Its purpose is to review the river flow data from in some cases the past 25 years. This book should answer the questions regarding the function of those dowdy, little shacks beside mighty rivers with hoses going into the water and, in some cases, satellite link-ups pointing to the sky.

Every province except for the Atlantic 'region', has a similar volume but the one on the far north is of most interest to Che-Mun readers.

Many great and small rivers are included and the monthly flow data for many years is recorded. Also noted is the maximum discharge at any one particular moment in a particular spot. The rivers are rated in cubic metres per seconds. What's a cubic meter? Well for one thing it's 35.3 cubic feet and each cubic foot contains 28 litres. It all adds up to a lot of water when you look at the records of some of these rivers.

All it takes is some chart hopping and you can put yourself into some pretty interesting situations. I would have given anything to have been on the banks - most definitely the banks, of the Back River above the Hermann River on July 3 1987 at 4:32 p.m. local time. The Back, which

has a historic July mean flow of 2320 cubic metres per second, had a watery surge that afternoon as its flow ballooned to 9690 cms. What a sight that must have been! That year, by the way, the Back discharged 23.2 million cubic decameters. (One dam³ is equal to 1000 cuM.)

What is of great interest to northern paddlers is to compare the relative size of the many northern rivers. They vary to a surprising degree. Of course the simple size of a river is only one component. The Mackenzie River is by far the largest river in the north - or almost anywhere - yet it burbles along with only two sections of rapids in it's 2000 mile length. It is also interesting to see how the river levels vary from year to year. We have heard that this winter's snowfall in the western NWT at least was very high and should amount to almost a record year in runoff. That's good news for most paddlers heading north - unless they're going upstream.

One of the most interesting river flow patterns is that of the Great Bear River which drains that huge lake of the same

name. This fast flowing 80-mile-long river has been described as a easy one day downstream trip or deadly ten day upstream one. The Great Bear's flows are amazingly constant through the entire year. It shows data for all 12 months with a high mean of 591 cms in June and a mean low of only 486 cms in April.

Surface water data has been published in a variety of formats since 1908 in about 300 publications. In the Northwest Territories information of water levels is available at a few locations primarily in connection with navigation as early as 1934. But it was not until 1944 that the Dominion Water and Power Bureau of the federal government started a regular hydrometric survey program. Similarly in the Yukon Territory some early records are available, the earliest being 1902 on the Yukon River. In 1975 the two regions agreed to share the collection of data conducted by the federal government.

These historic waterflow reports are available to the public by writing Environment Canada.

How the rivers stack up

River and location

High flow in CMS

(All in June unless noted)

Arctic Red River near the mouth	517
Back River above Hermann River	2320 (July)
Burnside River, near the mouth	548
Coppermine River, above Bloody Falls	1020
Dubawnt River, at outlet of Marjorie Lake	628 (July)
Ellice River, near the mouth	483
Kazan River, above Kazan Fall	1230 (July)
Liard River near the mouth	7530
Lockhart River, at outlet of Artillery Lake	233 (Aug)
Mackenzie River at Arctic Red River	21,200
Mountain River below Cambrian Creek	392
Peel River above Fort McPherson	2530
Redstone River 40 miles above the mouth	486
South Nahanni above Virginia Falls	823
- above Clausen Creek	1260
Taltson River at outlet of Tsu Lake	240 (July)
Tha-Anne River below Roseblade Lake	563 (July)
Thelon River below Schultz Lake	2750 (July)
above Beverly Lake	1280

News & Notes

TROUBLED WATERS... Seven of the rivers on a new list of B.C.'s top 10 recreational rivers are threatened by development, says the B.C. Institute of Technology's associate dean of renewable resources.

That coincidence underscores the need for legislation to protect B.C.'s outstanding rivers before they are lost, Mark Angelo said. Topping the list of B.C.'s "most significant recreation rivers" was the Fraser - a river that is the focus of a multimillion-dollar pollution cleanup campaign.

Second was the **Tatshenshini**, in northwestern B.C.. It is threatened by a massive copper mine. Wild steelhead runs in the **Thompson River**, No. 3 on the list, are endangered because of overfishing by commercial salmon boats. The river is also polluted by pulp mill effluent.

The **Stikine**, ranked fourth, is facing impacts by numerous gold mines on tributary systems and by an expanding network of resource roads. It has also been identified by B.C. Hydro as a possible power generating site.

The **Chilliwack** and **Babine**, numbers five and six, face no immediate, major threats, but logging is a concern in the Babine watershed.

Seventh, eighth and ninth are the **Cowichan**, **Similkameen** and **Dean**. The Similkameen, is the site of a new dam proposal. And the Dean, is a premier fishing river where wild fish stocks are in decline.

HEARTY TRAVELLER... Bad weather and equipment problems plagued Pat Dawson on the first two days of his epic canoe trip from Athabasca to Inuvik.

"I'm bailing out my canoe right now," Dawson said yesterday, the second day of his three month, 3,000 km journey. "I'm just soaked."

The 36-year-old Edmontonian is canoeing to Inuvik to help celebrate Canada's 125th anniversary and raise money for an emergency helicopter landing pad at University Hospital.

Dawson spoke to the Edmonton Sun by telephone from construction site 72 km up the Athabasca River from the town of Athabasca.

"I'm making lousy time. It's nothing but mud and water."

Replacing bad boots and heavy canned food are two things Dawson plans to do when he reaches Fort McMurray.

He's got at least two sets of "wicked" rapids to run before then. But the modern-day voyager vows he won't quit.

The first few days of any (canoe) trip are always tough said the adventurer who's a part-time janitor at Edmonton's University Hospital.

ON THE MARCH... About 250 people joined an Innu-led march to protest plans to dam the Ste-Marguerite River in northeastern Quebec.

"Enough is enough - there will be no more dams," said Gilbert Pilot, one of several aboriginals who addressed the demonstrators.

The Innu, also known as Montagnais, say the \$2.8-billion, 787-megawatt project north of Sept-Iles would ravage salmon fishing and

increase mercury levels in the area, while the flooding would affect animal habitats and destroy forests.

The march on the downtown offices of Hydro-Quebec was the culmination of a 27-day walk by 10 Innu to draw public attention to their cause. They left the Malotienam reserve, east of Sept-Iles, on May 3.

Quebec is already producing all the energy it needs, said Alexi Fontaine, of Malotienam, about 750 kilometres northeast of Montreal.

Hydro-Quebec wants more so it can sell it and make more money but that would entail irreversible environmental damage, he said in an interview.

Fontaine said the fight isn't against whites but for the environment.

"We're fighting for the planet," he said. "It's for our children, your children and the politicians' children."

HEADIN' NORTH? . . . Don Starkell and Victoria Jason plan to take another crack at guiding their kayaks through the Northwest Passage this summer.

Starkell, 59, and Jason, 47, were forced to halt the same trip last year. For Starkell, it was his second attempt.

"It is like a grudge because it almost killed me the first time when I was by myself (in 1990), and we only made 1,000 miles last year, so this year we're out to finish it."

Jason said the trip is the fulfillment of a promise she made to herself almost 30 years ago.

"I used to live about 100 miles out of Churchill and always wanted to explore the North, but I couldn't do that with two little children," she said.

"But I promised myself I'd do it later."

NUNAVOTE. . . The Northwest Territories, which is scheduled to be carved in half by the end of the decade, seems pretty divided already.

In May, voters across the N.W.T. narrowly approved a proposed boundary line for division into two separate territories. But the plebiscite results were split along regional lines.

Those in the east were overwhelmingly in favor of the proposed boundary. Voters west of the proposed new territory were almost as strongly opposed.

The final results of the plebiscite: 8,334 (54%) in favor of the boundary line, 7,020 (45%) against it.

In the eastern and central Arctic, which is to become an Inuit-run territory called Nunavut, nearly nine of every 10 voters supported the boundary.

In the more populous west, including the territorial capital of Yellowknife, "no" voters carried the day by a three-to-one margin. Some may have been swayed by arguments that creating Nunavut would be expensive and mean a loss of government jobs in the west.

The disparate results in the two regions could reopen the question of territorial division, which was supposed to have been settled in another plebiscite 10 years ago.

But Nunavut supporters insisted the results won't slow the move toward creation of Canada's third territory.

"We're on the road to Nunavut," said Rosemarie Kuptana, head of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

Ratification of the deal would pave the way for creation of Nunavut in 1999. The western half of the Northwest Territories would become a new, yet-to-be-named territory. There are still many possible twists and turns to be made before this story is finished.

Our Back Pages

GIVE VIA THE MESSAGE. . . We thank the vigilance of the Wilderness Canoe Association for pointing out the travesty that has befallen canoeists who use Via Rail. According to the WCA, Via will no longer allow canoeists to make unscheduled stops along its northern Ontario portion of the transcontinental service. That means, in this case, between Sudbury and Sioux Lookout. This was one of the popular ways of accessing many rivers - primarily the Missinaibi.

This is an OUTRAGE! And we must do something about it. Via claims it is all in the name of better service between Montreal and Vancouver. That's hogwash since the number of canoeists using the route is fairly small and of course seasonal. And as anyone knows who's done it - such stops are very brief.

There is a tremendous heritage involved in travelling Canada's wilderness by rail. Perhaps this is one reason normally sticky wilderness purists who hate the sound of any part of civilization invading their privacy, are seldom offending by the haunting melody of a distant train whistle. It seems to blow the very fibre of the wild and empty lands that train tracks usually make their way through.

We at Che-Mun have had the privilege to begin several trips by rail. They not only provide that convenient and historic link, they are a good way to arrive at the beginning of a trip refreshed - instead of totally bagged after some horrendous drive. It was bad enough when Via stopped travelling its scenic Lake Superior route - and now this.

Please motivate yourself - right now - to write to Via and complain about this loss. Won't you please join Che-Mun in writing a letter to Via Rail to complain about this stoppage of such a historic and important service. Write to: Mr. James Roche, Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Office, Via Rail Canada Inc. Box 8116, Montreal, Quebec H3C 3N3. Please also send a copy of you letter to Mr. John Rodriguez, M.P. Room 382, Confederation Building, Ottawa Ontario K1A 0A6.

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

Sig Olson cont'd.

from the shore. All went as planned except that the leading canoe shipped a great deal of water and when Sig stepped ashore to receive the plaudits of the populace he was soaking wet from the waist down.

As this take has unfolded the reader will have gathered that his Voyageurs had almost complete faith in him as their Bourgeois. However there were a few exception. On this occasion the astute observer would have seen that Sig got no sympathy for the wet bottom.

His Voyageurs were almost starving because he had given all our remaining food to a hungry Indian the previous night. We were not cheered by hearing from the Hudson's Bay manager that the locals in Stony Rapids watch with admiration as this hungry native cons each passing canoe party out of more food than they can comfortably spare.

Another example that our idol had touches of clay in his feet occurred in Quetico. Sig was

in country that he vowed was familiar to him so he took over the task of guiding us to a wonderful campsite he knew. After far too much paddling we realized that we were lost.

Sig stoutly denied this charge and assured us that he was just searching for his Grandmother's grave which he yearned to revisit! Such slips were rare and only serve to further endear him to us.

Sig will be long remembered by a worldwide public for his books and by many who encountered him personally during his lifetime of work to protect the wilderness.

We who were his Voyageurs remember him as our own Bourgeois, always wise and helpful with a never-failing sense of humour. We regard our friendship with him as one of the most important elements in our generally eventful lives. We like to think that he was proud and happy to be our revered Bourgeois.

Dr. Omand Solandt still lives in Bolton, just north of Toronto.

Packet cont'd.

ing water for their planes to land on. They have flown two groups into the upper Back River and had to search for water. Two weeks ago a group flying into the Thelon had to land their Twin Otter on ice.

George Drought's Wilderness Bound party left in early July for the Hood River. A U.S. camp is sending two groups to the Thelon and one to the Coppermine.

Four other groups are planning to paddle the Coppermine including the University of Colorado. So far they've all landed on Rocknest and Redrock Lake below Point Lake. Teri said that they are also doing a lot of business resupplying helicopter fuel for the four companies that are doing diamond prospecting in the upper Coppermine area (see page 12).



DIAMOND FEVER -- A diamond rush is spreading across parts of the NWT. Like here, near Point Lake at the head of the Coppermine River, prospectors are staking out large areas of land believed to contain the precious metals. The find has many worried about the rush for development that might occur in one of the

last truly inaccessible regions of mainland North America. Several companies are conducting tests to see if the finds pan out. There are currently no roads within 200 miles of the claims which are centered in the Coppermine headwater region of Point Lake and Lac de Gras. What would have Samuel Hearne thought?

Upcoming Che-Mun

In Outfit 70 we'll have a special photographic look at a few special places in Labrador and northern Quebec from the camera of 85-year-old George Grinnell.

Also a report on the summer's tripping activities including the HACC's Heart of the North expedition.

CHE-MUN

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