



**FALL 2004/WINTER 2005**

**SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE**

**OUTFITS 118 & 119**



photo: Dick Irwin

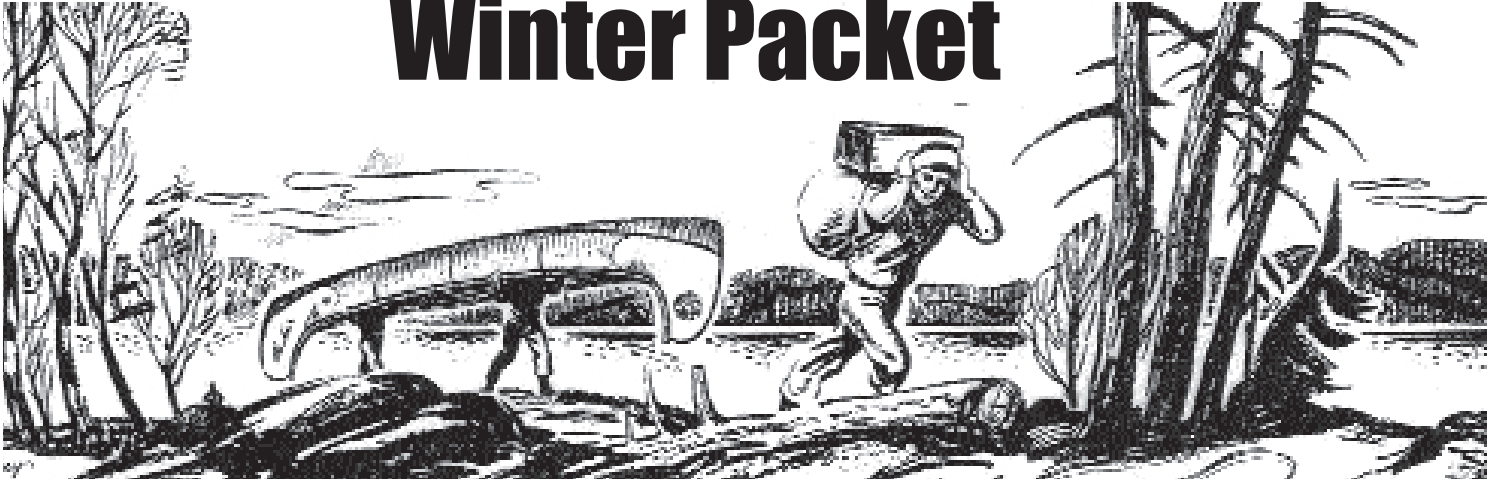
**WISECRACKS --** A sidewalk of water on Aylmer Lake provides a valuable lead to Randy Shepardson and his partner Sandy Breen. The

pair were part of an ambitious 2003 trip from Yellowknife to the mouth of the Coppermine River. We have a full report on starting on Page 6.

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# Winter Packet



**W**e received this fascinating letter and photo from Bryan Greene a subscriber from St John's Newfoundland.

"I read with interest Stewart Coffin's account of his trip down the Naskaupi River in 1968, published in *Chemun Outfit 114*. I have spent some time on the Naskaupi over the past ten years and enjoyed Stewart's description of the river before the Upper Churchill hydro development and dam at Orma Lake. It must have been truly a majestic river then. Stewart is correct in saying that the Orma dam has decreased the flow considerably. But the river is still eminently canoeable, still home to the caribou and geese that Mina Hubbard encountered in 1905. I just wish I had the opportunity to see it in 1968.

"My visits to the Naskaupi were essentially to retrace the Labrador Portion of Mina Hubbard's and Dillon Wallace's trips in preparation for a forthcoming edition of Mina's 1905 diary. I found Mina's diary very easy to follow in the field, her descriptions so detailed that her long portage routes around the lower and upper gorges of the Naskaupi, and even her campsites are easily located. George Elson's diary is less detailed (George had less time to write!), but he sometimes provides a helpful description. I used the diaries from the Wallace expedition (Wallace's, Easton's and Stanton's) mainly to help locate the old Innu portage route from the mouth of the Red Wine River to Seal Lake and the Innu route around Maid Marion Falls and the rapids below it. Wallace tried to follow those ancient portage routes rather than stick to the river, as Mina did, but he found they were overgrown and hard to find. They are still hard to find in thickly wooded areas but there are well-beaten paths in the many areas of lichen woodland north of Nipshish Lake.

"Mina recorded in her diary for July 17, 1905

that she and George built a cairn on a hill above their campsite on Dorothy Lake to mark their first view of Seal Lake and the end of the long struggle up the lower Naskaupi. I was pleasantly surprised to find that cairn (a rather substantial affair as you can see) still in place after nearly a century in a very exposed location.

"My trips on the Naskaupi gave left me with one over-riding impression of awe at the skill and stamina that enabled Mina's men to not only complete the trip in 1905 but to do it with grace and panache. Following Mina and George on the Naskaupi certainly makes one feel that it is not only the river that has diminished, that we are indeed "the dwindled sons of a race of supermen" as Stone and Finkelstein quote in their article on A.P. Low in *Outfit 111*.

"I enjoy Che-Mun very much. Congratulations on a fine publication."

**W**e also heard from **Lawrence Millman**, who knew Elliott Merrick and contributed some years ago to *Che-Mun*. He was a friend of the late Elliott Merrick.

You may remember me from *Che-Muns* past. Recently, I was browsing through a bunch of issues at Jack Gregg's house and I thought, what a splendid little publication -- I'd like to renew my



George Elson's and Mina Hubbard's 1905 Cairn still standing. photo: Bryan Greene

acquaintance with it as well as its editor. So, first of all, here's a contribution in the form of a prose poem for some future issue:

## GLACIAL ERRATIC NEAR OKAK BAY

For Elliott Merrick

All alone it stands, headpiece of the world, far from the teeming fellowship of moraine, rubble, or till. A palimpsest of grey-green lichen adds scurflike skin to its patina of bad weather. Its neck is joined to the cold Labrador firmament by a harmony so slight as to seem non-existent and yet so strong that nothing could break it, not even Atik-wapeo, the Caribou God. No other landmark graces these barrens, twenty miles wide from eyelid to eyelid, except this granite boulder balanced on scoured rock, deposited here by the last Ice Age. Pariah and bulwark, it is an example of how to hold on to the austere bounteous earth.

Hold on, vagabond, or you'll perish.

"A couple of other things. The Lyons Press in the US has reprinted *The Lure of the Labrador Wild* by Dillon Wallace with an introduction by yours truly; it is the first title in an Arctic reprint series edited also by yours truly. Could you kindly

# Canoesworthy

Quebec's Inuit want a government apology and financial compensation for a mass slaughter of sled dogs that they claim plunged their remote communities into decades of dependency.

More than 500 dogsled teams occupied 15 communities in northern Quebec when the population totalled 2,500 in 1965. About 10,000 Inuit now reside north of the 55th parallel in a vast territory known as Nunavik.

Without access to the sled dogs, hunters were unable to trap and provide income for their families. It created a level of dependency and physical inaction that prompted many to drink heavily and simply wait for monthly welfare cheques. Government officials viewed stray dogs as a health threat because of rabies. Some of the animals were also blamed for attacks on people, including a child who died.

The Inuit say the dogs were far from dangerous and actually helped save the lives of hunters by guiding them home in severe snowstorms, rescuing them when they fell through ice and protecting them from wild animals. Snow machines replaced the animals. Although they brought speed to the tundra, the costly devices couldn't replace the hunting prowess the dogs had provided. The slaughter of Inuit dogs, known as Qimmiit, has long been a sore spot for community members. In 2000, Makivik and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association lodged official complaints with both levels of government and sought public inquiries.

A new 54-minute film called the "Echo of the Last Howl," on the killing of sled dogs open in Kuujuaq in January. The film was produced by Makivik Corpora-

tion, which hosted the premiere of the film. Earlier, Makivik submitted a brief called the "The Slaughtering of Nunavik Qimmiit" to the federal and provincial governments..

"It seems they just wanted to wipe out the Inuit by getting rid of their livelihood," says one elder, one of some 100 people interviewed for the documentary. The recollections are mixed with old photographs and re-creations of sledding that once dominated the open plains of snow and ice.

Compliant Inuit are seen shepherding their dogs to a bay where police shot the animals. Mounds of the dead huskies were later burned.

Dogsledding has experienced a resurgence among the Inuit since 1999. About 30 teams participate in recreational races. Few still engage in hunting.

The Government of Nunavut confirmed what hunters in Nunavut have long been waiting for: an increase, by 115 across the territory, of annual polar bear quotas for the next 14 years.

"It's a good news story, and it will benefit our people," said Olayuk Akesuk, Nunavut's minister of environment. "It's not about economics, but putting more polar bear meat on your table."

The number of polar bears that can be legally harvested every year in Nunavut is now 518. These increases mean the total allowable harvest for Nunavut is close to what it was between 1992 to 1996, when about 500 polar bears were killed a year. The increase compensates for the loss of the polar bear hunt from the McClintock Channel, cut from 32 to zero in 2001 after an aerial survey de-

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## From the Editor

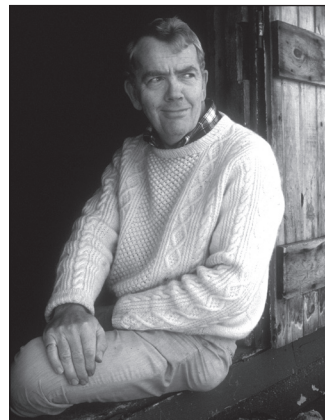
And now for something completely different. First of all, I would like to thank the so many of you who wrote to express their sympathies with the passing of my wife Margaret. It was strange again after everything had quieted down here to be flooded with so many kind thoughts as the news spread out through the *Che-Mun* community.

We are holding up well but things but we had more sad news with the passing of my father Tom Peake in October. I wrote in my eulogy to him:

"Tom Peake was there to support you, encourage you, assist you. How else can you explain how a man, who to my knowledge never paddled a canoe, raised four sons who are among Canada's premier wilderness canoeists. He was so proud of the Hide-Away Canoe Club. That was Tom Peake; he supported you in what you wanted to do. He took an interest in what you pursued. And he counseled, when asked.

"But it was his thoughtfulness for which he was legendary and there so many examples. One

memorable time was when we arrived back from a 55-day northern canoe trip having named the Morse River in 1985, Dad led the reception committee at



**Thomas Albert Peake 1923-2004**

Parry Sound train station with a red carpet, special bagpipe music and a champagne toast. We knew we were home. He later hosted a black tie dinner for 54 at Rosedale Golf Club in Toronto for Eric

Morse—it was a magical evening that has become a treasured lifelong memory."

So, you will understand why we were all happy to see 2004 gone! And it also explains why you are reading the first - and only - Double Issue of *Che-Mun* combining Outfits 118 and 119. This allows us to catch up and get back to a regular schedule.

And though we have only boosted in four pages, in order to keep mailing costs in line, we hope you will understand.

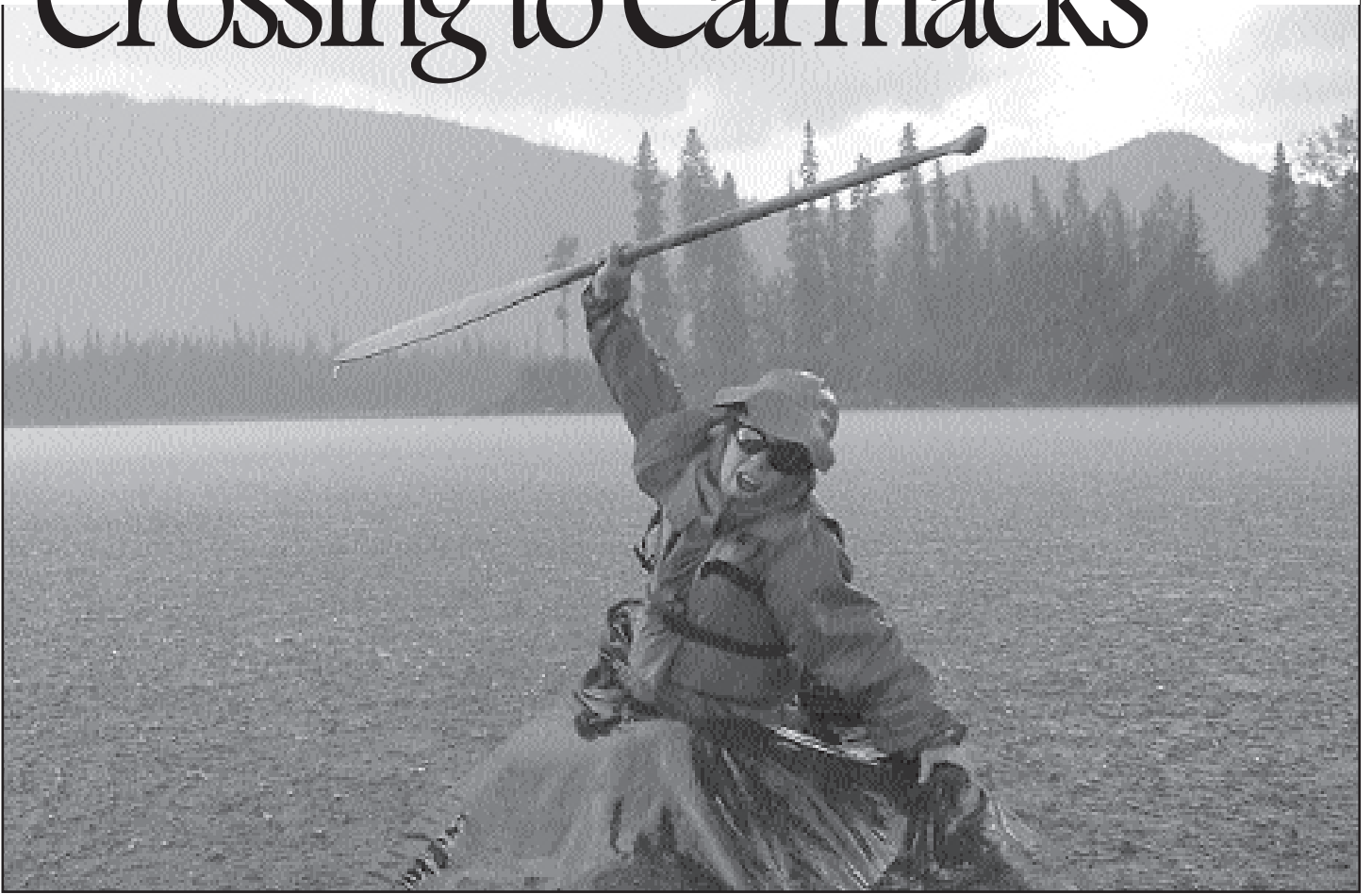
Life will have more disappoints ahead, but we feel sure there are many more highlights and memorable times too. That is why we will keep canoeing the north and doing our expeditions. Dad would want it that way. Out trips are a crystallization of life, a time when you truly feel alive. And as we just found out, such trips, while ephemeral, are also very real and deeply meaningful.

**Michael Peake**

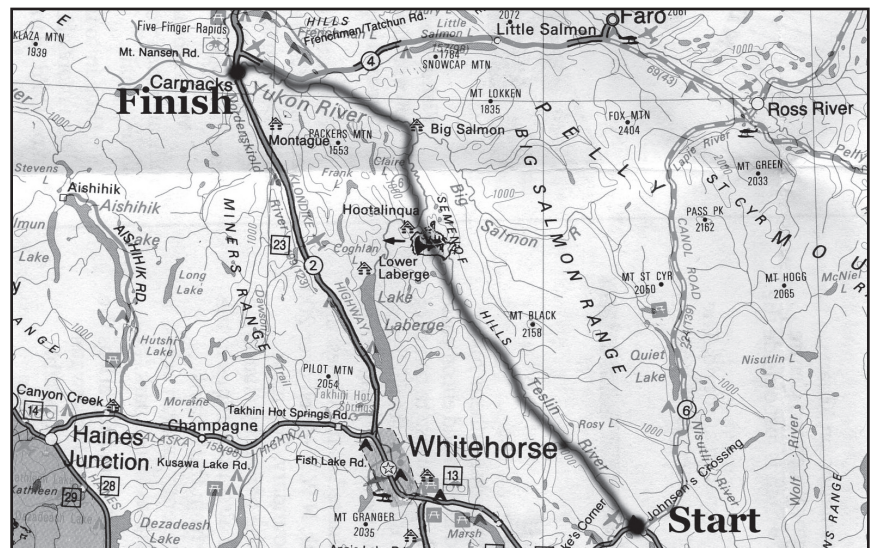


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# Crossing to Carmacks



*This page: Brendan loving the rain (above) and Buddy being somewhat less enthusiastic. Opposite: Leslie and Brendan check out the old steamer Norcom from yesteryear and various family photos including a group Yuri® sequence bottom right, a famed HACC pose.*



# Yukon

Story and Photos by GEOFFREY PEAKE  
*HACC Chief Guide*

In August of 2003, I took my family; Mrs. Chief Guide, Leslie, and kids Megan, 11 and Brendan, 9, and our late dog Buddy down the Teslin and Yukon rivers. The Teslin/Yukon river trip, from Johnson's Crossing to Carmacks is a perfect family choice. The 250 mile journey from the Alaska highway bridge that spans the Teslin to the bridge at Carmacks is a great family trip—consistent current, a few mildly interesting rapids, lots of Gold Rush artifacts and generally good scenery. I was pleasantly surprised how enjoyable the journey was. After having been spoiled by many HACC trips, I assumed the Yukon in comparison would be like paddling in a drainage ditch. The river is surprisingly scenic, with large sweeping vistas and a good flow that makes the kilometers pass by with little effort. The only disappointment was that we did not see much wildlife, and in some places the campsites were somewhat crowded. Overall, though, we saw few people and felt, for the most part, that we had the river to ourselves.

We took a week in total to travel between the bridges. The highlight of the trip for me was seeing the old steamboat ruins at Hootalinqua, and the post at Big Salmon (which had just been cleaned up by maintenance crews). The biggest logistical problem was the car shuttle. You can hire someone out of Whitehorse to shuttle you, but only at a considerable cost. We opted to drop our gear at Johnson's Crossing, park the car in Whitehorse, then take the bus back to the river. At Carmacks, Leslie caught a ride back to Whitehorse and returned in a few hours. For those wanting a simple family trip in an exotic environment—especially those who are fascinated by the Klondike Gold Rush—this is a great place to travel. Whitehorse is also an amazing little place, quite unlike any other northern town I've visited—lots of cafés and art shops, lots of great restaurants yet affordable.





# Y<sup>to</sup> K

## Yellowknife to Kugluktuk



### Coppermine Diary from Y to K. Tales from the Trip

**By CARL SHEPARDSON**

Photos by Dick Irwin (unless noted)

**June 12:** My flight to Edmonton arrived shortly before the plane bringing in my nephew, Todd, from San Francisco. We have tickets to Yellowknife in the morning and will be paddling partners for the next month. My wife Margie and I normally paddle together, but she will not be joining us until mid July when she will switch off with Todd. In the meantime I am looking forward to the luxury of a partner who can be persuaded to do the heavy lifting for the first month of our trip from Yellowknife to Kugluktuk via Pike's Portage and the Coppermine

River. Our son Randy and his friend Sandy are driving from Arizona and may already be waiting for us in town. Dick Irwin will be paddling with Walter Lohaza and the two of them are driving out from eastern Canada. We are all using Old Town trippers. Randy's and mine are pretty battered but Walter's is almost new.

June 14: The Yellowknife airport was pretty much as I remember, cold and spartan with the clever polar bear display inside and the strange pedestal arrangement out front that has the old timey bush plane glued on top. We all spent today running around town on the usual last minute errands. Air Tindi will be flying Margie in July 15th, so we have exactly one month to reach our rendezvous, a lonely spit on the east end of Lac de Gras. Registering at the RCMP today I was reminded of the time we were handed a waterproof marker to inscribe our names on the backs of our lifejackets, "in case you lose them," they insisted.

**Week #1** (June 15-21): This is Sandy's first canoe trip and it's been a harsh introduction. The weather has been cold with an opposing wind out of the northeast almost steady for seven days. Dick brought a sail but Walter won't let him use it, so he offered it to Randy. A nice gesture but except for two miles in Devil's Channel on Day Three it has been unusable. Anyway it has been tough going for Sandy being the only woman on this leg of the trip. It should be better for her once Margie gets here.

We've probably pushed a little harder than we should but we've been up Great Slave Lake twice before, once for the Thelon and another time to run down the Back and we have a preconception of how far we ought to get each day, but with all the wind we are falling far behind the pace of our earlier visits. Previous trips up the lake were mostly calm but this information is not inspiring Sandy. This is our first trip with Walter and he is a fascinating companion, tireless, precise, and unflaggingly pessimistic but in a very good-natured way. He has mapped out the miles ahead and is growing a little dubious that we shall actually reach our meeting point with Margie on time, something that I am particularly determined to do. Two years ago I planned a similar strategy to meet her mid summer and was three days late. She and Tina spent the time waiting on a barren island wondering what had become of me, and I'd rather not repeat that experience.

So far we've spent one day in camp to sit out rain, freezing cold wind and whitecaps/ big waves. The last couple of days were less rainy but still not pleasant. Can't wait for summer. At least there have been no bugs yet.

**Week #2** (June 22-28): The wind continued strong against us, very hard work and still cold. We reached the narrows. The lodge was getting ready to open soon for the season and they treated us to a hot lunch. Past the narrows we started running into ice, but nothing serious.

The next two days were perfect traveling weather. It was my turn to cook and we stopped early at the pool where I had such luck a few

years back. The fish were still there, swimming lazy circles on the bottom, and it was little trouble to pull out a 25 pounder for supper. Last week I caught only pike and grayling, which we threw back, but this week there have been a lot more trout. There was a lot of ice today but we were able to go around or bull our way through in every case. Our resident pessimist is now predicting we shall reach Lac de Gras on Day 40 to meet Margie 10 days late.

In general the north shore of Great Slave Lake is well wooded with mostly bedrock sloping shores and excellent camping. It is pretty country and we keep coming back to it even though we rarely see

much wildlife here, just the occasional moose and of course lots of eagles. There used to be a pair of swans nesting in Devil's channel but we did not see them this year. The weather has turned calm and buggy now, which is better than last week, I guess (just in time for the long carries!).

On Day 12 we finished the 257 miles to Pike's Portage and the next day we started the three days of carries to Artillery Lake, 28 miles away. The start of the carry is at a sandy beach and the first mile is steep uphill. We did two carries on Day 13 and the first was as bad as we remembered, perhaps 3 miles in length and going up about 700 feet. The trail is mostly dry except for the swampy parts and pretty well marked except for where it splits up. We flagged the trail in previous years with log pointers wherever it branched and with caribou antlers across the marshy section and these markers are

still in place. Todd was sick last night and this morning I came upon him sound asleep under the canoe mid-portage. Day 14 can be summed up as 4 portages, 3 trout, 1 musk ox.

**Week #3** (June 29-July 5): With the end of Pike's Portage we pretty well left the last of the trees behind. We stopped to cut all the wood we could carry in the three boats and then crossed the tree line. Artillery is a favorite lake of ours. There are several outstanding spots to camp but the best is about half way up where a sand spit juts out from the east to a huge high rocky hill, which is a great vantage point for surveying the landscape. Wildlife seems more plentiful here and we have seen wolves,




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*Opposite page: Delicate poling over black ice across Aylmer Lake.*



## Y to K Yellowknife to Kugluktuk

caribou, musk ox and even a wolverine in the past.

I haven't said anything yet about how great it is to have Dick along. He is the trip photographer, always running up and down hills to get the best shots. Also, he is a great cook, baking two loaves of bread in the evenings whenever he is on duty, as well as a hearty dessert. On his off duty nights he is an indefatigable wood gatherer, which is

previous years we had been able to simply paddle up little rapids. Ptarmigan has a lot of ice but so far we are sneaking along the right hand shore, dipping into the bays following the edge of the ice shelf as we go. Randy and Sandy are finding the wind extremely trying and we stopped early. It is hard for them to keep pace. Todd and I are estimating that Walter brought about 20 kilos of milk powder in his personal stash for this first month of the trip.

July 5: 26 miles, 1 musk ox. Perfect day. We paddled a lot of miles but got almost nowhere, hugging the shore as we wound in and out around the ice. Kind of a silly parlay after coming out on Clinton-Colden. We had promptly climbed a high hill to survey what we could of the lake. It was frozen from shore to shore and as far into the distance as we can see. So, a long discussion ensued as to which side (north or south) we should take. South is shorter, but there was some thought that if the wind ever came to break up the ice it would move in from the north, clearing that shore first. Last trip we used the south shore and the camping there is not particularly good. Anyway this time we elected with some dissension to try the north, despite the extra miles.

**Week #4 (July 6-12):** This week has been a long struggle against the ice and morale ebbed about as low as it can go. We started with beautiful weather on July 6th and we saw



Dragging on ice-covered Aylmer Lake enroute to the source of the Coppermine River.

more of a trick now that we are on the barrens. Dick and Randy went hill climbing and have reported back that the next 20 miles of lake are completely covered with hard white ice from shore to shore, hmm.

July 2: Covered 13, 13 and 16 miles the last three days which sounds leisurely. However, we are pretty tired. We have had some good fishing and some nice weather but have spent hours and hours battling the ice, dragging, chopping, wading, poling, lining and even portaging. We have been in and out along every nook and cove, following tight along the shore, grateful for any stretch that has melted back enough to dip a paddle. I would never have guessed it could take this long to traverse Artillery.

July 3: 15 miles. The Lockhart is extremely high but we are half way up to Ptarmigan Lake and Artillery, still frozen almost solid, is at last behind us. It's been a cold windy rainy day and this evening Todd is out chasing musk oxen with Randy's camera.

July 4: 13 miles. Another extremely cold, windy and rainy day. The Lockhart was high enough to force two portages where in

five musk oxen but the ice continued to be a serious problem. We spent the day forcing our way along the shore where we could, getting out on occasion to drag when we couldn't, and at one point making a one-mile drag across the neck of a bay to avoid what would have been a 16 mile detour. Dick is getting antsy. He has been suggesting that we modify the trip to meet Margie at the lodge in Rock Nest Bay on Aylmer where we know planes can get in. His thought is for Margie to fly in extra food and maps of McKay Lake and the Yellowknife River and to have us then head south in a grand loop back to Yellowknife. I demurred. I got a moment alone with Walter to get his take on the situation and was pleasantly surprised. He thinks we will be extremely late but has faith that we will make it, much more optimistic than I had supposed. Actually Walter is really getting into the ice thing. At first he was worried about damaging his boat, but now he just rams into the ice pack and whales away at it like the rest of us and is not the least hesitant in leaping out to drag across. In the last couple of days he seems to have gone from a "we can't go any further" to a "bring

it on” approach to travelling. Actually I am not too worried, if the ice melts we’ll paddle, if it doesn’t we’ll drag. We are covering ground just fine. In fact both Randy’s projections and mine indicate we shall reach Margie on time with Randy’s estimate even having us there a day early. We actually covered 24 miles today.

July 7: 20 miles. Trout and couscous for supper. Another beautiful but very hard day starting with a mile and a half drag to cut across another bay. Later we did several more drags. I think Todd and Sandy were the only ones not to step through the ice today. We’re off Clinton Colden now and will reach Aylmer tomorrow. Dick went off to phone Air Tindi tonight to inquire about conditions on Aylmer etc.

July 9: 22 and 12 miles the last two days. At last we’ve left the ice behind us with a final 2.5 mile drag across Sand Hill Bay first thing this morning. Then a few portages, two in excess of a kilometer, and here we are. Time is very tight now and rather than risk going up the Thonokied which we know nothing about, we decided to start portaging up the chain of ponds to the east avoiding what looks like a prolonged string of rapids to ascend the river. I count 13 portages for tomorrow before we join the upper Thonokied. Now that the ice is behind us and we are on these little barren ponds the bugs are suddenly getting thick, but just mosquitoes so far, and no one seems to mind.

July 10: 6 miles, mostly portages, but we are on the Thonokied. Tomorrow we head up to Afridi Lake and beyond.

July 11: Today it was Dick and Walter’s turn to fall far behind (my turn comes the second month when Margie arrives). It is so great having a strong partner like Todd. This stretch of the river has many unmarked rapids to ascend, pleasantly fun for those of us with a pole. At one point Todd was willing to walk along the shore carrying one of the packs, which made things even easier for me in the canoe. Dick and Walter made many portages, three over a kilometer, and called a halt at 3 pm. A couple of nice trout for supper. Hmm, it is raining pretty hard now.

July 12: 5 miles. Very cold and rainy day but we forced ourselves to travel feeling we had to reach Thonokied Lake today if we were to have any chance of getting to our rendezvous with Margie on time. A paddle, pole and portage day, with an awful lot of wind. Hmm, the pole on Dick’s tent has just snapped. Time for repairs.

**Week 5** (July 13-18) We went 19 and 7 miles these last two days and here we are on Lac de Gras after two brutal days of portaging, a lot of it more or less cross country. Randy has a GPS and uses it to guide a route. It worked really well on one carry and then really badly on another. Walter is an excellent portager. He always carries their canoe,

never gets tired, and seems to have an innate sense of where the next pond will be. Todd and I just blunder along and have been known to make some lengthy detours. Anyway it was a big relief to reach Lac de Gras and discover that the summer ice is finally gone for good. Margie arrives tomorrow and I’ll be sorry to see Todd leave. I better spend some time bathing and scrubbing before she gets here.

July 15: Margie is here and the trip has changed considerably. First off, summer has finally arrived and it is suddenly hot and buggy and very still with almost no wind to speak of. Secondly, we have finished all of the upstream work and the rest of the trip should be easy traveling as we have allotted 30 days to get from the east end of Lac de Gras



A skinny caribou decided to take a dip in front of Dick Irwin’s camera on Aylmer Lake.

down the Coppermine to Kugluktuk. Margie brought in lots of fresh food and supplies for the month. Another 20 kilos of milk powder for Walter and chocolate bars for me. I think the others will enjoy no longer having to be in the slowest boat. Randy and Sandy have decided to stay.

July 16: 18 miles. We passed two huge diamond mines today. The most intriguing was the one dug in the middle of the lake like a giant empty whirlpool protected by a dike.

July 17: 18 miles. We have finished the lake and are poised for a portage. Today was hot and sunny with a single shower. For the first time this summer the black flies are out and we have killed several hundred in the tent tonight. Walter lost a paddle today. It was right there in his hands and he was paddling along with it and then it wasn’t there. He and Dick looked hard for it but could find no trace. Unlikely that it would sink but it was not on the surface or along the shore. I lent him one of mine.

July 18: 13 miles. By noon we had spent the last 24 hours in our



# Y to K

## Yellowknife to Kugluktuk

head nets, but then a breeze came up. For an hour it was a nice change but before a second hour elapsed it had turned dark and stormy and we searched out the least exposed spot to camp we could find. This morning we had to portage, wade and even lift over a few little rapids.

**Week #6:** A pretty exciting week: I drowned our tent poles; we saw our first fellow travellers, stopped in at two lodges and left the barrens behind.

July 19: 19 miles. Yellow billed loons and Harris' sparrows today. Black flies are back.

July 20: 20 miles. We met our first paddlers today, 3 gentlemen from Germany paddling in those fold up boats with the aluminum struts. They are moving at an incredibly slow pace and do not expect to reach Kugluktuk before the end of August which is a little too adventurous for us. When traveling this far north we always try to be out by the 15th. Anyway they started 10 days ago at the west end of Lac de Gras where we camped 3 nights back. They are out here to experience the isolation and were disappointed to see us. They made us promise not to camp on the same lake with them. Lots of bugs today, killed 140 black flies in the tent tonight. There is a caribou out back now.

July 21: 9 miles. Pretty eventful day. Saw a number of caribou, both on land and in the water mingling with the canoes as we paddled along. Also I went swimming inadvertently and managed to lose our tent poles but we saved everything else. Tonight we have set up camp on a sandy spit just below where the rapids dump into Point Lake and our poor tent is erected back in the willows hanging from 8 surrounding paddles, with another serving as center pole. Packs have been placed in the corners of the tent and with lines leading off the sides, over the paddles, and down to the ground; the whole is reasonably presentable. From our dinner site though it resembles an immense spider with paddle legs crouching in the willows waiting to swallow us up for the night.

July 24-26: 32, 25 and 22 miles. The weather has been perfect and we have traversed the 80 odd miles of Point Lake to Peterson's Lodge in two and a half days. They were expecting us and we were

warmly greeted and treated. Margie had phoned Air Tindi after my embarrassing incident with the tent poles to check if any parties would be flying into the lodge that day. We were in luck and replacement poles have now materialized.

It was good to cross the tree line again today. As much as we love the barrens there is something comforting about knowing that you have shelter and firewood should it ever be needed. Also it is so much easier to cook big fish with wood rather than our little stoves. One of



A view from camp at the corner of Escape Rapids. This stream falls 100 feet into the Coppermine.

Walter's major talents is constructing fireplaces. He is an engineer by training and creates elaborate masterpieces. They smacked of overkill when we were cooking with our single burner stoves on the barrens but now that we are back amongst the trees his edifices are more appreciated. Dick accompanies each result with a perfectly evenly sawed, split and stacked wood supply. Perhaps we are not doing enough miles each day to properly tire those two out.

July 26: 13 miles total the last two days. Yesterday morning we arrived at the complex on Red Rock Lake where the most amazing couple spends their summers. Marjorie and Max Ward welcomed us into their compound and were the perfect hosts for a wonderful 24 hours. They have a beautiful Twin Otter parked out front for their commutes into Yellowknife. Max, 81, is one of the original bush pilots, and flew out of Yellowknife decades ago before starting an

international airline. In fact, it is one of Max's earlier planes that is perched on the pedestal at the Yellowknife airport. Anyway he helped carry Randy's boat into the shop to repair the bottom where it had been rubbed through dragging over rocks and ice. We also used their laundromat and showers and set up for the night in one of their guest sub mansions. The cook baked cookies until we were stuffed and after dinner we all sat around to tell stories. Max has been in the north even longer than Dick and it was one of those perfect evenings when everyone ruefully trots out their most outrageous experiences. In the morning we scarcely paddled 3 miles, just out of sight, before stopping for the day. Sandy is suffering after 42 days on the trail. She is both sick and worn out and tonight she and Randy are struggling to decide whether they should return to the Ward's and fly home or continue

a capsized canoe lodged mid-stream with all its gear. We wrestled it ashore and left it for whoever comes next. It belonged to two young women who apparently survived their mishap. We were attacked by angry terns today that kept clipping the stem of our canoe in their efforts to head us off from their nursery. Big moose outside camp tonight.

July 29. 34 miles. We startled a sleeping grizzly with her two cubs on shore today. Imagine our surprise when she woke up and leapt toward us. Once she saw that we were six however the three of them quickly detoured into the brush. She was very tall on her hind legs; most impressive. We're camped on a high bank at the edge of the woods tonight and it is very plush with nice moss to sleep on. A mother wolf and her three pups are just across the way. We are pretty much

at the Arctic Circle now and will be crossing the tree line back onto the barrens before long.

July 30. 30 miles. Three moose today, also a wolf with six pups, the most we have ever seen. Caught my first arctic char for supper tonight, about 30 inches, maybe 10 or 12 pounds. The traveling has been great, what a wonderful river.

July 31. 31 miles. Cold and windy today. Saw a robin.

August 1. 23 miles. Cold and rainy all day long. We made a big fire at noon to warm ourselves up. Tonight I got so frustrated that I put my fish rod away for the rest of the trip. All I hook are char now and they are just too big for my outfit. I lost two lures to snapped lines this evening before landing a 15 pounder which Dick is turning into chowder. Once I had him hooked and tiring, Dick was able to wade out and herd him into shore with



The peripatetic Dick Irwin and lunker trout on Artillery Lake

photo: Randy Shepardson

on with us in the morning. It would be a sad thing to see them leave tomorrow.

**Week #7:** What a perfect week, just the way summer trips should be. Lots of rapids and fun stretches of river, along with wolves, caribou, musk ox, moose and grizzlies. Easy days, fine weather, great scenery and wonderful camping. Everyone should be sure to do the Coppermine once in his or her lives. Summers are so nice in the north. There seems to be at least one good week almost every year.

July 27: 15 miles. Thunderstorms this morning so we had breakfast in bed. The green canoe has decided to continue with us and we are all glad that decision is finally behind us. Nice weather today and we are camped on an esker at the end of Rock Nest Lake.

July 28: 13 miles. There are 4 sets of intricate rapids below Rock Nest and each canoe made its own way. At the bottom we came upon

his raincoat. Moose, wolves and caribou today. Grizzly tracks on the flats down by the canoe tonight.

**Week #8:** Fall arrives and we go home.

August 3: We only got 6 miles yesterday and by then the wind and rain were kicking up waves so huge they kept filling the boats and it was not practical to continue. We set up an elaborate tarp/canoe shelter back in the trees and are here again today sitting out the storm. I guess it is fall now. Suddenly the caribou have reversed course and they have been streaming southwards past our camp by the hundreds for the last two days. It got up to about 45 degrees Fahrenheit at noon. The wind is howling out on the river but we are all snug in camp. The bugs are gone now. Really it was a pretty good summer insect wise as they scarcely lasted two weeks.

August 4: 25 miles today, temperatures in the low 40's, north wind,



# Y to K Yellowknife to Kugluktuk

mixture of cloud and sun, caribou everywhere. Saw musk ox. Nice current and rapids. Passed Rocky Defile at lunch and one group ran while the others portaged this big rapid. Pretty easy day except for the 30 mph head winds. We passed the Kendall River and are camped on a bluff across from the September Mountains.

August 5. 37 miles. Another good travel day; cool and overcast with occasional rapids. Another wolf, more caribou. Very picturesque country. Camping just below Muskox Rapids tonight.

August 6: 23 miles. Camped along the portage above Escape Rapids. Kind of a rainy morning but this evening is great. Lots of huge ice chunks along the

shore today. Also saw a hole in the river we will not soon forget. We came around a corner to find Randy and Sandy jammed in along the rocks, pointing upstream. Like them we did an unplanned revolution, then swung out around them with the bow hanging out over the edge of the hole before surging safely by along the cliff. They managed to paddle back upstream a few feet, then spin around and edge by the hole also. Then Dick and Walter made it too. Kind of scary stuff. Guess we should have been on the other side of the river! Grizzly wandering around outside camp tonight. Beautiful spot.

August 7: Camped at Bloody Falls tonight. A little disappointing, have heard about it for years and had expected something more earthshaking. 11 miles to town tomorrow. We plan to pop in early to see if we can catch a flight out.

August 8.: Got in to town shortly after 8 am but cannot leave until tomorrow. Alistair Harvey is the man to see here. We made arrangements with him to have our boats barged up the Mackenzie to

Hay River and then trucked back to the east coast. Cold and windy here and very exposed. Snow squalls off and on all day long.



Y2K Part II paddlers. From left to right; Carl Shepardson, Dick Irwin, Margie Shepardson, Randy Shepardson, Walter Lohaza and Sandy Breen. Missing is first half paddler Todd Shepardson.

next summer's trip on the Kazan will mark the completion of our first 40 years of wilderness exploration. What a wonderful journey it has been, and how we look forward to the trips ahead.

*Conclusion.* The Coppermine is a marvelous river and I cannot recommend it highly enough. It was a wonderful summer. We have traveled with Dick before and he is a great companion. If we had realized how special the Coppermine would turn out to be perhaps we would have gotten around to doing it sooner but there are so many great places to visit. Recollecting back, I marvel at our good fortune to have traveled in the north so many years. Margie and I started travelling together in 1965 and

## No Man's River

By Farley Mowat

Key Porter Books, Toronto 2004

355pp, \$36.95

ISBN: 1-55263-624-0

*Books reviewed by Michael Peake*

If there was one event or moment in time that catapulted the young Farley Mowat into the world of literature it was his travels in the north after WWII. Here is the kernel of a successful career that has spanned more than half a century.

Mowat returns to those very writing roots and canoe routes in *No Man's River*, a wonderful memoir of those days in the late 1940s when he travelled in and among the native people of northern Manitoba and

southern NWT. The very look of this book tells you why Mowat is beloved by publishers, apart from his superb writing style. He can produce a modern northern travel narrative that doesn't need costly photos! And he has done it here, crafting a fascinating memoir enveloped on the cusp of monumental change.

Arguably Mowat's most famous work, *Never Cry Wolf*, was made into a major motion picture and was based on his experiences here. After his

harrowing World War II service, young Mowat went north as an assistant to a highly anal and pedantic scientist whose mission was to kill and embalm as many species as possible in the greater name of science. Along the way Mowat befriends the Schweder family of German trappers who have deeply assimilated into the northern life.

Mowat soon tires of the scientist and befriends Charlie Schweder, the second generation member of the trapping family, and half native. The book is primarily about their travels through the area and includes details of the first descent of the Thlewiaza or 'Big' River in 1948.

Much of the first half of the book involves establishing the range of characters, which, as in much of Farley's world, is an elaborate mix of good, bad and indifferent. These years were just before the famed starva-

tion of the natives in this area and Mowat shows the beginnings of that. His first book, *People of the Deer*, told that tale of government incompetence and native suffering very eloquently. He is highly critical of a Dr. Yule; a government medical envoy who Mowat says did little of good. Farley always sides with the underdog.

Mowat recalls this tale with the aid of his journal and that of Charles Schweder's. He paints Charles as a complex man, torn between two cultures, both of whom want a piece of him. But the incredible depth of the story's detail and nuance is clearly from Mowat's memory mixed with his great imagination and the work of an author who has proudly proclaimed to "never let the facts get in the way of the truth". And we are all the richer for it.

From a wilderness canoeist's point of view, the tale is fascinating. Mowat is traveling through the country made famous by P.G. Downes just a decade earlier but with much more detail. They work up and down the rivers and lakes of the region and fortunately there are good maps in the front of the book. Their boat is powered by an old Lockwood motor, as was the custom of the era, but they spent much of their time paddling as well to save precious, and heavy, fuel. Mowat's descriptions of the rapids are somewhat over the top, in that they seemingly ran most huge ledges and even falls – unlikely – but probably an accurate recollection of what "it felt like" to young Farley. Mowat, as always, a master of dialogue, uses colloquialisms where proper, and every speaker sounds true and not over-the-top or hokey.

*No Man's River* is a Technicolour snapshot, without photographs, of an era now gone. A master writer, a witness to history and still in full command of his considerable craft at 82, Mowat takes the reader to a north that is long gone; natives living off the land and about to be assimilated; trappers wrestling a living across a wild country; a land largely empty but hugely lived in.

## Paddling the Boreal Forest

Rediscovering A.P. Low

By Max Finkelstein and James Stone

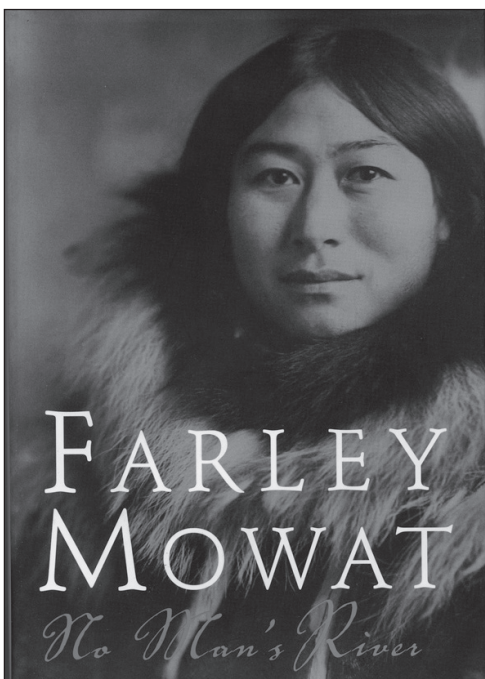
Natural Heritage Press, Toronto 2004

319pp, \$26.95

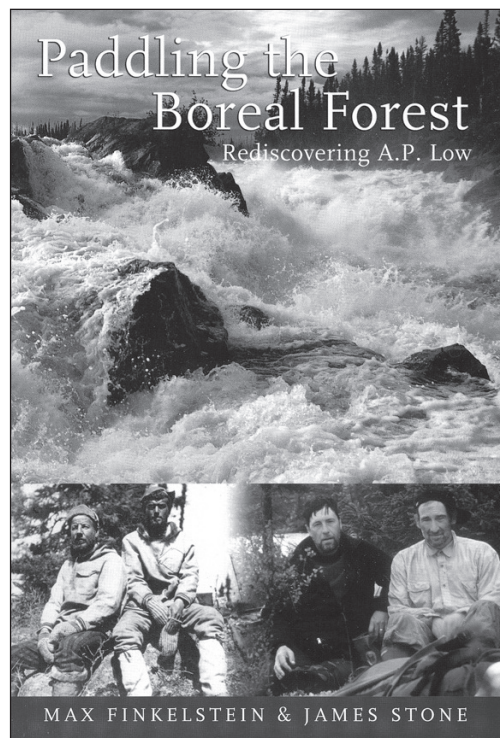
ISBN: 1-896219-98-5

The name A.P. Low, is one any historically-minded northern paddler has run up against. He defined the term hard traveller in a 20 year period near the end of the era of traditional land-based northern exploration. Albert Peter Low is also a name that few people remember and fewer have ever heard of.

I was very glad to hear a couple of years back, that Max Finkelstein and Jim Stone were working on Low's bio. You read about it first here of course in *Outfit III*. Max and Jim have combined the story of that 2002 slog of a trip, which patched five of Low's northern Quebec journeys, together with the story of Low himself.



A.P. had a Low profile indeed. The man was the very essence of a Canadian hero, in that he virtually never mentioned himself at all in his many writings. Now, of course, Low was in the employ of the Geological Survey of Canada and was paid to write about his trips. And with low pay and high adventure, he spent months and sometimes years on the northern



trail. And that was in an era when getting there was half the fun.

This is a very different kind of book that that of Farley Mowat. While no one wants to be compared to Mowat as a writer, the pair do a great job and I found the book getting more enjoyable as it went along. They have done a considerable amount of research and it shows. For while Low left a superb public accounting of his work, there are virtually no private letters or memorabilia to help a biographer along. It is very

hard to get inside Low's head with some personal insight or that of others. And there is not too much about the private Mr. Low. And this was a man who was apart from his wife and children for long stretches. Two of their children died which should have provoked some thoughtful discourse but these have all vanished somewhere in time. Pity.

I was a bit surprised by the book's title and photos inside. *Paddling the Boreal Forest*, while certainly accurate, is pretty boring. How about *AP: In the Footsteps of Low* or *Low County/High Adventure*? The photos, many of which are real gems from the National Archives, are way too small. One even has a caption mentioning a cow in the frame, you would need a magnifying glass to find it. These complaints are not the fault of the authors. The book also features hundreds of footnotes, which further classifies it as a scholarly work. I am always torn by footnotes as they do interrupt reading and change the feel of a book all the while providing great info and access to even more. I think a bibliography would do well enough.

If you were to compare this book and Mowat's to a canoe, Farley's would be a finely crafted cedarstrip with perfectly placed copper nails made by Walter Walker of Lakefield. Max and Jim's is a big rangy Quebec north weeds Tremblay canoe - a wood and canvas model. Now,

## Rendezvous with the Wild

### The Boreal Forest

Edited by James Raffan.

Boston Mills Press, 2004

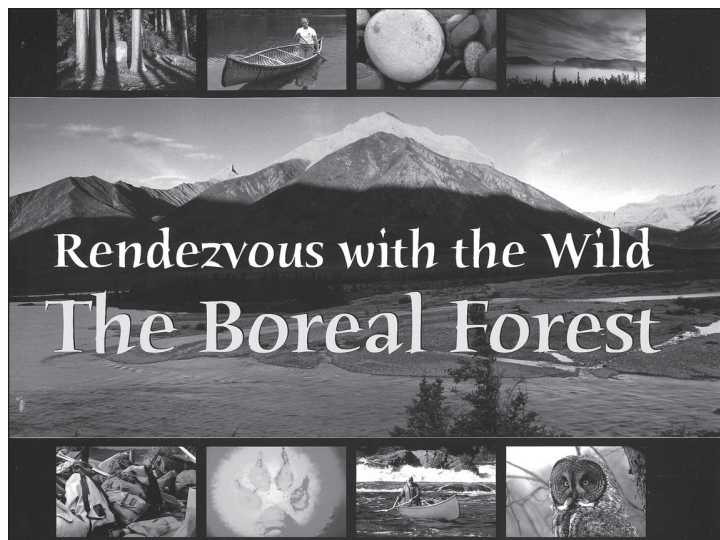
192pp, \$49.95

ISBN: 1-55046-422-1

the Tremblay doesn't have the fine lines of the graceful stripper - but it certainly still gets you there in one piece.

We continue with all things boreal forest, which means northern forest, in case you didn't really know. But we're sure you knew that boreal comes from the Greek god of the north wind, *Boreas*. You might have heard about a well publicized series of trip in the summer of 2003. Attracting media darlings like Justin Trudeau, David Suzuki and Cathy Jones, the Boreal Rendezvous spanned the country on ten different northern rivers: Nahanni, Moisie, Churchill, Athabasca, Berens, Wind. Bonnet Plume, Snake, Coal and Dease.

And who better to wrap all this up than the multimedia, multitasking Prof. Canot - James Raffan and his woodburning Macintosh computer? Raffan notes the original idea was to publish a short series of essays much the way the book *Wilderness Canada* did a generation (!) ago - it was a series of essays with some photos on nature published by *The Quetico Foundation*. But public



tastes seemed to have changed and people want shorter, prettier packages of info which this book certainly is. Many lovely photos, drawings, paintings and, of course, writing from a breadth of sources. The HACC was honoured to be asked to contribute two excerpts from our first online trip on the George River. It is interesting to note that some of the famous types' contributions are taken from their talks during the events.

This is a beautiful book to behold and it carries an important message. As canoeists, we share the love of the north woods, for natives it's been a home for millennia, but for those who impact on it the most, it's a place they never

terminated the polar bear population had taken a nosedive.

The numbers are also higher this year because Inuit knowledge is being used as a basis for the new management plans. For years, hunters have said polar bear numbers are up in several Nunavut populations. More nuisance bears have been spotted in or near communities.

The management plans and quota numbers are outlined in memoranda of understanding, or MOUs. They recommend a total allowable harvest per community based on the current scientific numbers for the first seven years after a population survey is done, and Inuit knowledge for the following seven years. According to the text of the MOUs, all parties will meet at least once every seven years “to review and update information and set direction for the continuing management of polar bears.”

A solid MOU package is important because Nunavut, unlike Nunavik or Greenland, has a U.S.-approved sport polar bear hunt. Under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act, bearskins and trophies may only be imported from areas of Canada that have healthy bear populations and a sustainable hunt — and can prove it to the U.S. authorities’ satisfaction.

**T**he Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency awarded \$55,588 to six groups to participate in the federal panel review of the Eastmain 1-A and Rupert diversion project. The funds will help the groups prepare for participation in the public consultation on the conformity of the impact statement. During this phase, the public will be invited to review the content of the impact statement and determine if the information presented is complete and conforms to the directives issued for its preparation. Details on this written consultation will be transmitted once the impact statement has been made public in both official languages. The proponents, Hydro-Québec and its subsidiary, the Société d’énergie de la Baie James, plan to submit their impact statement in the early 2005.

The recipients of participant funding are: Révérence Rupert, the Municipality of Sanikiluaq, Sierra Club of Canada, the Crees of the Waskaganish First Nation, the Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association and the Cree Outfitting and Tourism Association. The Eastmain-1-A and Rupert diversion project is located in northwestern Quebec, east of James Bay. The project includes:

- the diversion of some of the waters (up to 800 m<sup>3</sup>/s) from the Rupert River watershed into the Eastmain River watershed;
- the construction of a powerplant (up to 770 MW) on the Eastmain 1 reservoir;
- the addition of structures at the La Sarcelle site, at the outlet of the Opinaca reservoir.

To achieve this, the project calls for the construction of four dams, 51 dikes, two diversion bays flooding an area of 395 km<sup>2</sup>, 12,000 m of diversion channels or tunnels and two permanent access roads.

**T**he Kivalliq region’s Meadowbank gold mine project entered a new stage recently when Cumberland Resources Ltd. of Vancouver declared that their draft environmental impact statement, or “EIS,” is now in the hands of the Nunavut Impact Review Board.

For residents of Baker Lake and other Kivalliq communities, it means they will get a chance to attend public hearings, ask questions and get more infor-

mation about how the mine might affect the environment. The Meadowbank River drains into the lower Back River and is a regular route for those canoeing from the Back to the Thelon system.

Cumberland Resources is now at least two years behind the aggressive schedule they set for themselves in 2003. At that time, they predicted the Meadowbank mine would get all its permits by April 2004, enter construction by March 2005, and produce gold bars by December 2006. But they’re still predicting that when it does start up, the mine will last for 12 to 14 years, and produce at least three million ounces of gold.

The company plans to extract ore from three open pits, which will overlap with areas now covered by small lakes. To gain access to the ore that sits beneath those lakes, Cumberland will build dikes, remove the fish, and drain the lakes.

They’ll likely use a mixture of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil to blast ore out of the three open pits. That easy-to-mix combination is often used by terrorists, such as the car bomb that Timothy McVey used in the Oklahoma City bombing, so the company will have to use special handling and storage methods for its ammonium nitrate stockpiles.

The biggest open pit, called “Portage,” would form a huge, oval-shaped gash in the earth: about two kilometres long, 200 to 400 metres wide, and 175 metres deep. Nearby, a smaller, rounder pit called “Goose Island” would be about 150 metres in diameter and 150 metres deep.

The third open pit, called “Vault,” is projected to be 900 metres long, 600 metres wide and 185 metres deep, and would sit about 5 km north of the other two. An on-site mill and processing plant will crush ore into small pieces so that pure gold can be extracted from it, and then melted into gold bars. Cumberland will ship the gold to market on Boeing 737 aircraft that will land and take off from an on-site jet airstrip.

To help extract every last ounce of gold, Cumberland will treat some of the ore with cyanide, a deadly poison. The company says it will take steps to ensure that none of the cyanide escapes into the ecosystem.

To supply the mine, the company will use a barge landing facility and storage area several miles east of Baker Lake. The storage area would hold fuel tanks and other supplies, which would be transported along a haulage road.

After getting comments from various stakeholders, including territorial and federal government agencies, the company will be expected to produce a final EIS. After that document is produced, the board will be able to schedule public hearings, possibly as early as the fall, Briscoe said.

The company has yet to complete an Inuit impact and benefits agreement with the Kivalliq Inuit Association, and the mine may not go ahead until they sign one.

The Meadowbank gold mine project already appears to enjoy wide support among residents of Baker Lake, where the unemployment rate stands at around 26 per cent. At a public information session held there in 2003, a member of the community’s hamlet council urged residents to “forget about the fish and support the project for the jobs,” according to minutes of the meeting produced by Cumberland Resources.

To construct the mine, they’ll need about 350 workers. To operate it, they’ll need about 250. But only a quarter to a third of those workers are likely to be Inuit from Baker Lake and the Kivalliq region.



- photo by A. P. Low/National Archives of Canada C-5592

**We are delighted that a new light has been shed on A. P. Low thanks to the fine biography of this ubiquitous northern traveller. (See Review of Paddling the Boreal Forest on Page 13). This photo taken by Low on July 28, 1897 shows his 35-foot boat *The Alle*, right, being gently moved through the ice floes on Wakeham Bay in northwest Ungava Bay. The boat would dock for the winter in Fort Chimo (Kuujuuaq) a month later and would sail around to Great Whale River the next summer. Low was the last of the great land-based explorers of the Geological Survey of Canada and he left a great many fascinating photos from an era now long gone.**

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