

CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 80

CHE-MUN

SPRING 1995

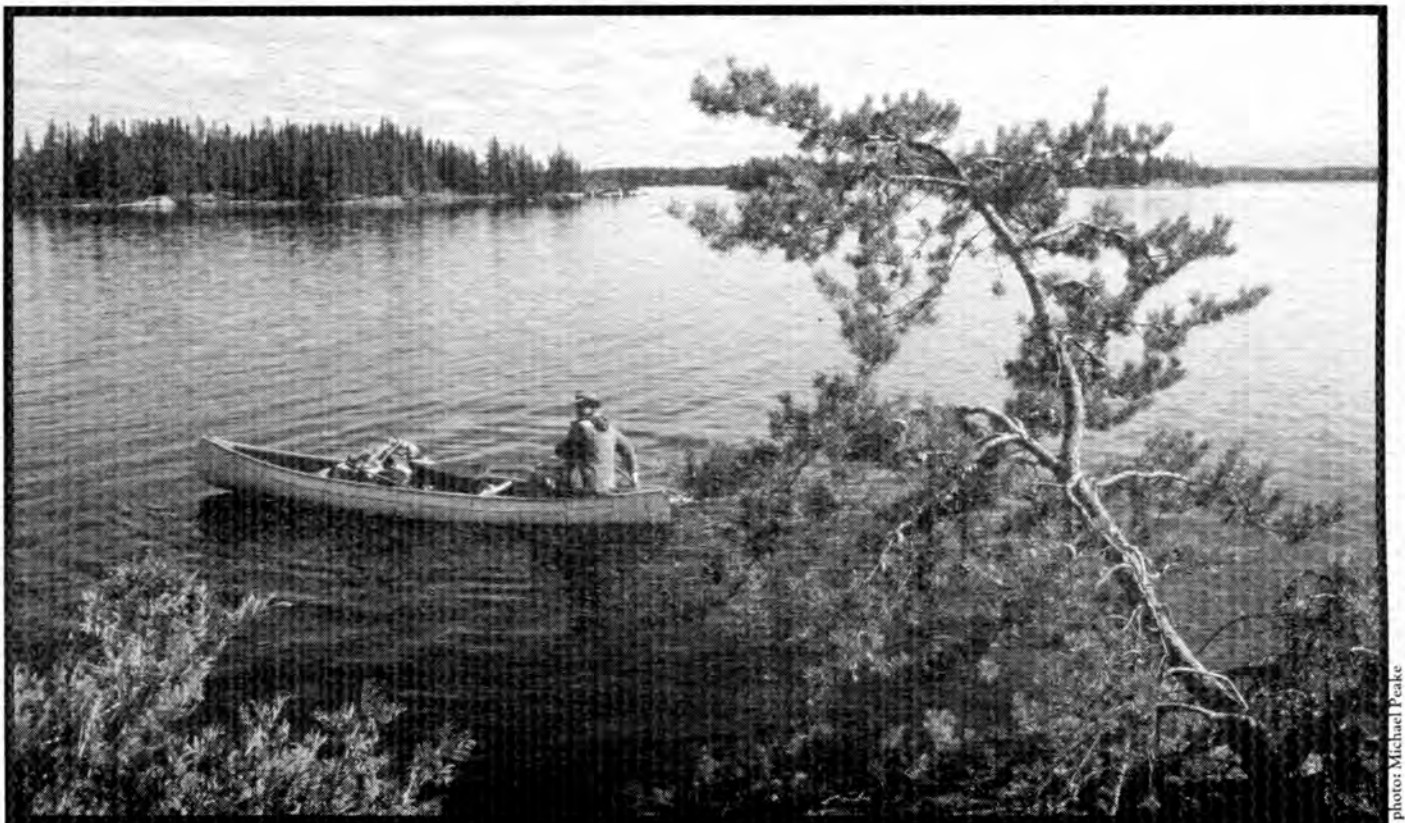


Photo: Michael Peake

WABIKIMI WONDERS -- There's a vicious battle going on right now over a prime area of wilderness north of Lake Superior. Wabikimi Provincial Park, home to a dwindling supply of vanishing woodland caribou, has become the target in a battle between the for-

est companies and those who wish to provide continued habitat for the species. The area is also prime canoe country. Here, Geoff Peake paddles his Pinetree canoe in Whitewater Lake, one of the large lakes in the area which is the headwater region for the Ogoki River.

Wabikimi is one of the newest northern parks and environmentalists want to dramatically increase its size to protect the caribou which are disappearing across the increasingly populated province. We have a report on the battle in Northern Ontario on Page 9.

**Warburton Pike
& Miss Hayball**

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Merrick's True**

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**Working hard for
Wabikimi**

Page 9

Spring Packet



Veteran paddler **Hubert P. Yockey** of Bel Air, Maryland dropped us a nice letter an article that triggered memories of the wonderful Missinaibi River.

"Your item on page 5 of Outfit 78 (Canoebooks Update) brought back memories of the wonderful Missinaibi, my favourite river in Ontario. With regard to the two deaths at Thunderhouse Falls, one must regard this as due to the incompetence of the canoeists. According to page 2 Hap Wilson's book *Missinaibi*, "They did dump a couple of times... no big deal. In fact they laughed about it." As one approaches falls ahead and in particular Thunderhouse Falls, the topography shouts FALLS AHEAD! There is no run-out ahead and the river seems to disappear. Regardless of maps, this calls for an immediate take-out for scouting. The map



The formidable falls in Hell's Gate.

that has been provided free of charge for many years by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Missinaibi Canoe Route, Mattice to Moosonee, shows correctly that the portage trail is on river LEFT. "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad."

"The current version of that map has a dangerous omission. It omits Hell's Gate and calls that part of the river, Long Rapids. There is a formidable falls in Hell's Gate and it is more dangerous than Thunderhouse Falls. I have corresponded with the authorities about this mistake and I hope they will change the map in this region for the coming paddling season. Long Rapids is a Class II/III run down a beautiful valley. Anyone who has survived this far should enjoy this run. It is the last rapid until on the Moose as one approaches Moosonee. I hope the readers of Che-Mun will be glad to know about the falls in Hell's Gate.

Deaths at other places on the Missinaibi are also due to lack of skill of the paddlers and not having at least three boats. Parties must stick together so that a rescue may be accomplished if one boat flips.

Wilson had this to say about Kettle Falls (page 96):

"Kettle Falls can't be run - it's an easy carry-over on the left... don't try to line it either, it's far easier to portage. A group of wily Americans charged down the right side like a marine offensive, paddling covered "berigans", they made it down alright (sic) during high water, the finesse of amusement park bumper cars."

"I regard this comment with some amusement. He is referring to my article in Canoe magazine April 1976, page 54, *Scouting a Whitewater Wilderness*. This piece shows a picture of my teenage

Explorer scouts "paddling covered berigans" completing the run on river right at Kettle Falls. At this time the river was actually at LOW WATER. We are clearly not making it down 'with the finesse of amusement park bumper cars'. On my next expedition the water was considerably higher and we repeated the run. I have enclosed a picture of one of our four Berrigans that made the run. Rick Mroz, stern, and Brian Pitt, bow, are punching through one of the holes. Although no boat is to be seen, they are clearly in control of the river and their Berrigan. Open boats should not try this without spray cover.

"We portaged a Grumman because my daughter and another boy were not up to this rapid. They crossed the river below Kettle Falls and Cynthia took the photographs.

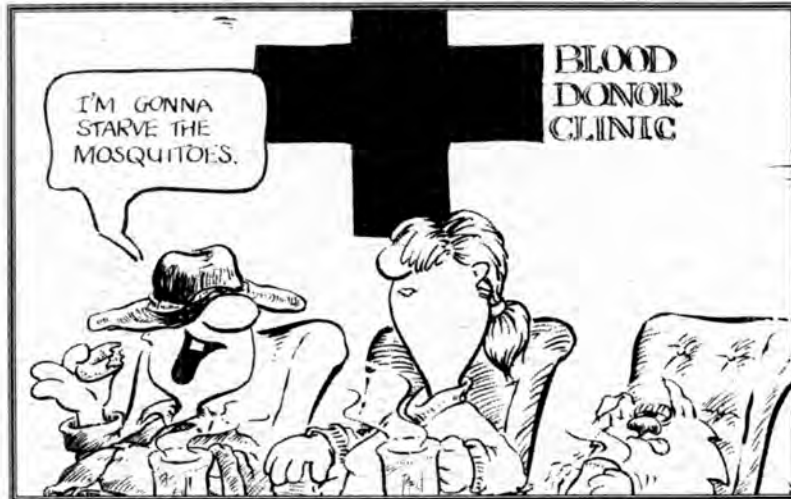
"When Che-Mun comes it's the first mail piece I read."

Everything we get in the mail from teacher **Phil Chester** of Deep River, Ont is like the man himself - unique. We received this after Phil got an Che-Mun subscription expiry notice.

"I must confess to you that Che-Mun is the only magazine/fanzine/newsletter/packet that I subscribe to. Why may you ask?

1. Totally and unabashedly Canadian, eh.
2. First class all the way. Non-apologetic.
3. Excellent features, especially canoe centrefolds.
4. Balanced, thoughtful journalism.
5. Pleasant to eye and touch. A sensual smorgasbord if you will. Tactile and experimental.
6. Inclusive. Panders to no elite. Egalitarian.
7. Independent. No ads, maintains integrity.
8. The true voice of Canada and Canadians at large. eg. droll type of voice, use of understatement etc.
9. Advocates. Pro-active. Takes a stand.
10. Can be used, in a pinch, on canoe trips when buddy forgets extra roll of toilet paper. (Utility). I have also smoked a *Che-Mun* when I ran out of Camel plains.
11. Environmentally friendly. (No chlorine) Only black and white photos, etc.
12. My true love sent to me 12 Che-Mun subscriptions."

➔ continued on Page 11



Editor's Notebook

Whew! Another winter is ebbing and the season we dream for all year is about to begin again. Soon it will be time to put all that map study to good use.

We've got a real mixed bag for you in this Outfit of Che-Mun. I hope many of you had a chance to get some good reading done this winter whether for research or pleasure. For me, spring is the busy time of the year for slide talks. There are a number of trips that I show regularly, such as "The Morse River" & "Lands Forlorn". This year I'm starting a new one and I gave the premiere showing at the WaterWalker Film Festival in Ottawa on March 4.

It's titled *Eric Morse and The Voyageurs* and it details - using original slides - the tripping escapades of that formidable and formative group of paddlers in the 1950s and 60s known as 'The Voyageurs'. Besides Morse, the group included Sigurd Olson, Blair Fraser, Tony Lovink, Denis Coolican, Elliott Rodger and Omond Solandt. This slide presentation is an extension of one I gave at the Solandt Symposium, which honoured Omond's great scientific work, at Queen's University last May.

In researching that talk, I went through original slides and letters of the group. It was a very rewarding to get closer to this group I'd admired for so long. The letters of Sig Olson, with their great style and gentle humour, were a joy to read. And now, I want to share those stories with a new generation of paddlers. We should all be aware of The Voyageurs place in canoeing history.

A number of people mention the photographs that appear in Che-Mun. For the most part, especially the trip photos which I take, all the originals are in colour. Almost any photo you see in Che-Mun is available for purchase. Prices vary and only good quality reproductions are available - in either prints or slides. Please write if you see something you like.

I'm sure all of you are as anxious as I am for the arrival of spring and the sound of a canoe paddle moving through the water. Every sunny spring that arrives is one year less in this trip called Life - so make the most of it all!

Michael Peake, Editor.

The Coffin Corner

We are again fortunate to be able to print one of the wonderful black and white photos taken by Stewart Coffin of Lincoln, Massachusetts. As many Che-Mun readers know, Stew has paddled much of Labrador and is a terrific source of knowledge of the area.

Eight of his memorable trips are detailed in Hodgins and Hoyle's *Canoeing North Into the Unknown*.

On Page 12 we feature one of Stew's photos depicting a formidable group of paddlers on the Moisie River in 1978. The picture was taken with a 2 1/4 x 3 1/4 Crown Graphic view camera complete with tripod and film back.

This camera was an upgrade from Coffin's first camera which he was still using twenty-odd years after his father gave it to him following World War II. Incidentally, his father was one of the earliest pioneers in pictorial nature photography. Stew took many good shots with his Argoflex twin-lens reflex camera and it rewarded him with still working despite tasting more than its share of river water.

It was one of those cameras with two lenses, one for shooting the other for viewing. You had to look directly down into the square box - and everything was backwards.

In the next issue of *Che-Mun* we plan to run what Stew describes as one of his favourite photos - a view along a challenging set of rapids on the lower George River in northern Quebec.

As Stew writes in a letter to *Che-Mun*;

"What splendid canoeing adventures my companions and I have had over the years. I recorded many of them on black & white film with the notion of someday having them published as an annotated photo album. This never happened, but I am glad to see some of them being published piecemeal, which suits me fine."

It suits us more than fine. Thanks, Stew.

Canoe Route Help Wanted

We received a last minute plea for help from our newest subscriber Christopher Morris of Toronto, who is doing the Back River and a bit more this summer. Chris writes:

"I was hoping that you or some Che-Mun readers might know of anyone who had tried to reach Pelly Bay from Chantrey Inlet (the end of the Back) by going up the Hayes River to Darby Lake and then down the Arrowsmith River."

If anyone knows about this route please either write to Che-Mun or drop Chris a line at 60 Redheugh Cres., Toronto, ON. M1W 3L3.

NUNAVUT

Newsline

Countdown to April 1, 1999

Is there an Inuktitut word for marketing? If not, there probably should be in light of their promotion efforts in southern Canada.

This summer, at Toronto's popular Canadian National Exhibition, there will be an \$2.5 million display titled *Inuit: Spirit of the Arctic*. The two million people who visit the CNE each year will see a three storey inukshuk housed in two large tents that depict the best of the northern Inuit life. Displays include Inuit products, a "circumpolar world information centre, a mock ice-floe for performances and a Walk Through Time depicting the evolution of the Inuit up until the creation of Nunavut.

The display follows a similar and very successful one at Ottawa's Winterlude Festival in March. These displays are the work of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.



Inuit across Nunavut will vote in April whether to allow the sale of land within Nunavut to private interests. The deal is part of the land claims agreement and would allow municipalities to sell land to homeowner and businesses who currently lease it.

The vote will be binding for 20 years. The Nunavut Tunngavik have come out supporting a No vote saying not enough Inuit people would be in position to purchase the land at this time. They expressed a fear that the concept of land ownership is not fully understood. They also fear a loss of control of municipal land to outside interests.



An Arctic Council, involving the world's circumpolar nations, may soon be a reality. Canada's Arctic ambassador, Mary Simon, said the United States should endorse the plan providing military and strategic issues are not involved. The US has long held back endorsing such a move.

The council would provide a means for the eight countries in the polar regions to co-operate on various issues including the role of environmental monitoring of the sensitive Arctic regions.



It seems everything's coming up diamonds in Canada's north recently. It was announced that an "exceptionally promising" diamond discovery was

A note from the North

Che-Mun reader Paul Epp was kind enough to drop us a letter from a friend in Iqaluit, NWT and it contained some written clarification on just what the rights of non-Native canoe paddlers would be. We quote a few sections from the letter:

"In reply to your query, there are no restrictions for persons travelling on navigable waterways through Inuit Owned Lands. According to the Land Claims Agreement, "there shall be a public right of access for the purpose of travel by water making use of a strip incidental to travel by water, and for recreation to a 100 foot strip of Inuit Owned Land bounding the sea coast, navigable rivers, navigable lakes that can be entered from said rivers. The said strip shall be measured from the ordinary high water mark of the sea coast and the said navigable rivers, lakes and water bodies. The right of access includes access to the foreshore adjacent to the said strip.

"The Agreement states that, "a member of the public may enter and remain on Inuit owned lands for emergency purposes." Also it states that: "members of the public may cross Inuit owned lands for the purpose of personal or casual travel, such as to go to their place of work or to and from a place of recreation. Wherever possible, crossings shall take place on routes designated by the Designated Inuit Organization. The right to cross shall include the right to make any necessary stops."

"I spoke with one of the Government Tourism Officers about this concern. He indicated that there should be no problem for tourists travelling in the NWT. . . The entire North relies heavily upon tourism - no more is this fact realized than with the Inuit community at large."

made in the Keewatin region between Baker Lake and Rankin Inlet. A total of 1509 micro diamonds and two macro diamonds were found in a 50 pound sample taken near Parker Lake.

The discovery was made in a type of rock where they weren't expected to be found which will open up more exploration in other areas. The main NWT diamond discoveries have been in the area near Lac de Gras at the headwaters of the Coppermine River. It's all part of a huge geological boom that appears to be happening.



The continuing race to see which community will be capital of Nunavut got two new entrants. Igloolik, a remote community on an island just north of the Melville Peninsula, has stated their intentions to enter the race. The small town is basing their hopes on an "executive" capital model that doesn't require a large community in order to be capital. It would mean many of the governments function would be spread to larger communities.

The hamlet of Baker Lake has also announced they are in the running. The community, which is located in the geographic centre of Canada, cited it's nearby rich mineral wealth as an important factor in Nunavut's growth. They also said their location -

inland, at the centre of Nunavut - was strategically important as well. The choice for capital will be made later this year and must be approved by Ottawa. There are three other main contenders; Rankin Inlet, Cambridge Bay and Iqaluit.



Over in Nunavik - the top region of Ungava populated by Inuit - talks are continuing with the Quebec government regarding a self-government deal. While the Crees in northern Quebec refuse to talk to the government, their Inuit counterparts are close to a deal. It's noted that the subject of Quebec sovereignty is not involved in the talks. Any large settlement would necessitate the re-opening of the massive James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement signed in 1975. This landmark agreement was the basis for the radical change in native life in northern Quebec. The deal brought much money and services to the north along with assorted social problems.

A recent health study of Nunavik released by the Quebec government showed that those who stuck to the traditional Inuit diet had much lower incidence of heart disease. Mercury and lead levels in the body were found to be more elevated among those living on the Hudson Bay coast as opposed to those on Ungava Bay.

Miss Hayball & Mr. Pike

The ever-dependable Gwyneth Hoyle of Peterborough dropped this wonderful note to us

"I received from England a booklet containing *Warburton Pike: An Unassuming Gentleman*, 57 pages, including photographs and maps and index on the interesting life of the man gleaned from friends, relatives, contemporary accounts and archives.

Almost as interesting as the little book was the accompanying letter from the author, Gwen Hayball, 85 Homelake House, Station Road, Poole, Dorset, England BH14 8UD.

"She had come across the name of Warburton Pike when working at the Vancouver Public Library in the 1950s, was curious and found that he came from a village in England close to her birthplace. In her own words, 'being in my 80's I had to make a decision regarding the mass of material accumulated during my years of research. I



Warburton Pike

had no desire to publish. The searching was leisurely and very exciting. I loved it for its own sake. To leave the collection for someone else to deal with after I pass on was unthinkable. So much of it is not important, this can be destroyed and the remainder offered to the Archives of the country of Dorset. ...

"Eventually the search led her to going north herself, 'to see and feel the tundra which Pike speaks so eloquently about. last year I visited Bathurst Inlet Lodge for the tenth time, the pristine wilderness drew me back again and again.' I shall not be going back to Bathurst Inlet and am glad I was there before exploration in the Northwest Territories was developing in a big way. Diamonds are the latest. Although it is a vast area, with planes, helicopters etc., one could not guarantee being isolated, which was part of the wonderful experience for me."

Miss Hayball published 200 copies of the booklet herself at \$14 Canadian including postage. At the time of writing she had only 73 copies left. A

Shortly before press time we received this submission for *Che-Mun* from Miss Hayball herself.

Warburton Pike: An Unassuming Gentleman

By GWEN HAYBALL

Warburton Pike is often described as a 'wanderer', hardly correct as his expeditions always had an objective. It was his interest in big game hunting which motivated many of his treks into wilderness areas of Canada, particularly the tundra of the Northwest Territories. As a big game hunter it was the muskox which lured him onto the Barrens.

His descent of the Colorado River with his close friend Lord Osbourne in November 1909 on a hunting expedition, is not well known. Their means of transport was a 'canoe', according to one article on Pike. In fact, it was an 18-foot dory, especially built for them in San Pedro. In a detailed report of the proposed search and rescue plan (Pike and Beauclerk reported lost) 'Arizona Charlie' Meadows describes the "boat" as having no other power than two stout oars. He had refused an invitation to accompany them, pointing out the danger of navigating the swift-flowing Colorado River in such a boat.

After travelling to Yuma in Arizona, they had continued on to about halfway down the east coast of lower California. Although they were particularly interested in sheep, at that time there was a wide variety of game in the area.

An enjoyable chance meeting with three Americans led to an agreement to meet again and spend Christmas together. Pike and Osbourne ended up being three days late for that rendezvous.

On their return to civilization at a station east of Yuma, they heard that two men had been drowned, subsequently they both read their own obituary notices in the local paper. Apparently the three Americans reported to the paper that the Englishmen had not tuned up on Christmas Day as arranged and were last seen "heading in a small boat for the open sea."

On returning to Victoria, B. C., Pike was met by anxiously waiting government officials who wanted to secure his services as Special Commissioner for the Province of British Columbia at the Second International Congress of Field Sports in Vienna. This must have been a wonderful experience for Pike, being among so many of his sportsmen friends. Pike entered a personal collection which together with the exhibits of B.C. gained numerous awards. The Times of London reported that prizes won by British Columbia were well deserved; "a remarkably fine show, which Warburton Pike got together."

Many tributes to him can be found in works on hunting and northern travel. This description of Pike from W. A. Baillie-Grohman, "... he is one in 10,000 when it comes to roughing it. Hardships are nothing to this born explorer. And let it be said here that none but the extremely hardy and thoroughly experienced in wood-craft should venture to follow that sportsman's example."

Lord Osbourne Beauclerk, writing Pike's obituary in the *Royal Geographical Journal*, 1915, says, "Personally the most modest of men, a keen naturalist, the best of travellers, he will be immensely regretted in the north-west country by all who knew him, to whom he was always ready to give a helping hand."

During his last few years in western Canada, he turned to less arduous pursuits, photographing and writing about natural history subjects. In 1915, he returned to England and applied for a position in the Navy. He was turned down on account of his health. Seriously ill, very depressed, it was necessary for him to have medical attention in a nursing home in Bournemouth, a seaside resort. It was late afternoon on October 20, 1915, when he decided to go for a walk, accompanied by a nurse. Walking along the sea shore, he suddenly turned and ran into a chine (a ravine in the cliff). The next morning his body was found washed up by the sea.

Five permanent memorials exist to remind us of this great sportsman whose stamina enabled him to withstand long, arduous treks and starvation to achieve his objectives. They are; the plaque on the door of Mayne Island church in B. C. which states that he donated the land on which it was built. Pike's Portage Route, at the east end of Great Slave Lake. The traditional trail used by the natives to the Barrens where Pike had spent months hunting the muskox. The cairn at Porter's Landing on Dease Lake, near the site of the placer gold mine which Pike was associated with for a number of years, Warburton Bay on Mackay Lake and a hill on Saturna Island - Warburton Mount.

Through Merrick's True North

True North

By Elliot Merrick.

Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989. 353pp.

Originally published by C. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1933.

By ANDREW MACDONALD

Though there are many readers for whom Elliot Merrick's *True North* is a golden opportunity, it is undoubtedly well suited to the student of life contemplating change. The history documented in this book takes place in Labrador during the winter of 1930-1, two years following Merrick's graduation from Yale University and entry into the work force.

As a preface, I can provide a contemporary example of the kind of passionate questioning for alternatives which Merrick suggests throughout the book.

Sitting in "development" seminars in my final year of undergraduate work, the discussions are often animated and diverse, reflecting a broad range of difficult topics with which to wrestle: citizenship, ethnicity, civil society, and the debate of grade weighting for class participation versus the research paper. New perspectives and new ideas surface each class, but one can count on each discussion culminating in a bottleneck - a vast enigmatic wall which prevents ideas from moving forward. The wall is the dominant global system, reproductive and always expanding.

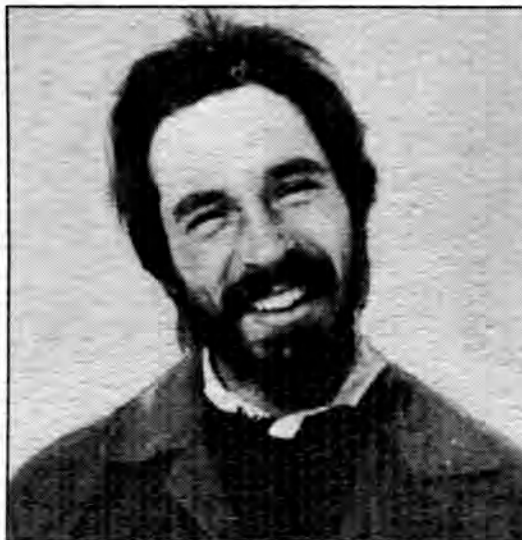
Invariably questions are put forth, critical thoughts and ideas, concerns with ecological sustainability, the decline of socialism, the inequality of capitalism, the pervasive wedge which economics drives between people and their life, and so on. The result is a demand by the class for an alternative model, a way of deconstructing this great wall. The class concludes and we, the students, parade home thoughtful but inevitably frustrated.

I sense today a revival of critical thought, the resurfacing of ideas put forth earlier in this century and before by Huxley, Leopold, and Thoreau - to whom Merrick turns for a preface, and who clearly influences the author in his reflections upon life. Appropriately the first part of the book is titled 'Awakening', and introduces the reader to the restless search for alternatives which drives Merrick north to Labrador.

Though I am not graduating this spring the pros-

pect will hopefully arise next fall, in which case Merricks's opening lines will undoubtedly resurface: "Each June from the educational grist mills come thousands of sad young men who do not take to the great American religion of business, who dislike being sandwich men with signs on their backs that read, 'My life is for sale to the highest bidder.' ..If only they could find some work worth doing and incidentally make a living at it." (emphasis added).

Throughout *True North* this theme, skeptical of



Elliott Merrick as pictured in *True North*.

the quality of modern social fabric, is broached again and again and it is this that I will use as a point of departure, examining traces of its presence in the hope of giving a taste of this books' rich flavour. Echoing the frustrations of my classmates in the shadow of the wall, the young Merrick is full of questions: "Who turned the world upside down anyway? Who, like an evil fairy in a book, switched all the values, calling the true values shams and the shams truth?"

In September of 1930, with these sentiments in mind, Elliot Merrick and his wife Kay depart from the Labrador village of North West River, perched on the estuary of Hamilton Inlet and embark upon a New Life, the title of the second part.

John Michelin, a seasoned trapper, decided to assume the companionship of the Merricks on the arduous trip up the Grand (now Churchill) river, and winter with them in his small cabin (referred to as a 'tilt'). As an aside, it was interesting to chat with Andrew Brown at the recent Wilderness Canoe

Symposium in Toronto, who had photographed in Labrador for *National Geographic* with John Michelin as guide in 1950. [Ed. Note - see July 1951 *National Geographic*.]

Merrick's journal is quick to engage in a vivid and often poetic description of time spent in the daily rigours of a Labrador winter. His journals expose and explore the texture of his companion's personalities, the nature of work, and the splendour and harshness of the wilderness within which these people must work to survive.

Merrick is able to define his journey in terms of the elements which surround him - he is aware that they are visitors. It is apparent that virtually every aspect of the Merrick's journey involved these elements and the character of the book is etched by the continuous challenges which presented themselves. The majority of the time these were rigours which bore confidence and forged a gradual change in the author's perspective.

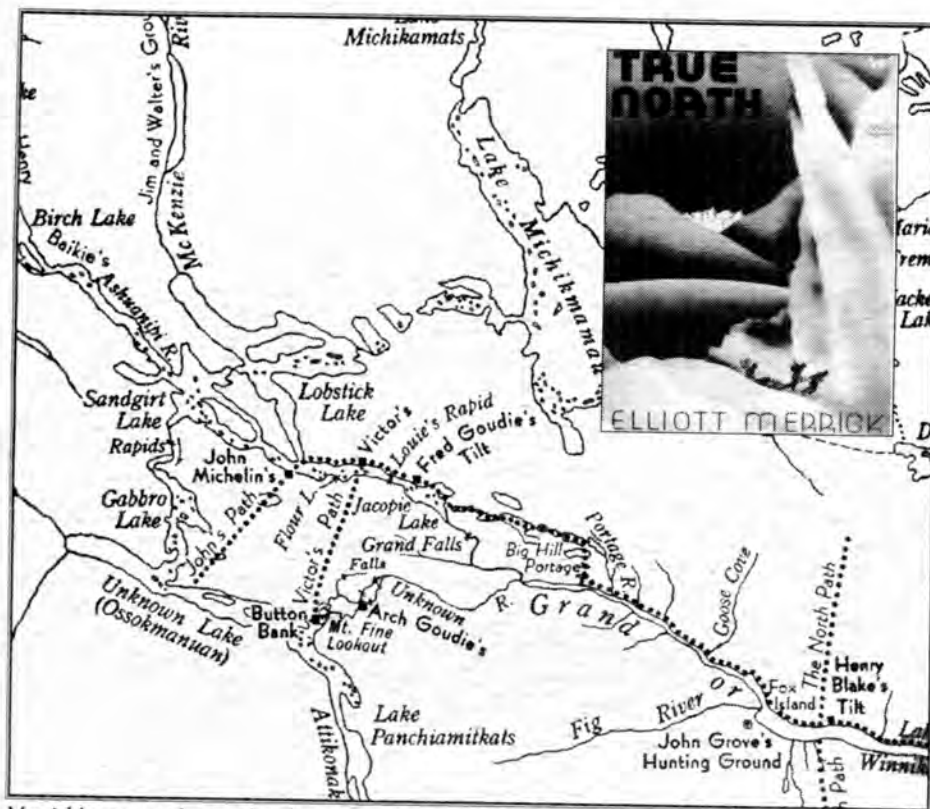
This is reflected in his description of a challenging portage found at the 'Big Hill', which rises 700 feet in a quarter mile, and part of the route which skirts Grand Falls: "Beyond this point every article of God's manufacture, or man's, undergoes a change in status. The value of merchandise is not calculated here by the currency of any nation on earth, but by weight and utility. A pound of tea is worth more than a diamond ring and ten pounds of flour is worth more than twenty pounds of gold...To see an inverted canoe moving slowly up the hill on a stalk of two small legs is enough to make you believe there's nothing a man can't do."

Merrick devotes ample time describing the people of the land. The reader is offered the rich texture of the Labrador community filled with anecdotes of local history and culture; youngsters, like a flock of swallows, skating up the Traverspine River; the January fair at Northwest River along with a multitude of trapper's tales.

The reader is reminded of the resourcefulness of the local people, their quiet hospitality and enduring friendship: "To us they were a song, an inspiration. They were kinder and stronger than we, and wiser in the business of living."

The trappers are presented as men of immense stamina and with a nasty habit of never admitting when one is tired or hungry (much like the Peake brothers, I might add). Merrick draws on Mark Twain's description of Mississippi River steamboat pilots to describe the Labrador men and their "remark-

The Classics



Merrick's annotated map taken from the endpapers of *True North* along with original dustjacket (inset).

able pictorial memories," in order to describe events of the past and destinations of the future. The indigenous Montagnais Indians are referred to infrequently, usually in stories which reflect both favourable and unfavourable accounts of interaction with white trappers.

Merrick writes of John Michelin's positive relationship with the Montagnais, described by the author on a cool fall day when Mathieu and his family stop in for tea. He makes an interesting comment in suggesting that the depletion of the caribou changed the Montagnais more than the coming of the whites.

The author refers to the lively Hudson's Bay Company activity with posts at Fort Nascaupe on Lake Petitsikapau, as well as on lakes Michikamau and Winnikapau, abandoned roughly 60 years prior to Merrick's journey. He describes travel as "perpetual romance", and his active imagination envies the explorer La Salle, "drifting from the spruce fringed lakes of Canada all down the Mississippi to the tropics; months and months of seeing round the next bend and never knowing in what strange paradise he might end."

Surely Mr. Merrick would have been interested in the La Salle expedition of the 1670's, detailed by Ken Lewis at the recent WCA symposium. It highlighted

the rapid swallowing of the wilds into the gullet of urbania. The trip, executed entirely in 18th century apparel and gear, appeared superimposed on modern life; a travelling stage play educating society about another era. *True North* is similar in offering not a dry historical text, but a primary account of an earlier culture.

The elements of wilderness pervade nearly every page, and giving one the sense it was the length and depth of immersion into this lifestyle which bore the fruits of such vivid description. The author draws on Shelley to describe a frosty fall morning in October, and yet his own descriptions surpass this. His words are unique to the time and place, animated by the spirit of the land.

"We ran through fields of crinkly new ice, plains of drifting loveliness set with jewel-like etchings in silver and black, designs of exquisite delicacy bending over the ripples that curled from our bow, sounding as we cut them a song of glass chimes in the breeze."

Important for Merrick is the proximity to the fundamental sources of life and death. The ability to catch and cook one's own food, to build one's own shelter and transport – he is passionate about the

symbolic significance of being able to craft a sled from a tree – these are what transcend our modern experiences and foster newborn appreciation for our life sources.

The 350 mile return trip to North West River in January 1931, guided by his Labrador guides' ritual and relentless homing beacon, tested the limits of the author's physical and mental endurance. It is interesting to note Merrick's feeling upon reaching Grand Falls on Christmas Day. His satisfaction of witnessing such "boundless power" was matched with the celebratory dish of apricots: "For me the Grand Falls is an interesting incident of the trip, no more appealing than the fact that a tilt can be built without a nail or the knowledge that you get cracked heels if you don't wash your feet. As always it is the travelling and the people met on the way, not the getting there."

Being again at North West River soon begs the question of when to return to the wild. The third section of the book, 'Bittersweet', details Merrick's experiences on a spring trapline off Lake Winnikapau, often with only his husky dog, Diamond, for companionship. He endures a bout of snowblindness, has a meager catch of fur and is haunted by the solitude: "Its very strange and illuminating to be alone in the woods 150 miles from a living soul, not knowing the way very well, with darkness coming on, the wind rising and the sky aching to belch snow."

This experience challenges Merrick, exhausting his exuberance for the woods, taming his questions in a wish for home. He describes the smells of rotten beaver castor bait, and the feel of bitter cold while setting, baiting and fixing the traps barehanded. In the evenings the chores of cutting wood for food and heat, would precede the tasks of thawing and skinning fur, baking for the next day, mending snowshoes and readying for the daylight start. He welcomes his arrival home to the world of books and thoughts. Upon settling back in Goose Bay, Elliot Merrick is home, reflected in his words: "Every bit of work we do seems worth doing."

Why is this book important? Why should one read *True North*? The book preserves a precious moment in history. It is rich in sensory detail and conveys a profound wilderness experience. Most importantly perhaps is that it asks questions, it challenges one to re-think the ethics which govern modern society. This, I think, makes it a book worth its weight in water (something a little more important than gold – especially for the canoeist!).

Andrew Macdonald, 22, is an undergraduate student at McGill University. He canoes the north with the Hide-Away Canoe Club and other unsavoury types.

Going Inside

By Alan Kesselheim.
McClelland and Stewart, Toronto.
292 pp. \$28.99 (Cdn)
Available May 1995.

This is the latest - and best - offering from prolific Montana author (and Che-Mun subscriber) Alan Kesselheim. He is once again writing about one of his year-long northern adventures undertaken with partner Marypat Zitzer.

Veteran Che-Mun readers will be familiar with this pair of adventurers who first came to our attention in 1986 with their overwintering trip down the Athabasca and Dubawnt and Kazan rivers. Alan wrote the book *Water and Sky* about that journey. He has also written many letters to Che-Mun giving us a first-hand look at their experiences. Now *Going Inside* looks at their second year-long adventure, this time down the Smoky, Peace and Kazan rivers in 1990-91.

There's a special sub-plot to this story and it indeed adds a unique twist to this outdoor adventure story. Halfway through the trip, spending long, dark nights in a cabin on bitterly cold Lake Athabasca, Marypat became pregnant - after years of trying. Their fertility ritual is delightfully woven throughout the whole tale and really adds to the book's interest.

I enjoyed this book immensely. It's a wonderful, comfortable read. Kesselheim's prose is straightforward and clear and simply begs you to keep reading. He doesn't try to over describe things and usually has a newspaper writer's succinctness in summing up a scene. Kesselheim is of the Sig Olson school of writing; a strong narrative, artfully dressed.

The story begins on the upper reaches of a flooded Smoky River in the foothills of the Alberta Rockies. The narrative begins moving as quickly as the river. There is gripping drama in Kesselheim's description of their running rapids down the water-choked channels of the Smoky. He conveys well the feeling of the teamwork that is necessary and obvious from their years of wilderness travel together.

These epic journeys of Kesselheim's are always neatly divided into two distinct segments - half through civilized areas and half through complete wilderness. They meet an interesting array of people while paddling down to Lake Athabasca, including one man who was swimming several hundred miles of the river to raise money for a charity. They experienced benevolence and indifference along with a few million gallons of muddy, fastmoving water.

They once again were winter caretakers in a fishing lodge near Stony Rapids where they'd wintered

before. This time their relationship with the locals was different on many levels. Near the end of their stay the newly elected native chief told them to get out of town at once after he identified Kesselheim as the author of *Water and Sky*. He didn't like the frank comments about the town that appeared in that book. They also had to deal with Marypat's pregnancy which required visits to the northern health system.

If bad weather makes for good stories, then Kesselheim is lucky as an author and less so as a tripper. They were certainly dogged by big winds for much of their trip including a rough paddle down Lake Athabasca. They had more bad weather than I have ever encountered (knock wood) although, like most canoeists, we block out all the bad stuff or we'd probably never go back.

Their big decision was to continue with the journey after finding out they were going to have a child after years of trying. Kesselheim continues his very readable story throughout the second half of their trip which takes them down the Ferguson River, a tributary of the Kazan, which they then follow to Baker Lake. By this point Marypat is seven months pregnant and reaching the limit of usefulness on a two person trip. You really admire her spirit and pluck in carrying on what must have been an exhausting regimen.

The book's final, and most excruciating, chapter is the natural fruition of their travels - the birth of their child. They had already decided to give their child the middle name Kazan, while paddling the river. Strangely, they never mention their first born's name in the book, but Che readers know it is Eli Kazan Kesselheim.

That trip must have done the trick. This spring Marypat will give birth to their third child and the great irony is that those northern trips will be on hold for a while. That's too bad. *Going Inside* was a treat to read and one of those rare books I look forward to reading again.

By the way, we were given a manuscript copy of the book to review since it's not out until May. So we haven't had a look at their cover or the maps and 16 pages of colour photos that will appear in the final printed version.

-Michael Peake.

A Snow Walker's Companion

By Garrett and Alexandra Conover.
Ragged Mountain Press,
Camden, ME. \$19.95 (US) 238 pp.

This is the season for Che-Mun readers to become writers. Our second review this month is on this definitive book from a wonderful pair of Maine Guides.

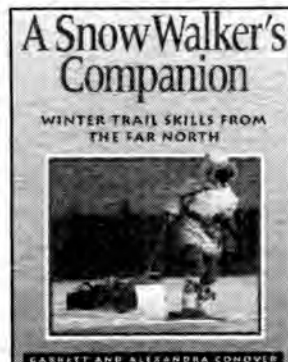
Garrett and Alexandra are four season travellers and this book is a great mate to *Beyond the Paddle*, the canoeing counterpart to this book written by Garrett in 1991.

The Conovers have been winter and summer Labrador travellers for the past several years. They have learned the ways of the Innu or Montagnais natives of the area and combined that with the tradition of northern trappers.

One of the great treats of this book - and a timely one for this Outfit of *Che-Mun* - is that the foreword is by Elliott Merrick, whose book, *True North*, is featured on Page 6. Merrick is a hero to the

Conovers and they have corresponded for years.

This reviewer has always felt that epic tales of deprivation were great to read about but awful to experience. The satisfying objective for our canoe group is to make ourselves comfortable in unpleasant surroundings.



Travelling in comfort is the message the Conovers are trying to get across. By the use of a traditional toboggan, snowshoes, a small woodstove and a large Egyptian cotton tent one can travel through the enchanting northern boreal forest in winter. Toboggans allow much heavier loads to be taken and the stoves mean living comfortably during those long cold evenings.

A Snow Walker's Companion tells you how to source or build the necessary items and how to use them. A lot of their materials are low-tech i.e. wool and cotton. They have no kind words for "miracle" fibres, and point out these old fabrics have worked for hundreds of years!

The book's clean look is accented with numerous fine photographs which illustrate the text well.

The Conovers are nothing if not thorough. They cover what to take, how to use it and how to cope with the rigours of winter travel. As Elliott Merrick says in his foreword - and who are we to argue, "The Conovers give us not only the physical details of winter travel and survival, but the spiritual accompaniment that is part of the wilderness experience."

As usual, Elliott Merrick is right on the money. And with the Conovers, you might say it's snow surprise!

-Michael Peake.

Wabikimi showdown ahead

By John Ankenman
Wildlands League

For more than two years the Wabikimi Park Boundary Committee, representing a diverse range of interests and values, has worked to reach a consensus regarding the proposed expansion of Wabikimi Provincial Park, located 150 miles north of Thunder Bay. The resolution of this issue is important to logging and mining companies, hunting and fishing camp operators, First Nations and other local residents as well as wilderness recreationists and advocates. It will also have a direct impact on the plants and animals that live in this part of the boreal forest. Of particular importance is the fate of the woodland caribou.

In 1880, woodland caribou were found as far south as Algonquin Park. With increased human activity in the boreal forests, the caribou were relentlessly pushed further and further north. Now the forests surrounding Wabikimi, at the southern boundary of the caribou's present range, are threatened.

The woodland caribou in this area depend on large tracts of mature boreal forest for suitable wintering and calving grounds; dense bush for protection from predators; and the lichens and other plants on which they feed. Much of the forest surrounding the park could be cleared in the future despite studies that have proven woodland caribou do not readily re-establish themselves in the clearcut areas. It is questionable whether caribou will ever move back onto the land they previously occupied.

Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is currently considering a risky experiment: increasing the size of clearcuts within caribou territory. By changing from a patchwork pattern of smaller clearcuts to fewer but larger clearcuts, they will temporarily leave larger areas uncut which they hope will support caribou. In one respect this plan might at first appear to make sense; woodland caribou need large tracts of even-

ly aged, mature boreal forest to survive. The risks involved in this experiment, however, are high.

Gerry Racey, the MNR ecologist who proposed this plan, is gambling on the ministry's ability to predict the quantity and quality of the land that should be left uncut to provide for the caribou's many needs. He is also gambling that the



The scenic Ogoki River flows through Wabikimi Provincial Park.

caribou will be able to re-establish themselves on previously clearcut land.

Mr. Racey has been quoted in *The Globe and Mail* as having "absolute confidence" in this theory, despite what zoologist William Pruitt calls the "mind-boggling complexity of caribou behaviour." Ecology is not a predictive science in the same sense as other sciences. Also, Mr. Racey is assuming that the clearcut areas will regenerate back to suitable caribou habitat. This assumption is based on the theory that regeneration after clearcutting mimics regeneration after fire. But clearcutting and forests fires differ significantly. Among other things, fire encourages habitat diversity; provides shelter for seedlings by leaving standing burnt trees; returns nutrients to the soil and in the boreal forest, facilitates the regeneration of jack pine and black spruce. None of these important factors in the

regeneration process are accomplished by clear-cutting.

Another problem for the caribou are the roads that will be built to bring in equipment to the logging areas and to transport the wood out. Studies have shown that where roads have been built, caribou (and other animals) become vulnerable to vehicular accidents, legal and illegal hunting and stress caused by the increased recreational use of ATVs.

Considering the risks involved in the MNR's management plan the largest possible park expansion is essential so that caribou will still survive in the park even if the plan fails. A total park area of one million hectares (2.5 million acres) is the size most often cited as being necessary.

Although crucial, size is not the only factor to be considered. It is also essential that land identified as critical caribou habitat be included in an enlarged park.

Because the Wabikimi Park Boundary Committee was unable to reach as consensus, it is now up to the Minister of Natural Resources, Howard Hampton, to make recommendations to the committee. If Wabikimi Provincial Park is not

extended to at least one million hectares, and if the critical caribou habitat that has been identified is not included, then our opportunity to ensure the long term survival of the local caribou will likely be lost. This must not be allowed to happen.

If you are concerned about Wabikimi, which is a great canoeing area, please consider sending a letter to Bob Rae, Premier of Ontario and Howard Hampton, Minister of Natural Resources at Queen's Park, Toronto ON, M7A 1W3. These letters are effective and counted. If you are interested in wilderness protection issues in Ontario please consider joining the Wildlands League, 401 Richmond St W, Suite 380, Toronto, ON, M5V 3A8, 416/971-WILD. If you have a particular interest in northern Ontario or the campaign to save the woodland caribou, please contact Environment North, 704 Holly Cr., Thunder Bay, ON, P7E 2T2, (807) 475-5267.

News & Notes

BACK TO BASICS. . . The Maine Canoe Symposium is re-born. After its birth in 1986, the MCS, back by the powerful L.L. Bean store in Freeport, Maine, changed its moniker in 1989 to the North American Canoe Symposium. The name change reflected a greater breadth of topics and speakers and the continued growth in the number of people attending.

Che-Mun was there through the Hide-Away Canoe Club members who showed our slides every year and gave talks on planning and running northern Canadian wilderness canoe trips. Things changed a lot last year when Bean's decided to alter the event by splitting it into two groups of Friday/Saturday and Sunday/Monday. This was a break from the traditional Friday night to Sunday afternoon slot that worked so well in the past. Well, naturally it was a disaster. People don't like to split their weekends up like that. So L.L. Bean pulled the plug.

One symposium regular, Jerry Kocher, decided the idea was too good to die and it's back to the original name with a simpler design, lower cost, most of the same pro staff returning (Conovers, Harry Rock, the Peakes) and best of all still at the wonderful Camp Winona in Bridgton, Maine. The date is June 9-11. Even ol' L.L. Bean is helping out with logistics and such. Bookings are now being accepted for the 10th annual event. The price is \$45US per person (that's a minimum charge, give more if you can). For info contact: *The MSC at R.R. #1, Box 868, Bridgton, ME 04009. Phone 207-647-3721 and fax 207-647-2750.*

WCA's GREAT TENTH. . . The 10th annual gathering of the Wilderness Canoe Association's Canoeing and Wilderness Symposium took place to a perennial packed house in Toronto on Jan 27-28. This anniversary edition was sort of a look back on some of the great speakers featured over the past decade. Once again, the most riveting, was George Grinnell, who told the tale of the ill-fated Moffatt expedition in 1955 - from a first-hand perspective. Grinnell's humorous yet eerie talk was spellbinding. Other notable speakers included; Ian MacLaren on George Back; Gwyneth Hoyle on the unsung travellers from 1874-1974 and the remarkable Victoria Jason on a grandmother's solo kayak travels throughout the Northwest Passage.

Hans Schneller from Bavaria showed an absolutely stunning series of very close-up pictures with a polar bear taken from his kayak. The beautiful Arctic light and the proximity combined with the bear's antics were quite unforgettable. The speaker who travelled furthest was Akitoshi Nishimura from Japan who told about his incredibly long solo trips across the breadth of the NWT.

We also enjoyed other talks by Joan McGuffin, Robert Perkins, Verlen Kruger, Max Buxton, Rudy Weibe and the Lustes. The event was once again a huge success and the despite continued rumours of its demise - started by organizing genius George Luste - it appears the WCA Symposium will continue on for another year at least. It's hard to say no to an event that attracted 700+ canoeists from around the world in the dead of a Canadian winter and did it all on budget. Maybe George Luste should run for office.

POOLE-ING RESOURCES . . . A note from the redoubtable Norm Kagan, Director of the Albert Faille Wilderness League in Minnesota. We quote verbatim:

"**POOLE FIELD MEMORIAL:** Help resurrect a most prominent Mackenzie Mountains-Nahanni River explorer and entrepreneur. Born in 1880 in Manitoba, Poole Field travelled to the Yukon with the Royal North West Mounted Police in 1897, later freetraded from Ross River to Fort Simpson to Aklavik and Dawson City. Poole knew everyone and spoke all languages. He's buried in an unmarked Vancouver grave.

Our Back Pages

The following back issues of Che-Mun are available at four dollars each including postage. Those denoted by an asterisk are photocopies of the original issue.

Outfit 38 - Voyageurs trip to Old Fort William
Outfit 39 - Caribou drown in Quebec, Cross-Canada canoeing*
Outfit 40 - Eric Morse and The Voyageurs*
Outfit 41 - Grand Canal Project - Thlewiaza River solo
Outfit 42 - The Morse River Expedition Part One
Outfit 43 - The Morse River Expedition Part Two
Outfit 44 - Bill Mason & the Dog R., Athabasca letter
Outfit 45 - Pipe River by Eric Morse, River flow chart
Outfit 46 - Hudson Bay to Ungava, Stew Coffin report
Outfit 47 - Heritage Rivers, Trans Canada Expedition
Outfit 48 - Freshwater Saga - Morse R. memoirs, slide fest
Outfit 49 - Queen Charlottes kayaking, HBC sell-off
Outfit 50 - Royal couple canoe the Hanbury/Thelon*
Outfit 51 - Traditional canoeing through Quetico Park
Outfit 52 - Lands Forlorn review, Atomic Arctic proposal
Outfit 53 - Chubb Crater in Ungava, Hubbard & Wallace
Outfit 54 - Povungnituk 88 - Ungava, Sleeping Island rev.
Outfit 55 - Memories of Bill Mason, Twin Otter gone
Outfit 56 - Canoeing stamps, Hanbury review, WCA slidefest
Outfit 57 - North American Canoe Symposium, book reviews
Outfit 58 - Churchill River trip, The Lonely Land rev.

Outfit 59 - Tyrrell brothers, Water & Sky, Alberta Pulp wars
Outfit 60 - Via Rail, Missinaibi River, James Bay, HBC exit
Outfit 61 - Inside LG2, Aki on the Barrens, Grey Owl
Outfit 62 - Ungava via Kogaluk & Payne rivers, Flaherty's book
Outfit 63 - Canoeing in the 1930s, Hydro-Quebec chairman
Outfit 64 - Rupert R. 1914, Keewaydin Guide, Fur Trade Canoe Routes
Outfit 65 - Churchill River hydro, Robert Perkins, James Bay
Outfit 66 - Lands Forlorn, HACC in Japan, Needle to the North
Outfit 67 - NWT division, Canoe Museum, James Bay
Outfit 68 - Charles Camsell, Barrens Wedding, Book reviews
Outfit 69 - Sig Olson Remembered, Historic riverflows
Outfit 70 - Great Bear to Coppermine, Ungava photos
Outfit 71 - Coppermine planning, Land of Feast & Famine
Outfit 72 - Eric Morse River List, Ungava Journey, J.B. Tyrrell
Outfit 73 - Petawawa River, David Thompson map, NWT regs
Outfit 74 - Pukaskwa River, Helen Falls cairn, Quetico trip
Outfit 75 - Tyrrell pictures, Hearne's route, Heritage Rivers
Outfit 76 - HBC money, MacDougall Pass, Sig Olson, Tyrrell
Outfit 77 - River stamps, Exploration of N. Canada, Book reviews
Outfit 78 - Across the Arctic Mts, LaVase Portage, Food drying
Outfit 79 - Book reviews, Thompson journal, Great Whale stopped

Help return his remains to Dawson for interment alongside his wife as part of the 1995 RNWMP-Yukon Centennial. Write to Inspector R. M. Juby, RCMP 'M' Division, 4100 4th Ave, Whitehorse, YT. Y1A 1H5."

LA VASE UPDATE . . .The efforts to save the historic La Vase Portages near North Bay, Ontario received a big boost recently when the Ontario Heritage Foundation granted \$45,000 to help purchase 96 acres of historic land.

That leaves less than \$25,000 to be raised through public appeal. This historic and vital link along the transcontinental voyageur canoe route came up for sale last summer causing a flurry of activity by heritage and canoe history buffs in the area. Incidentally, the La Vase Portages are the only section of the original cross-country voyageur route where canoeists are forced to detour to avoid trespassing on private land. Many end up on the city streets of North Bay as a result.

Time is of the essence as a housing development planned for the area was put on hold for two years. There are three portages along the 6.5 mile route between Trout Lake and Lake Nipissing. Of that distance, all but 2.2 miles are canoeable. You can still make donations to the cause. Send them to: *North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority, R. R. #5 Site 12, Comp. 5, 233 Birche Rd., North Bay, ON P1B 8Z4.* Make cheques payable to La Vase Project/ CA.

A NEW-NAVIK MINE . . .Plans are now underway to proceed with the development of a nickel mine at the very headwaters of the Povungnituk River in far northern Quebec. The Raglan Lake mine, operated by Falconbridge, will be developed in co-operation with the Makavik Corporation - the Inuit-owned corporation and business arm of the natives in Nunavik or Ungava. It is scheduled to open in 1998.

The environmental impacts of this mine appear to be pretty low. Very little processing will take place on site, primarily extraction. The ore concentrate will be trucked to be shipped in a port in Deception Bay, a long finger of water protruding into the very top of Quebec from Hudson Strait. The existing 60 mile road from there at an old mine, called Katinniq, to Raglan will be upgraded. They estimate they will be able to ship eight months of the year from the sea port.

The ore will be partially processed in Sudbury, Ontario and final smelting will be done in Norway. The area is rated as one of the best undeveloped nickel deposits in the world. The life of the mine is estimated at 18 years but it is expected that future discoveries will extend this time period. Falconbridge expects to spend almost \$500 million developing the project and expects to produce 20,000 tonnes of nickel per year and create 350 full time and 4000 indirect jobs.

The Inuit of Nunavik are doing their part to ensure that native jobs on the site will be more than the usual token positions offered by firms like Hydro-Quebec. The mine will pay into an Inuit trust fund - \$14 million over 18 years to ensure positive economic spinoffs. This plus other benefits bring the total estimated value to the Inuit to \$61 million. Nunavik includes some 7200 Inuit who live in 15 villages, all along the coast of Ungava Bay, Hudson Bay and Hudson Strait.

Anatomy of a Che-Mun mailing label

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

Spring Packet - continued from Page 2

It was very nice to get a note from Sara Seager, who spoke about her trip in the land of the Little Sticks at the recent WCA canoe symposium in Toronto last January. Sara is a student at Harvard University working on her PhD in astrophysics.

"I noticed when you mentioned George Luste's trip two issues ago, you wrote about the especially windy season in the Barren Lands. I can attest to that, having spent two months there this past summer. For example, the usual pleasure cruise of the Kazan River became a struggle downstream and most afternoons we were windbound, since even with the current progress was small.

"For the record, you should also know about the hot and dry summer and the multitude of forest fires south of that region. Part of my trip was in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Every single morning we saw near or distant columns of smoke; by every single afternoon the sky was "clouded over" with forest fire smoke. Three or four times we were 'firebound', waiting out channels or bays that were too thick with smoke to safely pass through.

"The 'old north trail' that had not been burnt three years ago by the fire at Kasmere Lake mentioned in a past issue of *Nastawgan*, {*Ed. Note - The Wilderness Canoe Association Journal*} was burning before our very eyes. We saw a few fires burning behind us on the shore and in one case on the headwaters of the Little Partridge River. We were trapped by a forest fire burning down the river. Even when we were 120 miles from the treeline, any south wind would blow the forest fire haze our way.

"In late August, when we returned to the tree line, there were both forest fires burning near us and much fresh burn. The burnt, and some patches, were still smoldering though there had been a cold and steady rain for three days. When we flew out from Kasba Lake Lodge to Points North, we saw many fresh scars on the land and many fires still smoldering. Probably you know that the fires burn mostly in isolated patches, but we saw some more extensive cases.

"Incidentally, it is hard to reconcile the hundreds of square miles of quick return of the nutrients to the soil with a tour-traveller's view of aesthetics and a travelling nightmare for at least a decade to come."



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

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

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

Upcoming Che-Mun

The Arctic Land Expedition - *Lost Route in Search of the Polar Sea* - is the official title of the 1995 Hide-Away Canoe Club expedition. It will be fully outlined in Outfit 81.

This 900-mile, 50-day journey follows a never-before-taken route proposed by a member of the 1833-35 George Back Expedition in a bid to rescue the then-missing Franklin expedition.

CHE-MUN

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