



WINTER 2001

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 103



photo: Peter Church

MOONSCAPE -- Sam Woo and Rob Strassi head downhill as Rosi Kerr stands by the pool and Jim "Doc" Abel walks amongst the rocks on Abel's 62nd birthday and a day away from their first watershed, Walker Lake, northwest of Hudson Bay. The epic 70 day, 1200 mile trip passed through the most remote area of the mainland North America. The trip was another in a series of long, gruelling trips headed by Jim Abel who is accompanied every year by much younger paddlers that he introduces to the joys - and pains - of northern wilderness canoeing. See Page 6.

**A Canoe Journey to Paradise –
through Hell**
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book & video reviews** Page 4

Winter Packet



Dear Friends:

Recently, I have had the honour of working with a committee to establish a Pierre Elliott Trudeau National Rivers Day!

On the federal level, there is a committee considering ways to commemorate Pierre Trudeau to honour his life, beliefs, passions and vision for this country. I am writing to you to request your support for the concept of a Pierre Elliott Trudeau National Rivers Day.

Support for a National Rivers Day in honour of Mr. Trudeau is widespread. Letters have come from David Suzuki, Becky Mason, Hap Wilson, Eco Trust, Canadian River Management Society, Kirk Wipper, Living By Water, Iona Campagnolo (Fraser Basin Council), MaxFinkelstein, Canadian Recreation Canoe Association, Herb Auerbach, James Raffan (Arctic Institute), Soil and Water Conservation Society, George Luste (Wilderness Canoe Association), and Sheila Copps ... to name just a few. Your voice, added to theirs, would be of great assistance in showing the breadth and depth of support for such an event.

The Pierre Elliott Trudeau National Rivers Day celebration could include events such as heritage or cultural festivals, environment cleanups, historical re-enactments, public awareness campaigns, municipal council decrees, educational workshops or seminars, canoeing and kayaking events, river art photography or contests and music festivals.

We all live near a watershed. We all would benefit from the preservation and protection of our rivers systems, which are unequalled anywhere on this planet. Rivers flow through our geography, communities, culture,

economy, history; indeed they flow through our veins.

In light of Mr. Trudeau's deep love for our wilderness and his vision for our country, a national rivers day would be a lasting legacy as well as a fine, symbolic tribute to his life, hopes and dreams. I urge you to send your letter of support for a Pierre Elliott Trudeau National Rivers Day, to the contacts listed below.

Sincerely,
Dot Bonnenfant

Please send your letters to:
Chair, Trudeau Committee
Mr. Ted Johnson
Vice President, Secretary and General Council
The Power Corporation
751 Square Victoria
Montreal, Quebec H2Y 2J3

Please help us track letters of support, send a copy to: The Committee to Establish a National Rivers Day in Honour of Mr. Trudeau
c/o Dr. David Goranson
Rivers Canada
849 164th Street
White Rock, British Columbia
V4A 4Y4

The following is a copy of the resolution passed in the Michipicooten Township Council in Wawa regarding the University River and Denison Falls.

Council resolution on Bill Mason
•Whereas; the late Bill Mason has made significant contributions to the art and

science of paddling in Canada, and

•Whereas; the Dog River, Denison Falls and the Lake Superior coastline were among his favourite places to paddle paint and film, and

•Whereas; Ontario's Living Legacy, Land Use Strategy has initially identified a Park that includes the Dog River, Denison Falls and a section of Lake Superior coastline as P1511.
•Therefore let it therefore be resolved that the Reeve and Council of the Township of Michipicoten request the Ministry of Natural Resources to name the park now identified as P1511 as Bill Mason Park.

Also here's the more background on the issue-from an unidentified source - Deep Gorge?

"Ralph Mills (the Reeve of local government) met with the (MNR names deleted) to discuss geographic names. Ralph reiterated his distaste for "University River" and also said that he was aware that the proposal to rename Dennison Falls has been dropped. There was talk about the name for the new waterway park on the Dog, and Ralph indicated that although he prefers that local sites be named after local people, he will accept "Bill Mason Waterway Park" if that is how things shape up.

Ralph identified three Wawa people who are good candidates for recognition, and will send information on them. It was pointed out that there are still new Parks and other sites to be named, and that we might be able to commemorate these local three by naming other sites after them (eg there are several new Living Legacy Parks in the area and the



OUTFIT 103: A 70-day journey across the Barrenlands will create many lasting memories and special photo moments for the paddlers. The chance to canoe downhill or go "caboganing" is a uniquely northern portaging method. Another special Arctic moment is to be part of a beautiful rainbow near Walker Lake enroute to Baker Lake.



A battle is shaping up over the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a vast plain of pristine tundra along Alaska's north coast, rich in polar bears, birds, caribou - and crude oil.

While environmentalists have dubbed the region "the Arctic Serengeti" for its ecological diversity, geologists say the permafrost is underlain with 12 billion barrels of recoverable oil, plus trillions of cubic feet of natural gas - making it one of the largest fossil fuel reserves on the continent.

Under U.S. law, the 20 million-acre refuge is protected from oil exploration and development. But over the last decade, Alaskan Inuit have tirelessly lobbied the president and Congress to change the law.

During his eight-year term in office, U.S. President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, stood steadfastly with the environmentalists and opposed the Inuit appeals.

But new President George Bush, a former oil-company executive, says drilling in the refuge will be part of his strategy to reduce America's dependence on foreign-oil imports.

To the 8,000 Inuit of the North Slope - some of whom live in the

Canoesworthy

refuge - oil means money.

The area's Inuit birthright organization, the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, owns the subsurface drilling rights in the refuge, which

it could sell to the likes of Exxon and British Petroleum. The group believes a carefully regulated oil exploration and development is possible.

Since its founding in the early 1970s the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation has become the wealthiest company based in Alaska, largely off of oil-field leasing and contracting.

The plan faces vehement opposition from the Gwich'in Indians of the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and interior Alaska - and opposition, as well, from Ottawa.

The Gwich'in, who include residents of Inuvik, Ft. McPherson and Tsiigehtchic in the Mackenzie River Delta, fear oil drilling could imperil one of their key sources of country food: the Porcupine caribou herd. The 200,000 caribou of the Porcupine herd roam across the Alaska-Canada border and constitute one of the largest remaining caribou populations in the world. In the summer, they calve in the narrow coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - right where the

➔ Continued on Page 11

From the Editor

Last year I delved into the book *Kon Tiki*, a book everyone's heard of but relatively few today have read. It is an incredible water wilderness adventure of a group of men who crossed the Pacific Ocean on a primitive raft in the 1940s. It's a must read for all wilderness sojourners such as ourselves.

Fifty years after Heyerdahl's epic voyage the film *Cast Away* has been front and centre in the popular culture of today. It was wonderful to see and truly "adult" movie. Mature in theme, thoughtful not exploitative. And very insightful about being locked into the wheels of society's time as the Tom Hanks' character was and suddenly being thrown completely out of the time machine and stranded on a deserted

island.

Hanks' character Chuck Noland (get it?) is returned to the modern world with great subtlety and poignancy. In one scene, he picks up a lighter and flicks it on and off, amazed - for the first time in his life - at the ease of making fire. We had seen what a powerful and difficult task that was in his primitive island world. And what an important one. We have so much and take so much for granted.

It re-enforced in my mind one of the reasons we take canoe trips. I have told the story of being briefly amazed, as Chuck was, when I felt hot water come out of a tap in Coppermine after being a month on the river and knowing how much effort to make water hot - even with a lighter. Many of us need a reminder of that perspective and a bracing wilderness trip gives up that in spades.

Speaking of wilderness trips we are happy to have a wonderful story by Peter Church on one of Jim Abel's Arctic canoe-flogging trips. I have heard about Jim and his annual 70-day journeys across the Barrens. He's the first one out and the last in and it's great to get an in-depth look to see what we were missing. (Whew!)

I am currently knee-deep in sponsor letters and research for the next Oriver.Online HACC trip. We are heading to Labrador this summer and I will tell more about it next issue—once we get our sponsors nailed down. Technology has certainly added to the task of trip prep. My incredible Epson 1270 printer can produce superb colour photos and printouts to send to prospective sponsors. E-mail greatly speeds up communication and I can burn CDs containing loads of info and photos.

But I'm still

Michael Peake.

Classic Solo Canoeing

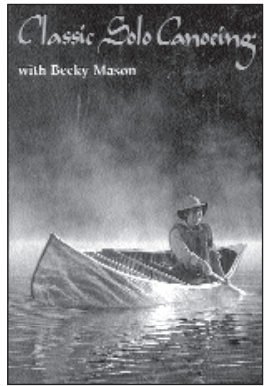
By Becky Mason

40 min. video \$39.96 Cdn

ISBN: 0-9688146-0-3

All reviews by Michael Peake

Becky Mason has made a name in her own right doing what she loves best, canoeing and painting. She might now want to also



considering film-making.

Being the daughter of an icon must have both its good and bad aspects. The last few years have seen Becky emerge from the her place in the wings - as the daughter of Bill Mason - to

centrestage in the world of canoeing. Since 1987, Becky has given private canoeing lessons, offering her peerless paddling skills to those willing to learn. But lately her voice and profile have been raised. She has become an advocate for environmental and other issues. She now gives slide talks on canoeing as well as demonstrations. And she has just released her first video called Classic Solo Canoeing. Like her father, Becky sweats the details. It shows. Any good film project, whatever the length, is a huge and complicated undertaking. The sensual qualities of image, sound, music and voice all come into play and if any single one is deficient, they all suffer. From the moment Becky and her ever-present blue hat, rolls into frame in her beautiful cedar/canvas Prospector, we know we're in for a treat. And that blue hat is firmly seated - even a dumping can't dislodge it!

While this video is by nature an instructional one, it does not lack for proper structure, flow or narrative. A variety of camera angles and beautiful lighting keep the visual interest alive thanks to videographer Paul Wing. The music by Ian Tamblyn is perfectly suited and pleasant

without being distracting. The video was produced and written by Becky with help from husband Reid MacLachlan. No director is credited but it's clear this is Becky's baby and it's her voice and image that fill the screen. Many shots are reminiscent of another Mason - watching Becky wade and pull the canoe upstream and even portage through a waterfall, were very evocative of Bill. The film's real message is how to paddle properly and Becky's hints and techniques will help you accomplish that - but not in one lesson or viewing - and students will watch this film easy to watch again and again.

I think it is one of her great strengths to use her father's association in a very passive way. She has no need to go in her own completely new direction, she adds to what is already there in an unassuming way.

While instructional, the film has a camping interlude and carries a subtle and effective environmental message. It's a most pleasant learning experience that effectively puts us all where we most want to be - our paddling.

Expedition Canoeing

By Cliff Jacobson

Globe Pequot Press, Guilford, CT

306 pp, US\$21.95

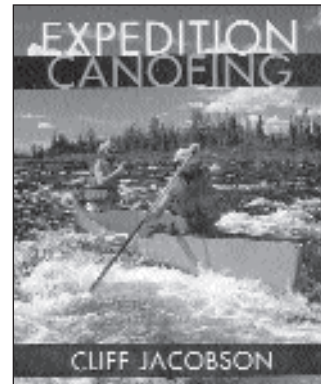
ISBN: 0-7627-0837-9

If there was any one book that ushered the Hide-Away Canoe Club into the world of paddling northern Canadian Rivers it was the precursor of this one. Its title, Canoeing Wild Rivers, was I still believe a better and more precise moniker. For paddling the big rivers is what real north expedition paddling is about. We used that book extensively in preparing for our greatest trip (so far), Journey Across the Barrenlands aka The Morse River Expedition. The new title is the work of the "marketing" folks and while not a bad one, I don't think a change was needed.

As far as canoe writers go, there's no one like Cliff Jacobson, bubbling with canoe-camping ideas and overflowing with enthusiasm. For this updated edition of his 1983 classic Cliff rewrote and added several sections to the book. He admits he never thought he would

have to update his last book that thought was complete in every detail. But continued development of new materials, techniques and technologies like GPS meant a lot of things had to be examined again.

I really like the focus of the book, which is on the big rivers, it is written with them in mind. Cliff offers literally hundreds of unique travelling



ideas; on canoe covers, cooking and ways to use what you already have. And he gives his opinion! For example on campstoves - which are absolutely vital to Barrenland

travel - he is not too happy with the Coleman Peak-1 and loves the old Optimus 111B. We feel just the opposite, that the 111B is a fuel hog and our Coleman's have performed perfectly through years of other stove trials. Is Cliff wrong? Who knows? But I am really glad to hear his opinion and reasons (even if I don't agree). This book holds a lot more than Cliff's views - which is perhaps its strongest point. Cliff knows a lot of northern paddlers, including myself, and there are a lot of suggestions drawn from a variety of great paddlers inside this book. I am honoured to be included and it makes me think how far our group has come since we clung to our copy of Canoeing Wild Rivers and read all about those amazing northern destinations and paddlers.

Expedition Canoeing covers the complete outfitting of a northern canoe trip with a huge pile of camp tips plus info on bears, navigating and portaging. Little things which can become much bigger in that harsh northern environment. The chapter titled The Expert's Edge offers real-world tips and opinions from a wide variety of seasoned northern paddlers some of whom later recount memorable trips. There are also several very complete and large Appendices that list contacts and addresses from numerous publications, products and paraphernalia from across the continent. All in all a great job and a very worthy successor to Canoeing Wild Rivers - which I will still probably call it.

Quetico Provincial Park An Illustrated History

By Shirley Peruniak

Friends of Quetico Park 2001

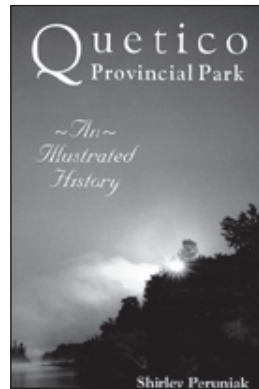
270pp \$34.95

ISBN: 1-895269-06-7

One of Quetico's very special individuals has produced an exciting new book highlighting the people of Quetico Park. Local historian and park expert Shirley Peruniak has spent countless hours interviewing and cataloguing the human history of the area and it has resulted in the publishing of Quetico Park - An Illustrated History.

Published by the Friends of Quetico Park,

Shirley's book tell the perhaps surprising story that it is people who make up so much of the story of a wilderness park. People like late park



naturalist Shan Walshe, to whom the book is dedicated, and the many other rangers, trappers and park superintendents whose stories are well pieced together by Shirley's patient and careful hand. The book is loaded with a wealth of

historic and personal photos spanning the last

century. Shirley's decades of dedicated work have produced a Quetico Park history like no other; highlighting the many unknown and hardworking people who make it a wilderness worth preserving.

Through Shirley's connections, a great many personal photos and snapshots are included in the book. These offer a truly human look at those who made Quetico part of their everyday life for decades, many of whom even lived in the Park, including the Lac La Croix First Nation.

The book also follows the many debates and turbulent times that Quetico Park has had. This includes acrimonious boundary and logging debates which continue to this day. One incredible plan, spawned in the 20's by U.S. tycoon Edward W. Backus that threatened to raise lake level in the region by 20 feet and

Churchill River update

Excerpt from an article in The Labradorian (Vol. 27 No. 47 Nov. 20, 2000) entitled, "Lower Churchill: Province considering smaller development" by Bert Pomeroy

A scaled down project for the development of Lower Churchill hydro will still mean huge benefits to the Upper Lake Melville area, according to the minister responsible for Labrador. "Maybe that's the way it should go if financing can be found," said Ernie McLean, who's also the legislative member for Lake Melville. "Goose Bay would be the ultimate staging area, if the project only involved Gull Island."

Mines and Energy Minister Paul Dicks revealed last week that the province is looking at plans to finance the project at a cost of \$3.7 billion. That's a far cry from the \$12 billion project originally proposed in March of 1998 by [former] Premier Lucien Bouchard and former Newfoundland and Labrador premier Brian Tobin.

In addition to the development of Gull Island, the original plan called for an expansion of the Upper Churchill project, by housing two new turbines in a generating station adjacent to the existing power plant, producing some 1,000 megawatts of power. (This would have been achieved by diverting two Quebec rivers into the Smallwood Reservoir.) Another component of the original proposal included the construction of a \$2.2 billion transmission line to carry 800 megawatts of power from Gull Island to the island.

The two sides had hoped to have a memorandum of understanding to move ahead with the project by the end of 1998. That deadline and others passed, and talks broke off earlier this year without a deal.

"It is, and always has been, the main objective of this government to develop the tremendous resource of the Churchill River for the benefit of the people of this province," Mr. Dicks said, in announcing the province's plan to look at other options. "That development has to be viable and

profitable."

In May of this year, Mr. Dicks added, the two sides realized that as a result of developments in US markets it would be difficult to finalize the partnership arrangements, as outlined in March of 1998. "For this reason, we both agreed to pause negotiations over the summer. Since that time, we talked to other potential partners and started to seriously focus on a 100 per cent Newfoundland and Labrador owned project."

Mr. Dicks went on to explain that, at the end of August, it became clear environmental and aboriginal issues in Quebec would lessen the chances of a diversion of the Romaine River taking place. As a result, he said, the province decided to go the project alone - with Hydro Quebec being a major purchaser.

While no deal has been reached between this province and Quebec to push ahead with the project, there have been some benefits. In March of 1998, Quebec waived a three-year-recall notice of 130 megawatts of power from the Upper Churchill, a move, according to then-premier Tobin, that would see the province reap some \$23 million a year. The power was sold back to Quebec at current market prices.

The province's Opposition, however, has been refuting the government's figures, and has called for full disclosure of all deals signed with Quebec. "The fact is, there were never any serious negotiations with Quebec for joint development of the Lower Churchill," said Opposition Leader Ed Byrne. "Quebec promoted the prospect of a Lower Churchill deal to sweet talk a naïve Brian Tobin and his government into a deal that Quebec wanted, to strengthen its hold on cheap power from the Upper Churchill.

The province however is standing by its claim that the 1998 contracts will result in huge dividends. Meanwhile, Mr. McLean said he's confident a development will take place on the Lower Churchill. "\$3 billion is a huge amount of money, and we may have to partner with other parties, other than Quebec, to see the Gull Island project developed," he said. "If that's an option, then I'd be all for it.

Repluse Bay to Baker Lake—the hard way

Ready & willing – with Abel



BAY SLIDE -- Members of the Repulse Bay to Baker Lake trip on Hudson Bay at the start of their 70-day journey in summer 2000. The canoes are being taken by an Inuit komatik to an river flowing into The Bay they would ascend to get eventually to the Quoich River which flows to Chesterfield Inlet.

of a perfect cadence, powerful, and effortless. There was no place else in the world. Perfect. Midnight, and just shy of darkness, the moon still showed but had diminished in size and luster. We pulled onto a dark shore, following one another's voices because we could not see. We set camp and looked up: the Aurora Borealis shifted across the sky like a fast green fog. So foreign are the northern lights to the common imagination that they defy description. They left me with nothing to say except inadequate banalities like "awesome."

The next day on Baker Lake we came across the first person we had seen in 68 days, Charlie, an Inuk taking some folks from South Carolina out on a caribou hunt. Given the ease with which we had found we could approach caribou, making a kill could not be a very difficult task. Charlie asked if we needed anything. We looked at each other and asked him if he had any pulled pork sandwiches. We needed nothing other than what we had. This was a big realization for me. This was the first moment at which I realized exactly what was about to come to an end.

For so long I had thought with relish of our arrival at Baker Lake. Every day of this expedition had been the hardest of my life. I had to thaw my socks out in the morning just so I could put them on and start wading through freezing Arctic rivers. Sometimes it just hurt to walk. I

was hungry all the time, thought constantly of food, and lost over 30 pounds. I missed my friends and family. My body ached. I hadn't taken a true bath in nearly 70 days, the closest thing being a jump in the cold river, a soap down, and quick rinse. But now that the end was in sight, I did not want it to end. The lifestyle I had had to live over the past months had been so consuming that I had lost sight of it. And when it was finally brought home to me that I would be leaving it to go back to my normal life, I did not want it to end.

I had wondered the entire time about what compelled Doc to return to the Arctic every year to heap pain and discomfort upon himself for several months. Until this moment, I could not answer that question. But now, as we approached the final days of our expedition, I knew why, at least in my own small way. We had carried ourselves and everything we needed for two and a half months over 1200+ miles. We had been completely self-sufficient. We had been completely anonymous. We had lived deliberately. We had worked hard everyday for 70 straight with little rest to speak of. We had come together and overcome significant obstacles, faced potentially life-endangering situations, and did battle against personal fears and limitations. For a brief period we were complete and inseparable and living fully, truly living.

Expedition

"I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over."

—Robert Frost, Birches

"What sense is there in pain at all—however we contrive it for ourselves as
we cast about for ways to bind up the wound between us and God?"

—Anne Carson, Plainwater

Story and Photos by PETER CHURCH

Here I am, very far from anywhere. I really don't even know where here is. But I am here. And I'm repeating, "Welcome to Hell," like a monk's mantra. "This must be where they send you when you're bad." I think. Images of places I'd rather be edge out almost every thought except those devoted to my numb feet.

I am not near any of the places for which my mind pines. Instead I am waist-deep in swift, cold water, pushing a canoe packed with 700-pounds of gear, supplies and food. Upstream, is my partner John, at the bow end, pulling, as we watch Volkswagen-size chunks of ice ride downstream on the current we are fighting. The rocks are sharp and slick: it's one step forward, two back. And with each step the choice is between trying to walk on the top of the rocks and staying more dry but being more unstable and at risk of slipping, or wading in the hollow spaces between the rocks that are more stable but get you more wet and cold. Having spent the 24 previous days the same way, this passes for routine.

I had, ostensibly, joined a canoe expedition. It resembled more of a sick hiking trip. In fact, it was beginning to look more and more like an exercise in Sisyphean joy, that peculiar kind of repetition that springs out of absurdity. Despite being a canoe expedition, and despite being on it for 24 days, we hadn't yet done any down-stream paddling. That wouldn't happen for another 12 days. And even then, things being the way they were we would have to portage around the first downstream trickle on account of the low water. What made this day exceptional was the air temperature, which was hovering in the upper 30s F, and the wind, which was steady at 30 miles an hour and gusting up to 40. This put the temperature somewhere in the neighborhood of 15 degrees for exposed skin. To keep my mind off my numb feet I sang The Star Spangled Banner over and over and over. Thankfully, we decided to stop scrambling upstream and warm ourselves.

Though we were not in a place where portaging was necessary, we chose to because it was the most effective way of getting warmed up. We had had at least one portage everyday of the expedition so far, and

by the end, some 46 days hence, portages would out-number our total days in the wilderness. Because each canoe had seven packs, in order to make one mile of progress we had to walk five to seven miles, and this while humping packs approaching 100 pounds. We would often double-pack in order to make fewer trips. The terrain alternated between unstable and very uneven rocks and thick, bog-like muck. I never decided which of these I hated more.

This particular day was too cold and windy for the legion of mosquitoes and blackflies to bother us. We completed our portage, ate lunch, and began discussing our next move. I was in no mood to continue, but I could not suggest that we stop for the day. We were 200 some miles from Repulse Bay and we had, quite literally, a thousand more to cover before getting to Baker Lake, our destination. We were already over a week and a couple of hundred miles behind schedule. I

didn't offer up a word. But in the end we didn't continue that day and set up camp instead. The horizontal snow was the deciding factor. Thus began our first day of rest in 24 days.

This journey began in late June in Repulse Bay, a place those from Arctic towns a few lines of latitude further south call "the moon" on account of the endless horizon and sparse flora. The region is also appropriately called "The Barrenlands." Our route would traverse the Keewatin District of

the newly formed Nunavut Province. Keewatin, I would later find out, is the wind god of the Inuit. Appropriately named too, given that we had a tail wind only twice in 70 days.

We were eight; each arriving by different but converging roads. At 23, Evan Perkins, our leader, an exceptional one I would add, was the youngest of the group. Having been on five previous expeditions, as something of an apprentice under Doc Abel, Evan's wisdom and his skill as a paddler and a leader far exceeded his age. This was his first time to be shouldered with the weight of the role of leader. It did not take me long to see that he was not only qualified, but that he had a gift and a natural knack for inspiring confidence among those who would rely on his decisions.

On the other end of the age spectrum, and rounding out the leadership team, was Jim "Doc" Abel, a pediatrician and the organizer of the trip and leader of twenty-one previous expeditions. He had his 62nd birthday during the expedition. The only year in the past 21 that he has not celebrated his birthday in the Barrenlands, he celebrated it by canoeing in Alaska. He is, quite simply, the most driven, if compulsive, man I have ever met. Sam Woo, a 47-year-old chemist who had also been on five previous expeditions with Doc, comes from San Francisco and



Nate McDonald (stern) and Jim "Doc" Abel on the upper part of the Quioch River.

Expedition

spends his playtime kayaking the rivers of Northern California. Rob Strassi, a 32-year-old bread baker and sometime mountain bike competitor, comes from Amherst, Massachusetts. The rest of us, John Tye, Nate Macdonald, Rosi Kerr, and I, 24-year-old college grads and novice whitewater paddlers with a love of the outdoors and a desire to challenge ourselves. The four of us have been across the globe and have put ourselves in testing situations, but nothing any of us had ever done could have prepared us for what awaited, nothing. And I doubt even another expedition of similar or greater magnitude will ever compare to this our first leap past the veil of the guaranteed-or-your-money-back world that hides a precipice of risk.

My initial rapture upon arriving in this Arctic desert quickly gave way to a realization that the next months would be the hardest of my life. Standing on a rise in Repulse Bay, bracing myself against a biting June wind, gazing over the endless horizon of a frozen Hudson Bay, I felt a shiver run through me. I had never been so full of fear and joy at once. The next months certainly would be hard. And in that, I found, I was not disappointed. The experience, I would find, would be burned into my memory like a tattoo.

Some of the men and women from Repulse Bay loaded our gear onto their komatiks and helped us cross 34 miles of frozen water to get to the mouth of the unnamed river we would spend the next month ascending. We spent the next weeks scrambling, lining, portaging, and every way possible dragging 2800 lbs. of gear in four canoes up 1500 feet of elevation over a distance of some 300 miles. Most of our time was spent scrambling, which meant that on a daily basis we could expect to spend some six hours, give or take, waist deep in Arctic rivers. If we weren't doing that we were portaging over the uneven, unstable rocks and the bog-like muck of the tundra. If we weren't doing that, we were dragging our canoes across frozen lakes hoping to not fall through (which did happen) or get sucked in the candle ice. And finally, as a last resort, if we couldn't do any of those things, we would paddle.

On the 10th day the one significant mishap of the expedition

occurred. The day before we had portaged above a 25-ft. waterfall and stopped early for the day. The next morning was July 4th and after loading the canoes we stood in them to sing The Star Spangled Banner while heading up stream in a reversal. We sat down and had to cross a current line that looked mellow, but was deceptively powerful. John was

in the stern; I was in the bow. We crossed the current line with too great an angle to the moving water. Even before it happened, I knew what was coming. In a blink we were swimming with the fish. When my head surfaced I heard Doc barking commands as John and I and everything in the canoe were floating quickly towards the falls. We were pulled ashore with about 30 more feet of safe shoreline. But the boat and its contents went over the falls.

Doc had gotten out of his canoe and run to the falls just in time to see the capsized boat sail over the lip of the falls and into the white water at the bottom. As soon as John and I got out of the sub-zero water, our digits seized up and we found it difficult to breathe. Nate and Rosi had to help us get out of our wet clothes. Fortunately, the day was sunny and warm, relatively speaking. John and I waited and warmed up while

everybody else ran after all the gear floating down river. They got everything back, but had to go as far as where we had started the day before in order to find the canoe. Through this event, the group galvanized and became more of a cohesive team. And we learned a valuable lesson about mellow looking eddy lines.

On the Day 13, we achieved our first landmark: Qamanialuk Lakes. We had been hoping to be able to paddle the lake, but it was mostly frozen and so we did the next best thing, we hauled our canoes workhorse style across the ice. After two hours of dragging under a blazing sun we got across the ice dam and were able to paddle the edges of the lake, as the center was still well frozen. The water was glassy placid, crystal clear, and the ice, frozen to the lake floor, looked like fish scales. We continued up river through Stewart, Curtis, and Pearce Lakes, then proceeded overland to Walker Lake. On Doc's birthday, Day 33, we achieved Walker Lake, our first watershed. We celebrated the event with Sam's special sauce (Yukon



Sam Woo warms his cold feet on Evan's belly with John Tye, Rosi Kerr, Nate McDonald, and Rob Strassi looking on along another unnamed river.

Expedition

Jack spiked with grain alcohol) and the "Tumble on the Tundra," a much anticipated wrestling match between Evan and Nate. Evan and Rob had packed in four pints of Guinness for the celebration, which we had no difficulty relieving them of.

On Day 35, we finally reached the headwaters of the unnamed river we would follow to the confluence with the Hayes River. The water was going our direction, which was good. But the water level was low, which was bad. The next day, after portaging around the bony top section, we got our first day of paddling with the flow of the river. We ran about five

rapids that first day and the next day, Day 37, we didn't travel. We spent that day trying to repair our wounded vessels.

John and I had managed to rip our boat up pretty well. We applied fiberglass strips and turned the seats around making the bow the stern and vice versa. This day also marked the halfway point of our anticipated route, which meant that we made the switch from

tortillas and cheese for lunch to tortillas and peanut butter. Being halfway would have been good news if we had been on schedule. As it was, we were well behind by a couple of hundred miles and perhaps two weeks. While on this stretch of river, we saw sandhill cranes, a harem of musk oxen and several wolves (two came to check us out while we were eating lunch, maybe they wanted our peanut butter.) Later we came across a wolf-eaten musk ox carcass, an astounding crate full of air.

We continued down this unnamed river for 150 miles in all until we met up with the Hayes, which we joined and followed to the confluence with another unnamed river, about 200 miles east of the Hayes' confluence with the Back River near Chantrey Inlet. Getting to this confluence was the axis on which this journey turned. We were weeks and hundreds of miles behind schedule. We had to decide whether to continue down river at a more leisurely pace, or head up river again for 150 miles and cross overland to the headwaters of the Quoich River. We ate lunch, considered the water level at the river's mouth, thought about our goals, our ambitions, our apprehensions, discussed the matter and decided that we hadn't had enough of going up river and we wanted to do it again. We covered eight upstream miles after lunch that day, 27 miles the next day and 22 the day after that. After lunch on Day 47 we gained nearly 200 feet of elevation over eight miles. We were moving well and on Day 50 we achieved the 1000-foot elevation mark, "summitting" for the second time. We had given ourselves 10 days to get to the watershed and we needed only six to cover 700 feet over 144

miles. I had been doubtful, but I was proved wrong. This had probably been the lowest week of the journey for me, and John and the rest of the team pulled me through. But getting to that watershed was tremendously gratifying. We camped that night at the headwaters of the Quoich and for the first time, I think, I felt completely at home with my teammates, the trip, and with being thousands of miles from nowhere.



MYSTERY FALLS -- Evan Perkins (stern) and Rosi Kerr paddle below a falls on the Quoich River which was not marked on their topo maps.

But that feeling didn't last long. We spent the next five days alternately portaging and paddling across small lakes until we reached navigable water. From here it was 350 miles on the gravy train to the mouth of the Quoich where we would head 100 miles up Chesterfield Inlet and into Baker Lake, our final destination, at the opposite end of the lake from the inlet. In all we covered roughly 1200 miles, most of which we walked. Every inch of that 1200 miles was fought for. We

had cold, wet feet every day for 70 days straight. Some nights I would delusionally hang my socks out to dry. Sometimes it worked (only so that I could get them wet again first thing). But more often before I could get my feet into them, I had to thaw the rock-hard socks by putting them in my sleeping bag while I ate my granola breakfast. Putting on frozen socks, though, wasn't the worse thing. I had an infected blister for a while that made just putting my boots painful. Then I had to get out there and walk on it all day, getting it wet and aggravating the infection. In addition to always having cold, wet feet, I was always hungry. Meals, though good and always welcome, satisfied for only about half an hour, after which all I could do was think about the next meal.

I am often asked by those who know of this trip, "Did you have fun?" Fun is not a helpful category in this case. One goes on a float trip down the Colorado River for fun. Fun does not even approach what we did on this expedition. It was far more severe than that. It was the hardest thing I have ever done. It was simultaneously the most demanding and the most gratifying thing I have ever been part of, perhaps will ever will be part of. This experience may also be the most important thing I have ever done. I am also often asked why someone would want to do this.

The journey along the Quoich was two weeks of paradise: down river, covering upwards of 30 miles a day. It seemed impossible when compared to the seven mile a day average we had at the beginning of the trip. We ran rapids, scouted, ran rapids, scouted, ran rapids. One day had nearly 20 miles of continuous rapids which left us exhausted. But we

Expeditions

PARADISE *Continued from Page 9*

finished the day at the confluence of two rivers: they pooled and continued on together.

We were weathered in at St. Clair Falls, a spot that had been camped at for thousands of years, a story told by the tent rings nearby. I was so happy about finding the only flat spot on the hill. But with the rain, that also meant it was the only spot that collected water. It didn't take long before I had a puddle covering a quarter of my floor space. I had to pull rocks into my tent and weigh down one corner in order to isolate the water. And every so often I had to bail the puddle. We celebrated Rosi's birthday here and the next day made it to Chesterfield Inlet and pointed up stream towards Baker Lake against a tremendously strong dropping tide and into headwinds. We made little progress to speak of and stopped shortly after lunch to wait for the tide to come in and be in our favor. We pulled our canoes up on shore and within 10 minutes the tide had dropped so far that they were completely aground. In 10 more minutes they were some 20 feet from the water. Such was the speed with which the tide was dropping. As we waited I lay out on a rock and let the sun warm my bundled body like a balm.

We ate an early dinner and began paddling around 5pm and continued until midnight, paddling through dusk into the night. Chesterfield Inlet narrowed until we were in a canyon framed by cliffs on either side. The sun was setting and cast long shadows across the water. The half-light pounded against the cliffs to our right and the

cliffs looked like orange embers from the deep fire. Soon, darkness fell. Heading west into the setting sun the sky was a ribbon the color of a Georgia peach on the horizon against a silhouette of ragged tundra hills. Georgia peach faded to light airy blue and then darkened until directly above was a deep midnight velvet sky littered with stars. Time elapsed and Evan looked behind us, gasped. We looked. The moon, large and golden, was rising directly behind us, directly in line with the inlet and framed by cliffs. The moon was halved and perched in place on the horizon, its gold reflection dancing in the water and it looked as if there was a cobbled gold walkway leading directly from where we sat right up to it. We turned again into the sunset, moon to our backs but continued on trying to burn this sublime image onto our brains. We were silent. Darkness became more complete and the moon rose and became pale, casting a silvery film across the water.

Soon, the other canoes became only silhouettes against a river of mercury. Nothing could be heard except the regular cadence of our paddle strokes. The rest was silence. And it looked like we were floating or gliding, we moved with such fluid grace. It was all I could do to not cry I was so overcome by the beauty of it. And in this moment I lost myself: I was nothing but eyes and ears and heart and soul and a paddling partner. John and I had achieved a marriage. We paddled in silence. Stroke after stroke. We spoke through our movements. Our strokes were

OUR BACK PAGES

The following back issues of Che-Mun are available at \$5 each (which includes postage).

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 Outfit 46 Hudson Bay to Ungava, Stew Coffin report
 Outfit 47 Heritage Rivers, Trans Canada Expedition
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 Outfit 101 Back River 1962 Part II, Dog River & Bill Mason, book reviews
 Outfit 102 Pierre Tudeau remembered, R.M.Patterson book rev & Nahanni info

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proposed oil wells would be drilled.

The Labrador Inuit - the last Canadian Inuit group without a land claim agreement - are closer than ever before to seeing their long-standing agreement-in-principle approved.

On Jan. 5, Nunavik's Makivik Corporation withdrew a legal challenge that asserted overlapping rights for northern Quebec Inuit in Labrador's Torngat Mountains.

As well, the concerns of non-aboriginals who want hunting and fishing rights within the Labrador Inuit settlement area were also close to being settled.

The AIP was reached in December 1998, and has already been before cabinet on two previous occasions for approval. If and when the provincial and federal governments finally approve the land claim, it will grant the Labrador Inuit Association's 5,000 members a sizable chunk of money, land and control over marine resources.

There's \$130 million in compensation funds, provincial royalties from resource development, and another \$120 million to set up what Andersen calls "an Inuit central government."

They'll also receive surface title to 6,100 square miles of land. Another 21,900 square miles will be set aside for the Inuit settlement area. About 3,000 square miles of this area lies in the Torngat Mountains and is slated to become a co-managed national park.

The LIA was established in the early 1970s to start the land claim process, and includes Inuit as well as persons of mixed ancestry, "Kablunainuit" or descendants of European settlers who arrived in the area in the 1700s. The LIA's membership lives in seven communities, from Nain to Happy Valley-Goose Bay in central Labrador.

As Nunavik's Raglan mine starts to churn out more and more nickel officials insist operations are going "flat out," simply in order to cover costs.

The world price of nickel is high, but Raglan's production isn't being boosted to make more money for Falconbridge Ltd., the giant mining company whose subsidiary- the Société minière du Raglan - runs Raglan, which sits at the top of Quebec at the source of the Povungnituk River.

And this increased production isn't even intended to help Falconbridge make up for losses suffered due to strikes at its Sudbury, Ont. mine. Raglan is increasing its production levels by 25 per cent because the expense of operating the Raglan mine is turning out to "much higher" than initially predicted.

The company faces some expensive environmental challenges figuring out how to store the one million tonnes of junk rock leftover from the milling process every year. There are already three football-field-sized tailing hills near the Raglan mine mill at Kattiniq. They're supposed to be frozen solid in permafrost, but some tailing debris, which contains potentially toxic heavy metals, has been blown off

the surface of these mounds.

To prevent any more tailings from escaping they will be buried under six feet of rock - an expensive solution for the company.

The company is also looking at the feasibility of using an open pit at the former Putarniq asbestos mine to store the tailings in a water-filled pit 20 miles from the mine. There, tailings could be stored under water, similarly to how they're stored at the Polaris zinc mine on Little Cornwallis Island.

Nunavut's Rangers are ranging farther to protect Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. The Canadian Forces are recommending that Rangers conduct regular exercises in the High Arctic to assert Canada's ownership of the region.

This year, squads of the volunteer soldiers will travel to the Arctic Archipelago to make at least two so-called "sovereignty patrols."

In April, one team of Grise Fiord Rangers head to Alexandra Fiord on the east coast of Ellesmere Island. From there they will use snowmobiles to make forays out onto the land and sea ice.

Another patrol in June or July will be staged out of Mould Bay on Prince Patrick Island in the Northwest Territories. Participants in that exercise will be drawn either from Resolute Bay or from the community of Holman in the Northwest Territories.

The patrols will likely involve between four and eight Rangers, and spend around a week out on the land. This year's trips will follow up on a High Arctic sovereignty patrol conducted jointly by the Rangers and the RCMP on Ellesmere Island last March.

Though participants on that exercise were on the look-out for foreign hunters rumoured to be poaching polar bears in the Alexandra Fiord region, Larouche said they didn't encounter anything illegal.

According to the report, called the Arctic Capability Study 2000, the sovereignty patrols are part of a new push to insure Canada's ownership of the High Arctic remains unchallenged.

In sovereignty, as in anything, possession is nine-tenths of the law. Central to that concern is the Northwest Passage, where, the report suggests, the onset of global warming could bring a surge in shipping activity. The passage is thousands of nautical miles shorter than the standard sea-route through the Panama Canal, and could be a profitable short-cut for transport companies if the polar sea ice thins.

Canada considers the passage to be a domestic waterway, and demands that other nations secure permission before passing through it. But other countries, including the United States, say the passage is an international channel. Canadian law, including Canadian environmental regulations, should not apply in the waterway, they say.

Several hundred Nunavut residents, mostly Inuit, serve as Canadian Rangers. They are organized into 25 community-based patrols, each headed by an elected sergeant. Every year the Rangers



POLAR BARES -- Photos of swimming in cold water are usually debatable about just how cold it is..Not with this photo of three brave lads in truly ice cold water during their their 70 day Arctic trip from Repulse Bay to Baker Lake. Nate McDonald, Rob Strassi and Evan Perkins, cooling off on a balmy Arctic day. Somewhere near Walker Lake upstream from Hudson Bay.

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