

CHE-MUN

THE NEWSLETTER OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 38

CHE-MUN

AUTUMN 1984



Voyageurs arrive at Old Fort William

Here we
go again

We're
Back!

Welcome to Outfit 38 of CHE-MUN. In this first issue in our revived format we think we've got lots to keep you interested.

In 'Centrespread' there's a look back to this summer's *RENDEZVOUS* at Old Fort William in words and pictures. We report and comment on tragedy in James Bay. Nick Nickels, founder of CHE-MUN, has a message for all you faithful subscribers as well as the first of what we hope will be a regular feature - Nick Nickels' Notebook.

Also find out about some of the big trips that have been done this year. We've got some news clippings on other aspects of canoeing including a gourmet's guide to the campfire.

Also starting with this issue is a feature called *TRIP LINE* for people interested in doing a particular river or area and need some help with planning or information.

In order to keep all lines of communication open we'll print the addresses of our correspondents so you can get in touch if there's something extra you'd like to know.

We want to know what you'd like to see in this newsletter and what you've been up to, as well as any ideas, comments and suggestions about wilderness canoeing.

I hope you'll excuse this hurried and harried edition of CHE-MUN but getting the first one together is tougher than the rest. (Isn't it?)

So please enjoy the first issue of the new CHE-MUN, let's hope we both prosper.

TRIP NOTES

If you've done or are planning to do an interesting trip (or if you'd prefer) EXPEDITION, we'd like to hear about it. Any trip reports are most welcome, especially if accompanied by a couple of GOOD photos. Remember don't be shy; it's hard to bore real canoeing addicts.

LAKE SUPERIOR

MICHAEL AND GEOFFREY PEAKE of Hide-Away Canoe Club departed Old Fort William (see Centrespread) July 1 and paddled along the north shore of Lake Superior (the world's largest) to Michipicoten Harbor. The trip took 16 days including one rest day and complimented a May trip down the Pukaskwa River in Pukaskwa National Park which dominates the ruggedly beautiful east coast.

MAGPIE-NIPISSIS

STEWART COFFIN and crew went back to this very experienced trippers favorite area - Quebec. Stew has done all major Quebec routes in most 30 years of active tripping. His trip report on the Magpie, Nipissis and neighbouring streams appears in this issue of CHE-MUN. His letter discusses that eternal dilemma for wilderness canoeists; do you publicize a wilderness and by doing so destroy it, or save it by bringing attention to the need to keep it? A tough problem, which is one of the reasons we want CHE-MUN to be small but influential.

VOYAGEUR HIGHWAY

The Outdoor Education Department at Lakehead U in Thunder Bay took 36 students along the classic voyageur canoe route this summer. Leaving Lachine Rapids, they went up the Ottawa and Mattawa Rivers, across Lake Nipissing and down the French River to Lake Huron, through Sault Ste. Marie and then 'round the BIG one - Lake Superior - to Old Fort William. (see Centrespread) The Bicentennial project was a great success and our congrats to all involved in bringing our heritage alive.

Brothers ride rapids to riches

By NANCY LANTHIER

When Jack and Joe Kowalski started leading rafting trips down the surging white waters of the Ottawa River in 1975, they were mainly out for a good time. This year their company, Wilderness Tours, will gross more than \$3-million, with total assets of more than \$2-million.

Based in Beachburg, Ont., about 75 miles west of Ottawa, Wilderness Tours expects to take more than 40,000 people down a five-mile stretch of the Ottawa River that boasts the meanest rapids in Eastern Canada.

"We knew we'd be successful," said Joe, 35, "but we never realized we'd become the biggest rafting company in Canada."

The business began modestly enough. As the president of the outdoor club at university in his native Pennsylvania, Joe often led rafting, kayaking and hiking expeditions. The highlight of these tours was a drenching voyage down the Petawawa River near Pembroke, Ont.

Joe, a mathematics major, liked the area and as soon as he had completed military service, he and a partner returned to investigate the possibilities of making money on white-water trips. In 1975, his partner put up the cash to rent rafting equipment. It carried 70 people down the river that summer.

The next season, they went into business full time, expecting thousands of customers. When only 400 showed up, the partner decided he had had enough. Although broke at the time, Joe bought him out for \$25,000. He then persuaded his brother, Jack, now 33, to join the enterprise.

"We never really advertised," recalled



Wilderness Tours expects 40,000 rafters down the Ottawa River this year.

Joe. "We'd track down ski shops all over the place and ask where the best ski clubs were. Then I'd tell the people at the clubs I ran rafting trips in Ottawa. We'd go to bicycle and boat stores, too."

By 1977, the Kowalski brothers were able to buy some second-hand equipment. The sons of a mill worker invested \$15,000 for four 20-foot rubber rafts, paddles and life jackets. They leased a battered school bus to take their customers from a small campsite to the rapids.

That season, 850 rafters took the plunge. But it still was not enough. Because the rapids in May and June were too high for their new rafts to handle, they were losing half their potential business.

They spent the winter looking for bigger rafts that could handle the violent, early-season rapids, and in 1978

became the first rafting company in Eastern North America to offer motorized rafting trips.

This year, they expect to carry more than 40,000 passengers. Their company employs 200 people during the season and its payroll tops \$1-million. Joe estimates that the rafters also pump \$3-million to \$5-million a year into the local economy in purchases of gas, food, accommodation and other goods and services.

The Kowalskis now own eight 35-foot rafts valued at \$25,000 each, two dozen 20-footers worth \$7,000 each, and several vehicles, as well as 150 acres of real estate.

Wearing a faded T-shirt and shorts, an athlete's bandage wrapped around his knee, Joe fits right in with the 700 other rafting enthusiasts who have come to challenge the 15-mile rapids. At-

tributing Wilderness Tours' success to the fact that neither he nor his brother had any business experience or business education when the company started, Joe maintains he does not care about making money.

He and his brother take salaries of \$60,000 a year. The rest of Wilderness Tours' income is reinvested in the business, which operates with no debt.

The company's new outdoor centre offers board sailing, kayaking and canoeing with instruction. Overnight rafting trips cost \$155 for a two-day trip and \$230 for a four-day tour.

In another effort to outclass the growing competition along the Ottawa River, Wilderness Tours has developed a sophisticated photographic and video department for people who want more than the memories of their thrills on the water.

This project will gross more than \$300,000 this season.

A key reason for the financial growth of Wilderness Tours is its Montreal affiliate, known as Lachine Rapids Tours Ltd., which Jack started last year. When an old man told him about the wicked rapids in downtown Montreal, he jumped at the chance to send rafts down them. The Kowalskis commissioned the construction of two aluminum, 700-horse-powered jet boats that have tossed 55,000 tourists about in a manner Disney World would be hard-pressed to duplicate, at \$25 for adults and \$20 for children.

In September, the initiation of a \$1-million expansion project at the Beachburg site gets under way. A licensed dining and entertainment complex will be ready when the 1985 white-water rafting season is launched.

BATHURST INLET

GORDON LIGHTFOOT and party left the north end of Artillery Lake, N.W.T., June 28 and proceeded up Contwoyto Lake which drains at both ends and thence on down the Burnside River into Bathurst Inlet. We hope to have a full report on this arduous trip.

STIKINE RIVER

Veteran canoe trippers GEORGE LUSTE and SANDY RICHARDSON of Toronto flew west to tackle the rugged Stikine River in northern B.C. Their party of four took a horse ride around the middle part of the river which includes a canyon that was only recently run by an expert team of kayakers for ABC-TV's American Sportsman. In fact, the river was so high this summer that the rafting company which works part of the river couldn't make any trips. We look forward to hearing more.

Lost (in) the Wood's 1. Lost in the woods 2.

Canoeists lifted from bush

SAULT STE. MARIE, Ont. (Special) — Fourteen U.S. canoeists reported missing after they were three days overdue on a canoeing trip in rugged Northern Ontario bush country were airlifted to White River, Ont., late yesterday. The canoeists, from Climax, Mich., near Kalamazoo, set out Aug. 18 on the White River, 320 kilometres northwest of Sault Ste. Marie and were to return last Friday. When they failed to do so, the wife of one of the leaders notified police and a search was started. The party, made up of two adults and 12 teen-agers, was spotted Tuesday afternoon at the mouth of the Pukaskwa River on the Lake Superior shore in Pukaskwa National Park some distance from their original destination.

(or don't do the Pukaskwa River in August)

(TORONTO—STAFF) There are a lot of mysterious circumstances surrounding the demise of one of canoeing's most venerable institutions.

WOOD'S BAG & CANVAS of Toronto makers of outdoor equipment for 90 years went into receivership this past summer. CHE-MUN tried to find out some details for our readers but was met with a stone wall at each turn.

Here's what we do know: WOOD'S was sold to a western Canadian sporting goods company last spring, they jazzed the old doll up, introducing new products and a nifty new logo at last spring's Sportsmens Show in Toronto. In those few months this western group managed to let this Canadian tripping institution go down the drain.

As any Canuck canoeist knows, WOOD'S for decades made THE tripping packsack. A rugged brute of 18-oz. canvas, these tough servants performed faithfully over millions of miles of paddle and portage. I have even taken mine to Tibet where native porters learned first-hand of it's back-digging durability.

Wilderness canoeists are creatures of habit. New equipment is cautiously admitted to our trip sheds. We know that whatever we take into the bush must be reliable... our outfit becomes very personal property. It's sad to lose an old and trusted friend.

The Toronto Sun, Tuesday August 7, 1984

SUBMERGED CANOE CONFIRMED AS THEIRS

Hopes dim for quartet

Hopes for four canoeists missing in James Bay suffered a set back yesterday when Moosonee OPP confirmed that a second canoe found submerged in a bay belonged to the party.

Sgt. Peter Hamilton said the discovery, in Hannah Bay near where another canoe had been uncovered, as well as finding a backpack, sleeping bag, and bed rolls, has "reduced our optimism that we will find the party alive."

George Grinnell, 22, his brother Andrew, 16, both of the Hamilton area, their cousin, Alexander (Sandy) Host, 30, of Old Greenwich, Conn., and Betty Emer, 23, of Cresskill, N.J., disappeared last month while pad-

dling the James Bay shoreline from Fort Albany to Moosonee.

The four left Fort Albany July 18 after travelling the 965-km (600-mile) Albany River from Sioux Lookout. They were to call relatives when they reached Moosonee.

"We did have severe weather conditions between the 22nd and 23rd," Hamilton said. "And that was a time they would reasonably be expected to be on the water en route."

Search and rescue personnel from Trenton withdrew their Buffalo aircraft and a helicopter yesterday, leaving Moosonee OPP to scour the area in a single-engine Otter aircraft.

Police at first hoped the experienced group had moved inland and were attempting to cross the rugged terrain on foot.

Hamilton said the only person who knows exactly what the group was carrying is the Grinnell boy's father, George, 50, a McMaster University professor.

But he and his wife are on a canoe trip on the Mackenzie River and a three-day search by the RCMP has not found them.

Hamilton described the terrain where the canoes were found as swampy lowlands.

"A ground search is practically impossible," he added.

CHE-MUN EDITORIAL

Remote wilderness canoe trips are often terrifying ... to the wives, mothers and loved ones of those going.

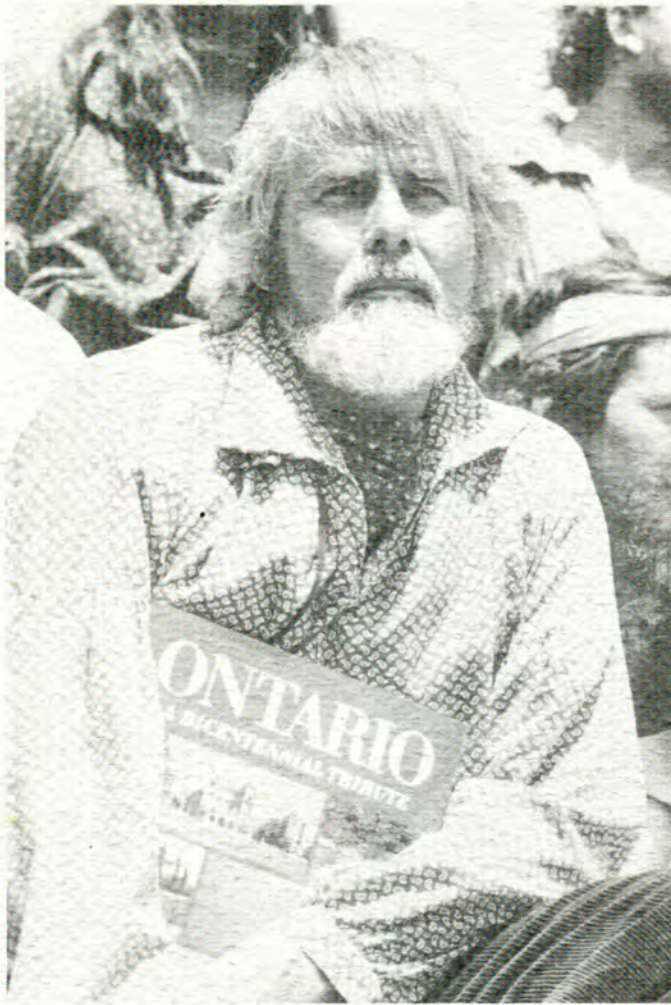
To those unfamiliar with the north country, it is a dangerous and inhospitable place. Those feelings are only confirmed when disaster does strike.

In July, four wilderness canoeists, all 30 years of age and under, died while canoeing down the west coast of James Bay. They had completed the long Albany River trip and were connecting from Fort Albany to Moosonee. This last leg, venturing out into dangerous James Bay, is not necessary as there is ample air egress available from Fort Albany. It is, however, not an uncommon occurrence in today's paddling experience.

This tragedy should serve to remind all of us of the fragility of both ourselves and our canoes. The line between success and failure is thin — sometimes six inches of freeboard — and failure on the ocean usually means death.

Responsible wilderness canoeists should never forget that tenuous situation. No one knows the circumstances surrounding the final moments of those four on James Bay — there are no witnesses alive — and no blame should or can be laid ... but a price is always paid — and that price is the highest there is.

MICHAEL PEAKE, EDITOR



RENDEZ



Photos by Michael Peake

If the ghosts of William McGillivray and friends arrived this summer at their old headquarters, Fort William, they would no doubt be dismayed at the seven extra miles they'd have to paddle up the Kaministiquia River to get there. Dismayed, not by the extra miles, a trifle to them, but by all the new neighbors on the block from the effluent spewing pulp mill to the bothersome endless drone of the power plant.

They would not, however, feel out of place once reaching their goal. The Ontario government has done the Norwesters proud in a stunningly accurate and well-crafted reproduction of Old Fort William in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Opened eight years ago at a cost of \$10 Million the Fort is one of Ontario's best kept secrets.

Rich in detail of both construction and fur trade artifacts, Old Fort William allows today's less arduous travelers to know something about how this incredible transportation system worked.

Essentially the distributing hub of the fur trade wheel Fort William received both furs brought from the Athabaska country and supplies from Montreal and was operated by the North West Company before they were swallowed by Hudson's Bay Company in 1821.

Built in 1803 after threats of American taxes on fur trade goods going through the established Grand Portage post the traditional U.S. entrepot, scared away the thrifty Highlanders. Even though the new route over the more laborious Kaministiquia-Dog Lake trail meant more work for the 'hommes du nord' the balance sheet took less of a beating.

Any wilderness canoeist with an interest in history should make a point of seeing Old Fort William- it's also the logical spot to start a canoe trip along the beautiful north shore of Lake Superior.

RENDEZVOUS!



The past summer was a special one for the old fort. In conjunction with Ontario's bi-centennial, the annual Rendezvous, the time when both fur canoes from the north and the supply-laden 'canots de maitre' from Montreal arrived at the fort and rested before swapping loads, was bigger than ever.

The Rendezvous was a special time, a period of great celebration and merrymaking. For most of the year Fort William was a quiet and cold place but in the brief heat of summer it was jumping.

As the brigades arrived the voyageurs were met with wine, women and song, and not necessarily in that order. The month it took the brigades to arrive and furs to be sorted and re-packed was a month of relaxation for the voyageurs who would be back to 18-hour days on the trail soon enough.

Each year since the reconstructed fort opened the Rendezvous has been held, as before, with historical re-enactment buffs camped at the gates over the July holiday weekend.

This summer a modern brigade of 36-foot 'canots du maites' arrived at the Rendezvous after paddling from Montreal. The Rendezvous Fort William group of 35 Lakehead University students and staff arrived July 1 in voyageur garb as they had been all the way along the 1500 mile historic fur trade route.

An official bi-centennial project, the team of voyageurs was fully one half *voyageuses* all of whom looked tanned and fit and ready for another 1000 miles...some of which they did as the group continued west to the Manitoba border.

The excitement of exploding cannon, singing voices and authentic costumes and setting made the Rendezvous at Old Fort William a stirring moment for anyone with a respect for those who plied the fur trade routes - the pioneers of canoe tripping in Canada.





NICK NICKELS NOTEBOOK

Current and former subscribers to CHE-MUN, the only international canoeing newsletter, 'GREETINGS!'

As you may remember, my original newsletter ceased publication in June 1983 after almost a decade of publishing. Increases in printing costs and postal rates and no supporting advertising revenue made its demise inevitable.

Throughout the silent period there were queries from would-be publishers which I considered carefully.

After many months of being "turned over on the canoe rack to dry", Michael Peake and Geoffrey Peake of Toronto appealed to me as worthy successors for many reasons.

Michael, a former contributor to CHE-MUN pieces, has a background of college journalism and is currently photo-journalist staffer with the Toronto Sun. He and his brothers are crack Canada wilderness canoe trippers and hikers, and Michael the published author of many trip reports. And of course thoroughly familiar with all aspects of current print journalism.

Without question the Peakes are my chosen successors and new publishers of CHE-MUN.

They will do it proud. I turn it over to them cheerfully and with good conscience that the Peakes will do born-again CHE-MUN proud, and then some. Bonne Chance!

FLASH! EXTRA! EXTRA!

CHE-MUN was given the honour to view Bill Mason's new film in a special preview in Toronto on September 30.

WATERWALKER is a feature length film of one man's views and deeply felt beliefs on canoeing and the natural world. Mason, author of the widely respected Path of the Paddle book, maker of many successful nature and canoe instructional films and an accomplished painter, put his heart and soul into this remarkable film.

It's a difficult film to categorize but essentially it is a documentary of paddling and living in the natural land. A deeply spiritual film, Mason examines how his views have changed through the years as the camera follows him through unplanned adventures and patiently obtained REAL nature shots.

Elsewhere in this first issue of the reactivated CHE-MUN is the news report of four canoe trippers drowned in James Bay, northeastern Ontario.

It is a theme familiar to me; for years I have been warning trippers against venturing on the Big Sea Water. It first came to my attention when it was successfully traversed by expert lone canoeist Bob Davis of Haliburton, Ont., in 1973. Indeed, the feat inspired me to start publishing the first issue of the original CHE-MUN newsletter that year.

In that summer Bob Davis had paddled from Red Lake country to Fort Albany on the Bay. In successive well-planned stages Davis paddled the west coast of the Bay to Moosonee in six days from Albany. He did not consider it any great achievement, so matter of fact was his planning and execution.

First he gave away to the Albany Indians all his remaining gorp and grub, built a sand box "fireplace" amidships, his canoe was stocked up on canned goods and pilot biscuit.

Davis paddled at the dictates of the 14-foot tides, riding inland on them to the high points on the costal tundra where he could cook his meals in the canoe. He

ate and slept until the next receding high tide drifted him out to the sea 12 hours later. He then made enough mileage until the next high tide floated him in again.

James Bay is about 100 miles across and 250 miles north to south, swept by strong winds and dangerous surf. There are no sheltering islands on the above sector and no navigational features on the flat shores. The Bay lives up to its name — The Widow Maker. Davis made it without turning a hair.

There have been several recorded canoeists' drownings on Hudson Bay; trying unsuccessfully to round the tidal shores from York Factory, Manitoba, to the mouth of the Nelson River; manoeuvring through the miles of mud flats at the mouth of the Little Seal River en route to Churchill; caught in night gales on Lake Winnipeg.

Attempting to traverse unknown Big Sea Waters is usually suicidal to paddlers. Don't even think about it.

NICK

Something for all you Franklin fans. We'll keep an eye on this

•• The Toronto Sun, Wednesday September 26, 1984

Invasion of Arctic body snatchers?

By JOHN GEIGER
Special to the Sun

Fears that body snatchers or vandals might try to disrupt the graves of three British Royal Navy seamen — dead for 138 years — have sparked plans for a "security blanket" over their remote central Arctic resting place.

Alberta professor Owen Beattie, of the University of Alberta, who led the research team that uncovered two of the well-preserved bodies on Beechey Island last month, last night contacted officials in the Northwest Territories.

"They'll have a network of charter airline pilots and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that will be keeping an eye on the entire area. They'll blanket the area," Beattie said.

The Franklin winter camp historic site, where the graves were uncovered, is a well-known site in the North and has been visited by scientific parties and some tourists.

"Anytime you get objects considered unusual there's a pretty small minority who could cause a good deal of damage," he said.

"Valuable scientific information

could be lost forever."

Beattie said "it's possible" there are other frozen bodies from the doomed Franklin expedition, including that of Sir John Franklin himself.

Two of the three graves on the Beechey Island site were opened by the scientific party. The Sun has learned through historical sources that those graves were of Petty Officer John Torrington, 20, and Able-bodied Seaman John Hartnell, 25.

The third body, also buried deep in the permafrost, is that of marine William Braine, 34.

A CHE-MUN TRIP REPORT

THE COFFIN CREW

BACK IN QUEBEC.

(EDITOR'S NOTE- Stewart T. Coffin, the author of this trip report, is a major name in Canadian wilderness canoeing. His name keeps cropping up on different trip reports from the Kazan to the George. We are very honoured to have him as a subscriber and contributor. Stewart is an expert on Quebec rivers having done all the major routes. He can be reached at 79 Old Sudbury Rd., Lincoln, Mass. 01773)

REPORT OF WILDERNESS CANOE TRIP ON THE MAGPIE, VITAL, WACOUNO, NIPISSIS AND MOISIE RIVERS, AUGUST 1984.

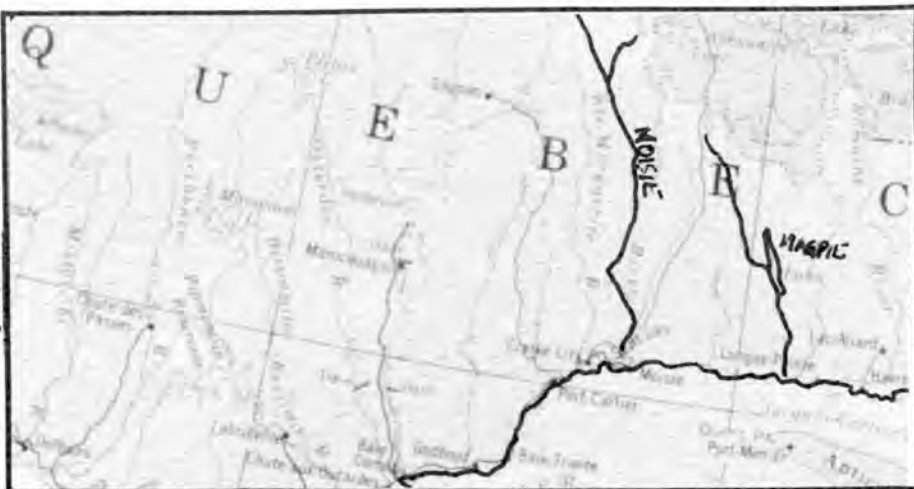
Party consisted of; ALEXANDRA and GARNETT CONOVER, LARRY WESSON and RUSS OTTEY, TAMMIS COFFIN and SARA BIEWEN, JANE and STEWART COFFIN.

Conovers used their Jerry Stelmok (E.M. White) 18 1/2-foot wood and canvas canoe, others used Kevlar-epoxy Big Dippers. (designed and built by Coffin.)

Took the August 14 train to Eric, and started down the Magpie Branch at 2pm. This is an established canoe route described in a Club de Canot-Camping report by Raymond Boyer, which we used and found to be accurate. First camp was near an old air strip. Second camp was at Boyer's 900m (R3) rapid. Third camp on a large sand beach. Easy river to travel, very sandy country with good campsites. Nearly unbroken wilderness leaving behind the clutter of the railroad, power lines and power switching station.

Morning of the fourth day passed unoccupied hunting cabin. Log book in cabin indicated four canoe parties went by this year. With easy access and fine scenery, expect canoe traffic to increase in future years.

Turned up Riviere Vital and made fourth camp in scenic area. Spent all morning of fifth day wading and tracking up steep rapids to Lac Vital. Saw a few signs of recent canoe travel. Passed occupied fishing camp owned by Gulf Corp. on L.Vital. More slow going upstream in pm. Nice camp on an esker.



Sixth day crossed Lac Fournier, portaged and paddled up small streams with beaver ponds and camped on one of them. Found traces of old portage trails, hard to follow. Seventh day reached source of stream, found no trace of trail across height-of-land, so blazed a one mile portage to Lac la Mule on a heading of 300 degrees magnetic. This trail follows a line which is obvious on the map, to a small marshy bay on a burned area on la Mule.

Camped in a spruce thicket on an island nearby. Eighth day paddled down la Mule. Country is still wild, even this close to the railroad, but for how much longer? Very sharp rapids at the outlet of la Mule have well-worn 1/4-mile portage trail around them, evidently used by fishing parties with motorboats. Passed under the QNS&LR tracks at Waco and camped on Wacouno Lake.

The remaining six days were spent descending the Wacouno, Nipissis and Moisie Rivers. BOB HATTON and I did this route in 1967 and a few other canoeing parties have since been down it. There are about nine portages on the Wacouno, three of which are long ones (one to two plus miles) around gorges, best done along the train tracks. The final one is around a spectacular 100-foot falls.

The Nipissis has some very strong rapids and one set of falls with an easy portage around them. The Moisie has been described in a separate report. (See CHE-MUN 39) There are good campsites and fine

scenery nearby the whole way, although the railroad is always close by. Finished trip afternoon of August 27 at teh Eric 138 bridge. On the whole a very satisfactory trip through nice country.

Water levels this summer were the lowest I have seen, even slightly lower than last summer. This hindered us slightly in some places, aided us in others, and really didn't matter much. The weather was cloudy and showery at the start but quite fair and warm the second week. The black flies were not as bad as I have seen in the past and towards the end of the trip they were quite absent, even in the warm sunny weather.

This interesting route offers an alternative for parties wishing to avoid the rapids of the lower Magpie which are said to be numerous and difficult. Our route can be followed in its entirety for a moderately paced two-week trip, or terminated at any of the numerous train stops along the way.

It also offers easy access to headwaters of the Manitou by working southward from Lac Fournier, starting at either Eric as did the AL STIRT part last year, or following our route in reverse from Waco.

(This has been the first of a regular feature in CHE-MUN. We will report on interesting and newsworthy trips in this space in all future issues. The style will vary with each contributor so please make all submissions full of the needed info.-Ed.)

Discovering guilt-free greed

HAPPY ISLE LAKE, Algonquin Park.

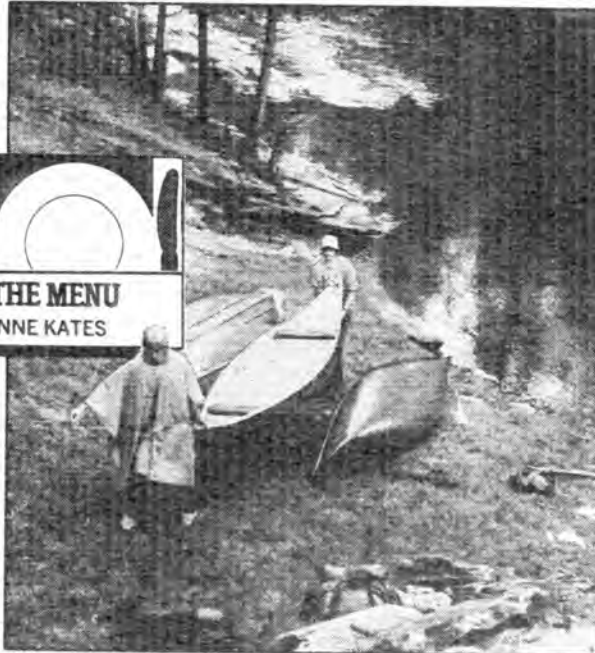
THE 1984 EDITION of roughing it in the bush has so far been delicious. Sort of. Not exactly hollandaise sauce on poached eggs with runny yolks and solid whites, but the charms of the campfire, which are sometimes elusive, have been salutary.

When one has outgrown burnt marshmallows smelling like sticks, and charred hotdogs with all the gustatory charm of cotton batting, a whole new world opens up. It has to, or else you can't go camping.

Canoe trips are one of the few remaining places where machismo (and machisma, its frequently-found female form) is still permissible. And the payoff for acts of heroism is always edible. A three-mile portage completed without whining is nought but a gold-plated excuse to over-eat.

On the first canoe trip of this summer, in July, when the mosquitoes were winning every battle, I wondered why the packs weighed 80 pounds. The culprit was Ester. "Normally I bring fried additives on a canoe trip," she said, "but I couldn't this time, not with a restaurant critic along." The dinner she had brought, which will surely be the cause of several slipped discs in later life, was called Macaroni And The Garden. She pulled a tattered recipe out of her shirt pocket and sautéed zucchini, onions, radishes and carrots on the fire. She then made a cream sauce scented with tomato, wine and fresh basil. So what if the tomato was canned tomato paste, the cream was canned condensed milk and the wine Ontario's finest in a cardboard box? Served over pasta, it was impressive for the second night out on a canoe trip. What was even more impressive was our piggishness. We were five civilized women, all of whom have the normal female paranoia about weight. We over-eat when we're neurotic; so it was interesting to notice five relaxed women eat enough Macaroni And The Garden to feed three small elephants.

The gleeful guiltless greed of canoe-trip eating is astonishing. I have often suspected that most of the people I know prefer eating to almost every other ac-



Canoe-tripping offers a gold-plated excuse to overeat.



tivity (including their conjugal beds), but on a canoe trip, people really take the gloves off, so to speak. What else is there for sensualists in the bush? Paddling is hard work, but a dalliance compared to portaging, which must be the Creator's dress rehearsal for Hell. After slogging through mud and up and down mountains for a mile or so with either an 80-pound pack or a 16-foot boat on your back, is it any wonder you get desperate about what's on the menu? The only other reliable physical pleasure ought to be a good night's sleep, but who gets much sleep on the ground, listening to beavers slapping their tails all night, and waiting for the bear to come? So it's food for fun. The greed is guilt-free because you've worked so hard to get there: a canoe trip, properly done by

masochistic over-achievers, makes an aerobics class at the Y seem like lying in bed eating Champagne truffles.

The second reason why self-denial is unnecessary is that the environment does it for you. To wit, a canoe trip is one of the few situations when you cannot get any more food — no matter what you do. You can't throw fiscal caution to the winds and order two more tuna sushi. You can't go to the corner store for a chocolate bar. You can't even go to Fran's for the post-midnight munchies. There is no Fran's on this side of the portage. You might catch fish, but you probably won't. Ergo, you're carrying your entire food ration.

This produces a reaction. Middle-class food anxiety, the neurosis that puts 10 cans of tuna on the shelf and twice as

much food as necessary on the dinner party table, reaches its nadir on a canoe trip. When people are afraid of not getting enough to eat, they over-eat cheerfully. And the things they over-eat — fried additives is too kind a phrase.

Take last night's dinner. I call it campfire paella but you might call it wishful thinking. We cooked rice together with freeze-dried chicken and peas, dried vegetable flakes, Chinese dried shrimps, a package of minestrone soup, saffron and a lot of garlic. Given the tendency of freeze-dried food to taste like cardboard, it proved one of my favorite hypotheses: add enough garlic to almost anything and you'll be able to eat it. The dog thinks so, too.

Or take the dinner the night before last, which I call stir-fried vegetables. If we had truth-on-menu laws it would be re-named Szechuan slop, for it features freeze-dried vegetables with a sprinkling of the woods (pine needles etc.) and a sauce of hoï sen, Szechuan chili paste, black beans, soya sauce, sesame oil, rice vinegar, garlic, ginger and sesame seeds, all carried in a plastic tube. The sauce is great, but remember what it's going on.

It's too bad Escoffier never applied his mind to the question of canoe trip food. But perhaps Michel Guerard is working on it at this very moment. After all, people go canoeing in France. And it is but a short step from cuisine minceur.

However, one does not normally lose weight on a canoe trip. This is a law as immutable as the law of no complaining. Even if it has been raining for a week, even if your clothes are wet and all your food is soggy, people who complain are not invited back. They are about as welcome as canoe trippers who fail to appreciate the delicate art of food rationing. Every little thing, from one onion divided among five people at lunchtime to one handful of gorp (like trail mix) per person per portage, is carefully calculated. It is de rigueur to be satisfied with your ration and never to whine for more. Martyrs (people who eat less than their ration) are also hors de style. They are the kind of people who also insist on carrying the heaviest pack and nobody likes them because they make the rest of us feel like lazy pigs. We go on a canoe trip to prove the opposite to ourselves. And this is what Canadians call summer — roughing it smooth.

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TRIP LINE

TRIP LINE is meant to be like a tripping bulletin board. If you are looking for info on a remote canoeing area and would like to enlist the aid of our resource pool, drop CHE-MUN a line telling us what area and what kind of info you need. We will post it each issue in TRIP LINE with your address and phone number, and any of our readers who are able to help can get in touch with you. Since most of us will be busy planning throughout the long winter months the Winter issue of CHE-MUN in December will be the perfect time for you long-range planners to get what you need.

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