

CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 82

CHE-MUN

AUTUMN 1995

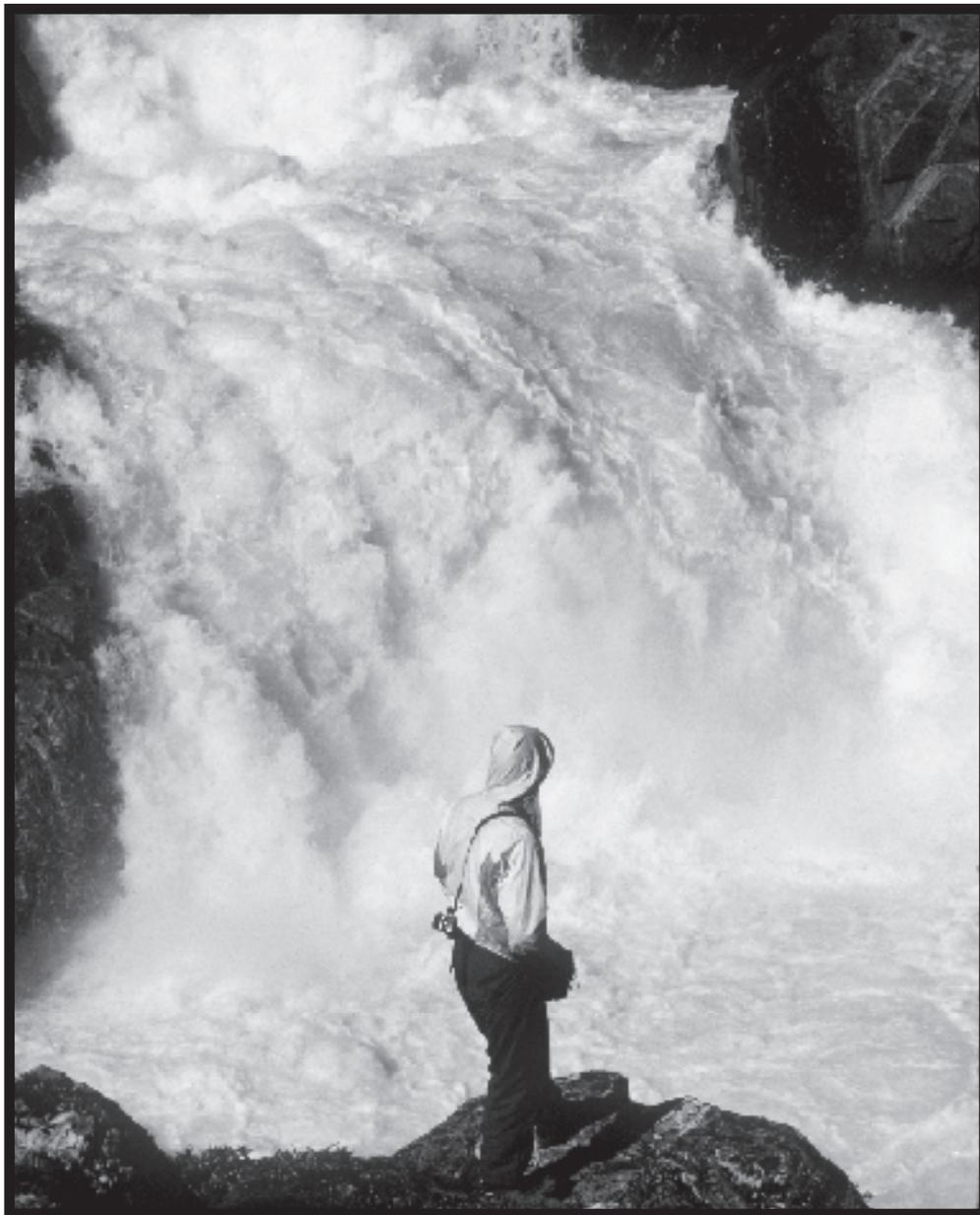


photo: Michael Peake

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DATE WITH DICKSON -- David Peake gets an closeup view of the power of one of the many falls in the Hanbury River's mightiest drop - Dickson Canyon. The two mile portage around this twisting, ragged piece of water is a fitting price to pay to gaze down on one of the great scenic highlights in the Barrenlands. David Peake was one of the members of the Hide-Away Canoe Club's *Arctic Land Expedition*, one of the few groups to go up the Hanbury River. You will note Dave is well wrapped in a Wood's bug jacket. The flies were at their legendary best this summer. A full report on the trip begins on Page 6.

Fall Packet



We received this letter from Jen McLeod, who lives in Ottawa and works for a well-established summer camp, whose owner happens to be a Che-Mun subscriber. She has some thoughtful comments regarding her generation of canoe trippers.

"I was angered and offended when I read the accusations made by Barry Hansen in a letter to the Editor in the summer issue of Che-Mun (Outfit 81).

"Mr. Hansen wrote, 'I had the misfortune of canoeing the Missinaibi last summer with my wife and two other ladies. It was the first time I had been on the river since 1981 and I was appalled at the changes. The number of people and the amount of garbage and excrement were unbelievable. The prime culprits appear to be the youth camps now using the river for wilderness tripping. They appear to have no concept of wilderness etiquette. Perhaps it is something you could editorialize since I only see it getting worse. At least as of yet the northern Arctic rivers are yet to be polluted by these groups though I'm sure they're on their way.'"

"I am a youth trip leader with Camp Wanapitei (*Ed. Note - in Lake Temagami*) and I co-led a trip on the Missinaibi in August 1994. We, too, were appalled by the amount of garbage strewn about the portages and campsites. Contrary to Mr. Hansen's accusation that youth camps appear to be the prime culprits for the pollution, our group picked up a considerable amount of the garbage we came across, and carried it out.

"I believe that Mr. Hansen is wrong in blaming the youth camps for the pollution of wilderness canoe routes. Part of what I hope to achieve by leading remote wilderness trips is to help participants to develop their own wilderness ethic. In part, I'd like to instill in participants a sense of responsibility for each action they take. The simplest example of this concept, and a rule that all tripping organizations uphold, is to carry out all garbage that they bring in. I carry that one step further, as I know many leaders do, and on my trips, we carry out everything that we find along the way. It is my

love of the wilderness and a deep caring for it that drives me to do this, not just a simple wilderness etiquette.

"Unfortunately what used to be considered remote rivers are becoming increasingly travelled and polluted. This August, I co-led a trip on the Mistassibi Nord-Est in Quebec. We found it surprisingly polluted, considering that is challenging enough that people who travel it should be relatively experienced paddlers who know better than to leave their garbage.

"On a more encouraging note, the trip on the Mistassibi N-E, this summer was the second half of a two-month Leader-in-Training program. I was constantly impressed by the effort and initiative taken by the participants to minimize our impact and clean up areas we travelled through. I am confident that youth camps and the capable leaders that they produce are, in fact, part of the solution, not the problem."

We had an anxious letter from George Reif from Bowler, Wisconsin who attached a clipping of an article that distressed him greatly.

"Enclosed is a copy of a nightmare from *Time Magazine*. Good God! Say it isn't so! Must we now lay our bodies out before the bulldozers. What to do? What to do?"

The objects of George's consternation is a two page essay titled *Minnesota's Sensible Plan* that appeared in the September 11 issue of the news magazine. It detailed the forthcoming project code-named Excelsior. This plan calls for the creation of the Superior Drainage Canal in 1999 which would send 50 billion gallons per hour out of Lake Superior towards the dry American southwest.

We offer a short excerpt from the article;

'It will flow into the St. Croix River, to the Mississippi, south to an aqueduct at Keokuk, Iowa and from there west to the Colorado River and into the Grand Canyon and many other southwest canyons, filling them up to the rims - enough water to supply the parched southwest from Los Angeles to

Sante Fe for 50 years.'

The piece goes on the overview the financial rewards that would be heaped on the lucky citizens of Minnesota. Tours of the now-dry lakebed of Superior would be a tourist draw as would the casinos that would inevitable arise.'

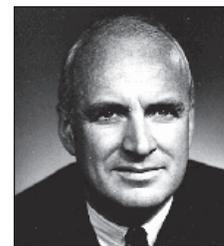
It's a scary piece all right but I think you must consider the source. It was written by a Minnesota writer with a well-earned reputation - Garrison Keillor. Mr. Keillor's fame came from his well known stories and recordings. Mr. Keillor is a humourist.

The only thing about writing satire such as this is that you've already been outdone by reality.

Obituary

Denis M. Coolican 1913-1995

All wilderness canoeists were saddened to learn of the passing of Denis Coolican - one of the members of *The*



Coolican in 1963

Voyageurs, an influential canoeing group that began in the 1950s.

Denis passed away quietly in Ottawa on Friday, October 20. He was 83.

Coolican was one of the last members to join the group. His first trip was on the Churchill River in 1955. With the death earlier this year of Tony Lovink, the group's oldest member, Elliot Rodger, is now the sole survivor of the group of eight.

For several years Denis kept the journals of the trip that were published annually in the *Ottawa Journal*. He went on four of the *Voyageurs* 11 major trips and remained life-long friends with the group.

We'll have more on Denis Coolican in the



Editor's Notebook

Yes – we're still here, a little bit late but that's what happens when you go away for a while - and when life gets so busy. I hope you had as good a summer as I. The results of the Hide-Away Canoe Club's *Arctic Land Expedition* are evident throughout Outfit 82.

It was a dry and warm summer in our part of the northland this year (read: buggy). The great rivers of the Northwest Territories are low and have been so for several years. Lighter snowfalls and warm springs are causing record low water levels across the north.

The only river we were able to directly compare was the Thelon as we'd been on it 10 years ago – and it was low. We also did not see nearly the amount of game that we had a decade earlier. That was probably due, in part, to the fact we entered the Barrenlands later in the year.

We met only one group on our 50-day march - Dalen and Lori Bayes - who knew about us through *Che-Mun*. They were camped just below the cairn built by James W. Tyrrell on his travels in the area in 1900. A piece of wood in the cairn was also signed by W.H. B. Hoare in 1937.

One of the great thrills of the summer came at the end of our trip. We finished at the junction of the Back and Consul rivers, not far from the Morse River. On our flight out were able to take a detour back to the Morse and the cairn we built there in 1985. That trip remains enchanted and one that we know we could never duplicate - and haven't tried. It was a magic moment to be there on that Morse lake again at our cairn, the top of which had been toppled by a grizzly.

We also got to visit the famous Helen Falls cairn which is liberally filled with the names of many *Che-Mun* subscribers.

A number of canoeists consider cairns an abomination. These purists have little sense of history or wonder. These piles of rocks connect us with our past. They are a natural signature on a natural landscape. An insignificant dot which links the past with the present. You are not alone, the joys and sufferings have been experienced before. And will be again.

Michael Peake, Editor.

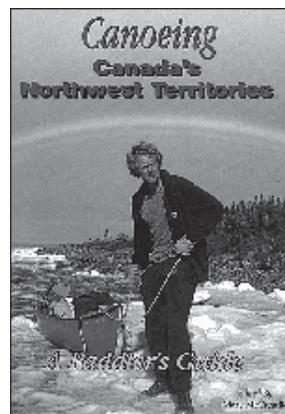
Canoeing Canada's Northwest Territories: A Paddler's Guide

Edited by Mary McCreadie.

Published by the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association. Hyde Park, Ont. 194 pp. \$21.95 (Cdn)

Reviewed by Michael Peake.

This book has been in the works for a number of years. I first heard about it in 1990 when it was four years old and have tried to follow its progress since.



The CRCA took over the project and have finally published it as one of their own. The editor, Mary McCreadie, lives in Yellowknife and has been compiling the trip reports and info that have gone into the reports on the 19 river trips covered here.

The rivers profiled are; the Anderson, Back,

Beaulieu, Burnside & Mara, Cameron, Coppermine, Hanbury-Thelon, Hood, Hornaday, Horton, Kazan, Mackenzie, Mountain, Natla/Keele, Slave, Snare, South Nahanni, Wecho and Yellowknife.

Each river is described in 17 sections which include total distance, river profile, human history and hydrographic profile. This book is not intended as a definitive guide to the river. Major rapids and obstacles are listed but only in general terms. Water levels can cause big changes from year to year.

Maps are provided for each river and are quite simplistic - and contain a great number of typos. I found four mistakes in the first three minutes thumbing through this book. For example the Baillie River is the Baille, Hawk Rapids become Hawks. In another place, author Rudy Wiebe is turned into Judy Wiebe.

Also some of the info is incorrect. For example, John Hornby is listed as wintering on the Thelon in 1927-28 when it was actually the year before.

Most of the black and white photos inside are only adequately reproduced. By the way, I took the cover photo – though it's not credited.

This book contains a lot of info and they've tried to cover all the bases. It's certainly interesting to read and will be a necessary addition to a northern paddler's library. But when typos and incorrect facts pop up with some regularity it detracts from the experience.

New books on Superior and NW Passage

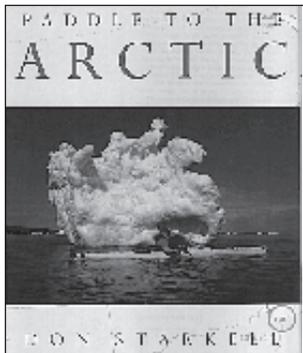
Paddle To the Arctic

By Don Starkell

McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1995.
313 pp. \$24.95 (US) \$29.95 Cdn.

Reviewed by Michael Peake

What does it take to write a book? Authors talk about the sweat, toil and torture of writing. Of getting all those thoughts and feelings down on paper. For Don Starkell, writing *Paddle to the Arctic* must have been a piece of cake considering what he had to go through on the incredibly tortuous undertaking he put himself



through.

Starkell is best known for the compelling *Paddle to the Amazon* about the 12,000 mile canoe trip from Winnipeg to Brazil. That was a wonderful read and his latest is well, I

can't say enjoyable perhaps compelling, certainly wincing. This book concerns Starkell's three year attempt to paddle by sea kayak from Churchill Manitoba to Tuktoyuktuk at the mouth of the Mackenzie River. It was to be a formidable undertaking.

The book is done in journal style with daily entries over the three summers it took Starkell is candid, perhaps lacking some insight into his own demons and drives which made a group of three become one before very long.

Starkell started his journey as a solo effort in 1990 and within a couple of days of paddling the treacherous coast north of Churchill had dumped in chilly Hudson Bay and came very close to dying. He limped back to Churchill where one local greeted him with the fact he was sorry he made it back because it would only encourage others to try the same.

The 59-year-old Starkell started again next year with two other veteran companions, Fred Reffler, 55, and Victoria Jason, 45, as they attempted to reach Repulse Bay. Fred only lasted for a while and

left the trip at Arviat (Eskimo Point). Victoria continued on to Repulse Bay and was game to try again the next summer for the big push.

The pair gave it a go next June and attempted to pull their sleds from Repulse to Pelly or Spence Bays but lasted only one day before Victoria gave up. It was too much work with the tiny sleds they had. The pair accepted a ride via snowmobile to Spence Bay and soon realize the Inuit sleds, or komatiks, made much more sense than their contraptions. But Victoria did not last much longer, the workload was too stiff and Starkell too demanding a taskmaster. She had to stop after contracting edema. He continued on alone from Gjoa Haven and from there on relates as searing and demanding sequence of events as you could imagine.

Perhaps there are too many "almost died todays" because it would be hard to believe that one person could be this fortunate. But there's no doubt Starkell has immense fortitude and a capacity for suffering that equals an Iraqi torturer. The final few days are simply horrendous and the fact he is alive today - missing numerous extremities - is a miracle.

Along the way, he bumps into several Inuit (the book does not use the correct term Inuk when referring to a single native) as well as a couple of interesting encounter with DEWline employees. These relics of the cold war were both a bane and help to him. One guy at the Cape Young DEWline (American run, Canadian manned) refused all help when he approached with a bloody foot. This creep whom Starkell names with revulsion - Ian Fraser - should go down in the annals of the north of everything that is wrong with technocrats. The locals - and other DEWline folks were usually very helpful to this obvious adventurer.

The book has numerous photos - all in black and white. and several small and helpful maps.

Don Starkell is a true adventurer. He takes chances - some very stupid ones - but also takes what's dished out and keeps getting up for more. I found myself shaking my head throughout this book and the unrelenting wave of tough luck and great experiences he underwent through those three summers. In the future, I look forward to reading about what Mr. Starkell has been up to. And I'll have to read it. because you will never catch me going on a trip with him.

Superior

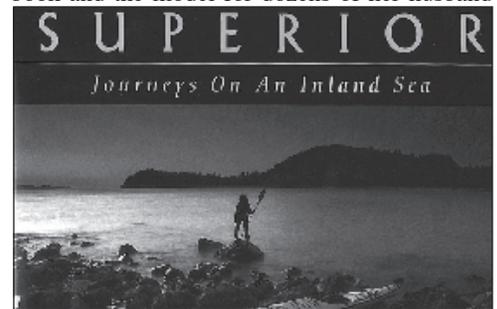
Journeys On An Inland Sea

By Gary and Joanie McGuffin

Boston Mills Press, Erin, Ont 1995.
160pp. \$50 (Cdn) \$40 (US)

Reviewed by Michael Peake

Gary and Joanie McGuffin have resurfaced again as they seen to every few years with a book or special project of note. I first saw the slide show that entailed much of this book at the Maine Canoe Symposium in 1994 and was tremendously impressed. It was Joanie McGuffin who showed it, she's the writer of this book and the model for dozens of her husband



Gary's excellent photographs.

Gary seems to be the silent partner of this northern duo. They first came to light in 1984-5 just after they were married with a two year cross-Canada canoe trip which was subsequently published as *Where Rivers Run*. While that book was a narrative of their trip with photos thrown in, *Superior* is primarily a picture book which contains a complete detailing of their circumnavigation of Lake Superior. And that's what the slide show was presented as - a trip around Lake Superior - but in reality it's a collection of the couple's four-season travels around the vast and beautiful inland sea.

The pair have some stiff competition when it comes to picture books on Superior. Many have tackled this rugged subject but McGuffin's photos stand out. He is a very talented photographer specializing in long exposures which create whether through film reciprocity or unusual light, starkly unique views of the great lake. Also, the photos are superbly reproduced and a long way from the standard "postcard" views found in many efforts.

The couple are also to be congratulated on the

Updates

Newsline Countdown to April 1, 1999

production of the book. Generally glossy photos books of this type are printed in the Orient where cost are lower. But the McGuffin's have not only printed in Canada but sought out a paper source which does not use bleached pulp and therefore emits no dioxins into waterways such as Lake Superior. There are numerous pulp mills along Superior's shores pumping in toxic effluent - notably the James River plant in Marathon. That's the one Bill Mason used in *Waterwalker* - but the pipe is now buried underwater way out into the lake. I suppose the McGuffin's realized the cruel irony of producing a book on Lake Superior which might help to add to it's already considerable environmental burden.

There's a big tip of the hat to Bill Mason with the surprising exclusion of any photos of Cascade Falls. There's just one taken from the top of them looking down. These favourite falls of Bill Mason were used in many of his films and books and should probably be called Mason Falls. And frankly they've been done enough. The editors are to congratulate for their willpower in trying to top Mason.

Superior reminds me of something Pat and Rosemarie Keough might have produced. They are also a married couple who did three books in their Portfolio Series including the Ottawa Valley, Nahanni and the Niagara Escarpment. Like the McGuffin's, the Keough's did a great job of photography but presented more written and historical background on their subject. But the Keough's have not been heard from since they packed up and moved out to the Gulf Islands in British Columbia a couple of years ago.

The book contains 134 wonderful photos and many are breathtaking. About half of them are of Joanie which is one of the problems when just two people are involved. She's is nice to look at but there's a lot of her. One problem I had was reading the text. The column width runs to seven inches in most places - far too wide a line for comfortable reading. Joanie's prose is crisp and readable but lacks any supporting maps or historical photos that would add subtext to her story. But these are small points.

Superior is a book which manages to translate the feel of that lake's vast rocky stretches and surreal, dappled light. Gary McGuffin's superb photographs will make most photographers envious and all canoeists rarin' to go.

The residents of Iqaluit had some unexpected visitors arrive when the cruise ship *Alla Tarasova* was delayed in reaching the Baffin Island capital. The ship received ice damage on the trip there.

A group of tourists had to spend extra time in the Iqaluit, the former Frobisher Bay. The group included noted author Farley Mowat who was among the group of experts teaching the cruise customers about the history, flora, fauna of the area. Mowat, when asked what he thought of the delay, quipped, "It was marvellous - the bar was open." Also in the group was northern photographer Mike Beedell who was accompanied by his father and grandmother.

The flying choices for going north get a lot slimmer this fall. Canadian North Airlines announced the cancellation of their regular flight from Montreal to Iqaluit, Nanisivik and Lake Harbour effective October 29, 1995. The sole carrier will now be First Air which is owned by the Makavik Corporation, the body which runs the northern Quebec land claim money. Canadian was forced out of the routes by declining business since so many of the regulars who use the flights want to use the "local" airline. This includes the many government and bureaucratic people who regularly fly south and north.

For their part, First Air have promised they will not raise rates because they now have to monopoly.

Speaking of the Makavik Corporation, their top person resigned last summer. Simonie Nalukturuk, who beat out veteran politician Charlie "Mega" Watt, for the president's position last year resigned citing personal problems. His replacement is Zebedee Nungak, who will serve out the remaining two years of the term.

Makavik officials were said to be uneasy about the idea of an election to replace Nalukturuk since

that would give the notorious Watt a chance to regain the post. Watt was the subject of a *Maclean's* magazine story which revealed he lived in a \$900,000 house in Montreal that was paid for by the Makavik Corporation. Watt was also friendly with Hydro-Quebec and backed working with the power company. Most natives in Ungava, or Nunavik, are opposed to virtually all Hydro-Quebec's plans.

The Nunavut Implementation Commission issued a report saying Iqaluit - and not Rankin Inlet - is the best choice as capital of the new Nunavut. That recommendation was supposed to go to Ottawa who must give final approval. But in a surprise move, Ottawa announced that a vote would be held in December in order for the residents of Nunavut to choose the capital themselves. Three city's names will appear on the ballot; Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet and Cambridge Bay.

The commission's study found that setting up a capital infrastructure would be cheaper in Iqaluit and would create 100 jobs there. They estimate it would cost \$188 million in Iqaluit, \$196 million in Cambridge Bay and \$203 million in Rankin.

Nunavut will be proclaimed on April 1, 1999 and fully independent by 2005.

Two Danish men, a father and son, have retraced the 19th century journey of Qillarsuaq, an Inuit shaman who led his people across the ocean from north Baffin to Greenland. The story was first recounted by Knud Rasmussen, the Greenland ethnologist. Modern historians say the shaman was fleeing a murder he committed.

John Andersen, 52, and his son Ture, 21, travelled from Grise Fiord to Pond Inlet. This is the third summer of the journey. The first year saw the pair travel the Greenland coast to Thule. The second year, the father travelled alone to Grise Fiord. Andersen said he was still able to find the camping sites of Qillarsuaq even 150 years later; remains of tents, harpoons and sledges remain intact. The pair are using kayaks which they have had to pull on sleds for many stretches.

The trip was first recreated in 1987 when a team of dog sledgers made the crossing. They included photographer Mike Beedell. The Andersens will also be presenting a photo exhibit of their travels next year in Copenhagen.

HACC 1995

50 Days - From Camsell to Consul

By **MICHAEL PEAKE**
Che-Mun Editor

As the ancient Chinese proverb says, and so did I, this journey of 1000 miles began with a single step on the north shore of Lake Athabasca.

Andrew Macdonald and I led off the first of two 25-day legs of the Arctic Land Expedition. We were deposited on Lake Athabasca at 3 am on July 8 following a cold and eerie flight from Yellowknife by way of an Air Tindi Turbo Otter.

We scrambled to get a few hours sleep in the lingering twilight and were up early hoping the plane had put us near the beginning of the venerable Camsell Portage. The town of the same name lay a few miles west of us, a smattering of twinkling lights we observed in the pre-dawn grayness as we descended down from the chilly altitudes to the chillier great lake.

Charles Camsell, noted canoeist for the Geological Survey of Canada, headed a trip through this region in 1914. We had a copy of his report with us for we would follow his route for the first 10 days of our 50 day Arctic Land Expedition. (See Che-Mun 81 for background info.)

The small opening in the bushes just 200 yards from our tent gives no indication of the physical or historical breadth of the portage which remains there to this day. A wide swath through the alder forest of the north shore of Athabasca plows north towards Tazin Lake, 10 miles away. There are actually four segments of the portage with lake breaks and all are obviously still in use to this day, though probably by snow machines during winter season.

The path is wide with easy walking - no tree ducking or moose-mushing here. Well, a bit of mush and a bit of garbage as well from winter camps that are established along the way. The gain from Athabasca to Tazin is 400 feet, not totally painless but the historic significance helps the body through the hard parts. Of course it's tough to do a uphill grind at the best of times but at the very start of a 50-dayer with bulging packs and sagging muscles it's even rougher. That's why this 43-year-old canoeist takes along a strong and eager young man of half his age. Andrew's 22-year-old steel spring legs continued to pump all day and though we were



The four Peakes; Geoffrey, David, Michael, Seàn, in Dickson Canyon on the Hanbury River.

equally tired, he was ready to go again well ahead of me.

It took us two days plus an hour on the third to get into Tazin and the big lake greeted us with placid waters and a wonderful vista. It was the calm before the storm. Our route called for us to descend the Tazin River which flows north towards the Barrenlands before heading west and into the Taltson on its way north to Great Slave Lake. As we reached the river outlet on Tazin Lake, preparing for the first current and swift water of the trip my eyes appeared to be deceived by finding no outlet at all! This was no deception. A very solid rock and earth dam was quite effectively holding in every precious drop of Tazin water. Ahead lay a stagnant pond, the remains of the Tazin River which Mr. Camsell propelled down with great speed.

This was indeed a surprise. Nothing in my research had told me about this dam which I later found out was constructed in the 1970s to boost water levels for the diversion of water to the hydro dam for Uranium City - which is now abandoned. Thanks a lot Saskatchewan!

We had no choice but to carry over this monstrosity and begin to haul our boat down the fetid waters of Tazin Pond. The soupy, algae-filled water was an affront but if there is one area where the

Hide-Away Canoe Club is proficient - it's dragging. And that's what we did for several miles. We were heartened many times by paddleable stretches which soon closed in again. A day and a half later the river was pretty well back to normal - for September but this was July 10th. Our second evening on the Tazin was special. We were treated to a fine chorus of wolves from a mile or two away. Their calls were so good they sounded like a nature recording. Beautifully eerie.

Andrew and I began to make more mileage on day 6 as we approached Hill Island Lake - an expansion of the Tazin. We were anxious to see this lake and had an outstanding campsite near where the river comes in. The famous island which gives the lake its name was noted by Samuel Hearne on his return journey from Coppermine in 1772. It's quite prominent and we stared at it for a couple of hours while plying the glassiness of Hill Island.

We had a very sobering incident when we stopped for a lunch break near the top of the lake and stretched out on the smooth rock after the meal, myself for a quick nap, and Andrew to read. He was reading Siddhartha and had a short passage he wanted me to hear. I lay on my granite pillow listening to him say, "And then Siddhartha said, 'Holy shit the canoe's floating away!'" For a split second I thought, "I don't remember that line in the story"

Expeditions



Sean Peake at MuskoX Falls on the upper Thelon River just above the Elk R. It's the last big drop until the Thelon Canyon.

blackflies coated us and we were drinking large amounts of water to keep cool. We decided to paddle down the lake where the big carry started and put up the tent to cook and relax in. This we did and enjoyed an hour's respite from the hordes. Of course, it was almost 6 pm before we finished lunch and had to push on to a tough 3 km carry.

It was ugly. Hot, sweaty, buggy, nauseous, aching. Ah, the glory of the Arctic canoe trip. But you just do it. The maddening part was that at 11 pm when we were trying to cook something to eat even though we're not really hungry - it was still buggy! In fact, it was buggy all that night of August 11, though nice and cool. But it dawned sunny and calm again - a curse. We had about the same routing for this days and dragged our butts around camp before departing at noon.

It's never as bad on the final day of a big carry since you at least have the end in sight. And of course that's one of the great and not-so-great things about the Barrens. The end is usually in sight which can be uplifting and depressing. It all depends on your mindset and if you feel like you're actually getting any closer to that damned lake. Our 5 km of carrying today offered a nice breeze which was most helpful. We had a 140 foot ridge to rise up which kept us puffing but offered a lovely view from the top (i.e. the big lake we were heading to).

As happens so often, on August 12 we found ourselves over the hump. That day has become a special celebratory one throughout the years (it's the wedding anniversary of our Chaplain Peter Scott) and was no exception this time as we toasted the trip with some fine spirits, treats and cigars. David once again pulled his surprise from his pack in the form of four cool cans of Boddington's Best Bitter. They were lovely ales! We were camped on an esker fragment in a lovely lake which straddled the 64th parallel and we called Ruggles. A rest day was declared and it proved still and sunny again. We had to put the sleeping bags over the tent during the day to

keep it cool. (See Page 9 for more details of this area.)

The route from here to the Baillie was quite scenic with many eskery hills and winding waterways. The upper Baillie was extremely low and we were worried about making good time. The river slowly improved getting bigger and bigger but it was clear the water was quite low. The Baillie completely changes character about a third of the way down where a stream comes in from the west. All of a sudden the river is full of deep, runnable rapids. These sets, perhaps a hundred in all, continue at regular intervals all down the river to near its confluence with the Back. There was a lot of evidence of caribou activity, it must be quite a sight in July but we saw only scattered 'bou throughout our descent.

We saw two grizzlies along the river in one day. The first was rambling along the shore and moved away once they caught our scent. The second was seen swimming across the river ahead of us and sitting on the bank once we caught his eye. We stopped, thankful we weren't in a rapid and watched for a while. Once he caught a whiff of us, he headed uphill. We also had a close encounter with a wolf who must have been sleeping by a rock when we

passed a few feet from shore and he jumped up and loped off before we could react with our cameras.

We finally reached the mighty Back River which also looked pretty low. Below the junction was a red Old Town canoe with German lettering that was tethered to the bank near the high water level. It'll be gone in the spring unless claimed. Just below where the Baillie enters is a long sandy section where channel finding is an art. This was surprising to us who had been on the Back in 1985 from Garry Lake on down. The river there flows fast and full with many challenging rapids.

We had only one named rapids on this section of the river and it proved fun and scenic. Hawk Rapids are now known to many of you as the cover art on the front of *Canoeing North Into the Unknown* which came out a year ago. There were also several unnamed and demanding sets following Hawk including a river-wide ledge that demanded respect.

When Geoffrey flew in he arranged a secondary pickup point for us - after reviewing the mileage in a more realistic manner and told Air Tindi to first look for us at the mouth of the Consul River - some 60 miles upstream from our original point. This is the northern boundary of the Thelon Game Sanctuary which we had been following since before the Hanbury Thelon junction. This pickup point proved to be realistic despite a final day's slog into NE winds that confirmed the Back River's reputation.

The plane arrived on time and we had a special treat to finish off the trip. We flew to the cairn at the head of the Morse River which we erected in 1985. We had no idea whether the six-foot pile of rocks would even be standing - but there it was. The Twin Otter could not land on the rocky shore with the high winds that day so we did a Marine number and baled out 60 feet from shore in waist deep water. The cairn had once held a bottle with our message about naming the river after Eric Morse. The bottle and the top few rocks had been knocked down and

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Expeditions

and then I realized that Andrew had looked up to see our canoe - our only canoe - skimming south east on the now-rippling surface of Hill Island. Andrew quickly stripped down and hit the water in a running dive. The boat was only 50 feet away but starting to gain momentum but he hauled it in easily. I applauded his fast action and cursed our carelessness. We were not going very far without that 17 feet of Old Town ABS. We would be a lot more careful in the future but it wasn't the last time we'd lose the canoe on this half of the trip.

We passed another small lodge coming out of Hill Island, we'd seen one earlier on Tazin but both were empty. They were probably hunting camps for moose later in the fall. We were to leave the Tazin shortly and start on our second of eight rivers this summer.

Actually the Thekulthili River is a pretty short stretch of water. The Chipewyan name means 'flowing out over flat rocks' and we ascended it through a couple of large lakes and short river stretches towards the Taltson River system. The Taltson flows through large lakes in a fairly benign manner until its lower reaches. We reached the Taltson at mighty Nonacho Lake which we found to our surprise draining south. It is supposed to drain to the west via the Taltson. There was no drainage outlet marked on the map here but a solid rapid is definitely there.

Andrew and I were still trying to catch up following our slow adventures on the Tazin and we were thankful to get over Nonacho with its long sweeping bays with no real wind problems. One large and impressive rapid was passed heading upstream from Nonacho and just afterwards we headed off into the much less travelled areas.

We were now in the hands of Guy Blanchet and his published account of travel in the area in 1925 and printed in the Canadian Field Naturalist. Blanchet, a veteran and inveterate northern traveler, was also looking for the route as proposed by Dr. King. The critical jump was the one from the Taltson to Eileen Lake. Samuel Hearne called the lake Clowey and it was a critical stop for his band of Coppermine-bound natives in 1771. Eileen straddles the Barrenlands, it's south shore a solid fuzz of trees; its north boundary stretching unbroken to the northern wilds. This jump was to give us two of the biggest obstacles we would face all summer. The first was simply a matter of slogging it out, the second a true mystery.

Andrew and I managed to weave our way through the first couple of portages into small lakes north of the Taltson without

too much problem. There were, of course, no trails - no human trails, that it, the area was honey-combed with a maze of caribou trails heading in any direction you'd like. The problem came when we had to do the final 3 km portage with no breaks. It looked so obvious on the map but the reality of swamps, trees and undulating ground made it anything but.

All our sensible plans went by the boards and we ended up slogging, scouting and dead reckoning our way through to Relief Lake which we named our ultimate destination.

The second problem was more maddening and frustrating. We had another 3 km portage into Eileen. We figured this would be easier since the trees were much more thinly spaced. And this sort of turned out to be the case. The carrying was ridiculously easy when compared to our previous day's tribulations. We leap-frogged the loads into 10-15 minute segments so we wouldn't get too strung out. We reached the edge of a boggy area within easy reach of Eileen and left a load on top while we struggled through the wet mess. We had to make a detour of a few minutes and gratefully reached the lake and headed back for our final load. But that final load had disappeared. And I mean disappeared. It defied all logic. We didn't go more than 400 metres as the crow flies yet we were unable to find our packs in the relatively open forest. We retraced our steps thinking any minute they would appear. But they didn't. The slow wash of panic was beginning to be felt. The sun was getting low in the sky, thrashing around in bear country was unsettling.

Surely they must be right here. . . or here. Every place we saw that looked just like the spot - wasn't. It was the most confounding *two hours* of my canoeing life. It was just one more sweep of an area I was sure we'd been over - and there they were. Most of our food, our tents and our peace of mind all sitting there in a patient pile of Cordura and canvas.

It was a maddeningly scary event that almost defied analysis. Just another nudge from the North.

Once on Eileen, we wanted to camp in an appropriate spot and found a great point not far from the offending portage. What made this spot special was the presence of an ancient birch tree standing guard over things. Perhaps the direct descendant of one of the trees Hearne and Matonabee used to make their tiny bark boats. We took a rest day here and the worst scenario unfolded - a beautiful and calm rest day followed by a vicious north wind that pinned us down for a day and a half. The outlet from Eileen had been noted

as a great fishing hole by Blanchet. And indeed it was. After wading down the rocky rapids in the Eileen River we had eight hits in 10 casts. Blanchet hauled in 150 pounds of fish for his subsistence diet from this spot.

We were left with one more overland section to get us into the Thelon River system. Blanchet mistakenly thought his run down the Eileen River was actually on the Thelon but there was one more watershed to carry. We decided here on the more northerly of two possible routes - the probable old native route into the Thelon. Blanchet had met some Chipewyans on Nonacho Lake and an elder in the group recalled her family's summer trips to the barrenlands via the Thelon River - and she used that name.

The chain of lakes northeast of Eileen that head towards the southwest bay of Whitefish was the route we chose. The final portage into the Thelon headwater lake was spectacular. It followed a classic esker - up to 80 feet high - that snaked and knifed its way for two miles through the lakes and trees of the area. The view was incredible, the walking superb and it took us quite close to Whitefish. A flurry of rainbows finished off the day and we camped in a cold evening not far from the outlet to Lynx Lake where our pickup would be.

We had chosen an esker right near the outlet of Lynx Lake as the drop spot but we weren't able to make it all the way and found a great beach for the airplane to land eight miles west of our original spot. I figured they would see it as they flew in from Yellowknife which was 220 miles to the west. Wrong. In fact it was a near thing that they found us at all. The Air Tindi pilot carrying our second half crew followed the north end of the lake and landed at the original spot after not seeing us. It was only with a few minutes to go before just dumping the group out that they spotted our yellow tent and the merrily waving ALE flag.

I was looking forward to seeing our second half crew and sad to see Andrew go. This was his first trip to the Barrens and his excitement rekindled my own first thoughts from 10 years earlier. But he had to go out, that was the plan and my brothers Geoffrey, HACC Chief Guide, and David, Quartermaster, and HACC Piscine Director Peter Brewster would carry on. Only one problem. No Peter Brewster. Geoffrey was first off the Air Tindi Turbo Beaver with a note from Peter explaining his rib injury a week earlier which forced him off. So what were we to do? Mr partner David was there and Geoff said he'd go solo. I didn't really like that idea. Much confusion and b.s. followed and shortly after brother Sean emerging from the back of the

➡Continued on Page 11

ALE: An Historical Perspective

By SEAN PEAKE
HACC Director of Research

Pinpointing La Camarade's route to the Baillie from the Hanbury-Thelon junction was really a best guess exercise. We could never be sure where exactly his old route lay as no landmarks were identified on King's map, only the flow of waterways.

To reach the Baillie, we planned to ascend a stream that lay on the north side of the Hanbury, about 6 miles above Macdonald Falls. The unusually low water levels—between three and four feet below normal—turned our destination stream into a sandbox, in effect making it a continuous 18-20 mile carry. We ended up shifting the start of our route downstream, about two or three miles above the falls, to where the Hanbury meanders through high sand hills and its valley widens. Our plan was to pond-hop across the tundra. It involved nine carries (with an average distance of 1.5 km between each "pond") over two days; the lakes saving us about 5 miles of carrying our overloaded packs.

During the portaging we saw no trace of habitation—no tent rings, fire places, oil drums, plastic or paper—but where we ended up was quite the opposite. Our destination was a long lake that lay just on the Hanbury side of the watershed. At the end of our last carry, Geoff found a small roll of very old birch bark on the beach. As we were several miles above the treeline, and many more from the nearest birch tree, this discovery proved quite promising. We knew we had entered a special place.

On our path to the Baillie, we followed a chain of small lakes joined by narrow streams—an almost continuous waterway had it not been for the low water. At north end of the first lake large, eskers close in on the shore, some quite high and

steep, and all quite spectacular. Each hillside bore the scars of thousands of years of caribou migration: the deep ruts gave a terraced look, like fields carved into a mountainside. At the narrows, where the eskers were cut by the streams flowing between the lakes, we saw stone knives, lance

that could easily be blocked. From the tops of the eskers a hunter could see an approaching animal without fear of being discovered and could quickly descend to the stream in lie in wait. In my brief experience in the barrens, never have I seen a region peppered with as many remnants of its

early inhabitants as this, nor as heavily scarred by caribou trails. According to the Handbook of North American (Vol. 6) and the display at the Prince of Wales Centre in Yellowknife, the artifacts appear to date from between 4000 and 7000 years ago. We have since provided the archeological division of the Centre with the coordinates of the sites we discovered. We can only hope that the Centre will have an opportunity to explore this area and maybe shed more light on the movements of the first people to venture onto the barrens following the retreat of the ice sheets, some 10,000 years ago.

Whether or not La Camarade's route is valid is a moot point. Many have paddled the portion from Lake Athabasca to the Thelon-Hanbury, but few, if any, have bothered to cross from the Hanbury to the Baillie (halfway through the portaging the reason for this comes galloping home) as not a single vestige was found of modern man.

Upon reflection, it seems the Steel River is a likely portion of La Camarade's route. As we wanted to get the full exposure of the Hanbury, before we set out we decided to go beyond the Steel and visit Dickson Canyon and Macdonald Falls. The Steel has the greatest flow of any of the rivers entering into the Hanbury from the north, between the junction and Macdonald Falls, the area where La

Camarade's map indicates cross-country travel begins. Perhaps there are more remnants along the Steel, perhaps not. One thing is certain, though, we entered an area with a deep and rich past.

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points and scrapers, some made of sparkling white quartzite. These sites were perfect ambush-cades. Caribou, descending the eskers to cross the river, would have had little chance of escape from the hunters—there was only one way out, and

News & Notes

MUSEUM UPDATE . . . The slow-turning wheels of progress have been greased a bit lately and the Canadian Canoe Museum has made some important strides. The last canoes left the old Camp Kandalore site in Haliburton in October and have headed for the new facility in Peterborough, Ontario.

The ink is dry on a gift from Outboard Marine Corporation to the museum of a 90,000 sq. ft. building on 6 acres of land in Peterborough. The building, valued at over one million dollars, will allow the entire canoe museum collection to be housed under one roof for the first time.

The former Kanawa Canoe Museum was founded by Kirk Wipper who singlehandedly began amassing the incredible collection of watercraft. Kirk was finally compensated last year and the collection rests in the hands of the new Canadian Canoe Museum board.

The long-awaited facility should be open to the public by next summer and the discovery of a lifetime of canoes and canoeing can begin. We'll keep you up to date on what's happening. Several of the canoe museum trustees are *Che-Mun* readers - naturally.

SCARY BWCA . . . All hell seems to be breaking loose in the along the Canada-US bordering one of the continent's great canoeing areas.

Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area is in danger of being ripped apart by the lifting of its wilderness designation. This would allow unrestricted access by motorized vehicles, a snowmobile trail running through the park and the abandoning of the visitor quota system. The threat also extends to the Voyageurs National Park, a few miles to the west. The BWCA is adjacent to Quetico Provincial Park which is also under a motorized attack lately. Natives there are allowed fly-in and motorboat guiding on numerous lakes in the million-acre wilderness park.

The U.S.-based Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness are fighting the proposed law changes that would gut the protection for their hard-fought parks.

HERITAGE UPDATE . . . The Canadian Heritage Rivers System continues to grow, adding new rivers to its list every year. They celebrated their 10th anniversary this year and have produced a book and added another Heritage River - the Upper Restigouche in New Brunswick.

There are now 28 rivers in this program totalling 6,357 km. While the program does much to promote river wilderness awareness there is no legal protection for the designated rivers. Northern Heritage Rivers include; the Kazan, Thelon, Seal, Alsek, Soper, Arctic Red, Clearwater and S. Nahanni.

C2C UPDATE . . . Well they apparently did it. Though we don't have any details of their exact route and whether they did indeed paddle the entire distance, Roman Rockcliffe, 24, and Frank Wolf, 24, arrived in Vancouver on Oct 14 after having left St. John, New Brunswick on April 18.

The pair were paddling to raise awareness for AIDS research and took a southern route, not the traditional fur trade route and rivers. We don't know how they crossed the Rockies but they certainly did well to get to the Pacific in that amount of time. We hope to try and find out more about this continental crossing for the next outfit.

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
Outfit 80 - Warburton Pike, Wabakimi Park, Merrick's True North
Outfit 81 - Arctic Land Exped, David Hanbury, Diamond development

Continued from Page 8

plane with a pizza box in one hand and his order to join the expedition in the other. It was to be the four Peakes - alone. I was most sorry for Peter who had looked forward to this all year but happy that a replacement was found - and I was related to him. There was a surfeit of cigars and distilled products that evening and the weather blessed us with a great sunset.

With groaning gunwales we headed off down the Thelon the next day. We had heard the river was low - and it was - but still quite runnable. The first two days on the upper Thelon were new to us. We had entered the river below the Elk River and Muskox Falls in 1985 and missed its thundering grandeur - and this was in low water. It was there we met the only group I saw all summer - and of course they were Che-Mun subscribers. Dalen and Lori Bayes of Washington state are veteran northern travellers. In fact, they were camped at the mouth of the Elk River thinking they might see us. Dalen was photographing Muskox Falls, he'd hiked the couple of miles up when we met him. One look at the four hairy, hulking canoeists in our logo-splattered canoes and he said, "You must be the Peake boys." We chatted for a while and promised to see them both the next morning when we headed down river. The rapids below the big fall, the big waves can be avoided by going far right, are the last big ones for many miles. Dalen and Lori were camped just below the cairn J. W. Tyrrell made in his trip up the Thelon in 1900. After arriving at their camp in style - with flags flying - we delivered a *Che-Mun* to Dalen who'd given his away and were hosted royally with some "heart starter" in our coffee. We then visited the cairn which also had a wooden stake attached. Our HACC Director of Research, Sean, noticed that the almost-illegible signature was that of W. H. B. Hoare who passed through here in 1937.

We made good time down the upper Thelon from that point since it's mostly swift water. The only real obstacle before the Hanbury junction in Thelon Canyon which is a three mile 90-degree turn which many people portage across. We ran and lined in '85 and were hoping to do the same this time. The only really hard part is the undercut cliff down the left side which was simply run last time. In much lower water the ledge we went over was more exposed meaning a tougher run outside or a possible tight run against the cliff.

The upper drop of the canyon was still a portage and then a short run and into a snapping eddy which brings you down to the superb sandstone lining ledges. This was where I lost the boat in 1985, letting the stern get too far out. With less water and more experience this did not happen again. Sean and Geoff, who rescued by canoe then, stood and politely applauded when I went through the fateful chute.

Geoff and Sean approached the cliff without being sure of which way to go - out or in. Then they realized something I had forgotten from an old trip report. In really low water you can walk around the cliff. It was about two feet deep and a team effort was needed but no real problem. All you're left with then are several miles of big standing waves which can usually be avoided by sticking close to shore. We did line the next big drop on the side, one we'd barreled through in '85 to our absolute horror and wetness.

We made the junction about 9 pm and camped right there next to the mouth of the Hanbury - a great place to be. The view from my tent door, 60 feet up the river bank looked right down the Thelon. And that was the easy route that beckoned. But not for the Peakes.

We headed up the Hanbury the next morning. We have no other record of any group travelling up this river since Hoare in 1929. But perhaps some people have. (Let us know.) The first day's relatively easy lining brought us to Helen Falls a place I'd always wanted to see. This beautiful drop, the last on the Hanbury, is also noted as the Eric Morse cairn site. The climb up to the portage trail - some distance from the falls - was a treat.

Low water meant a large area of the fall's ledge was dry and great for camp-

ing. The cairn, an unassuming pile of rocks, contained an ammo box and a well-waterproofed journal dating from 1992. Missing was the reproduction that editor David Pelly had done and left there after taking out the original (See *Che* 74). Even in the few short years no fewer than seven *Che-Mun* subscribers had written their names!

I was sure we were in a select few who had done both Thelon Canyon and Helen Falls in three days of travel. Heading upstream from Helen meant a lot of lining with some flat stretches where we actually got in the canoe. Ford Falls was the next obstacle and really not much after Helen but the big one lay just a couple of miles further west - Dickson Canyon.

Now here's a formidable piece of water. Dickson Canyon's three miles of tortuous twists and deadly drops is a portage all the way. We didn't start the carry until 6 pm after dragging up the greasy and rapids rocks well below. Three and a half hours of tough slogging brought us to the only spot along the way where you can camp close to the water. It's a highwater runoff channel that appears just before a mighty drop through the dark rocks and we dragged our very weary bodies into camp as it was getting dark. Geoff made a bracing cup of sweet tea with milk that was as good as



Wading around the critical point on the Thelon Canyon.

anything I'd tasted in recent memory.

The next morning before finishing the final third of the carry we set out to have a good look at Dickson. The bugs were again atrocious here - as they had been most of the summer. Our Woods bug jackets were in constant use and a real sanity saver. For many years I had mentally pictured Dickson Canyon and now here it was in front of me. It's an incredibly savage piece of water, ripping its way down more than 200 vertical feet of the Hanbury's elevation. I would love to see it in break-up. We posed for some shots and walked much of the length (it's much better without packs) before donning our loads again for the final kilometer. We put in just above the blind corner that would be a nightmare to descend and headed for Macdonald Falls which lay just ahead.

Not far past Macdonald there is a rock narrows that signifies the end of the steep section - and the beginning of an adventure for those heading downstream. We entered the sandy expansion of the Hanbury where the deep water disappeared and finding the route through the tons of pure white sandy proved harder than you'd think. It wasn't far before we began to head north leaving the now-easy Hanbury behind.

The footing was pretty good but the bugs, general work load and temperatures were oppressive. Four northbound carries later, totalling 3.5 km, we entered a long lake where we'd hoped to have lunch. But it was just too buggy. Heavy



ESKER HAUL -- Andrew Macdonald portages his Old Town Tripper along a spectacular esker that makes up part of the old Indian Portage into the Thelon River system from the west.

This esker heads very close to Whitefish Lake, the headwaters of the Thelon. The photo was taken on Day 23 of the first half of the Arctic Land Expedition which retraced the route pro-

posed by Dr. Richard King and given to him by the native La Camarade, when he was trip physician on the Back Expedition in 1834. The route was travelled this summer for almost

Che Announcements

BORN. April 21, 1995 in Toronto to Sean and Bev Peake, a lovely daughter, Virginia Melanie weighing in at 6 lbs. 15 ounces. 'Mini Ginnie' was welcomed by sisters Kaitlain and Emily.

MARRIED. Margaret Ann McNair of Muskoka, Ont. and Michael Adams Peake. Wed in Toronto, October 25, 1995.

CHE-MUN

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