

CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 87

CHE-MUN

WINTER 1997



photo: Chris Morris

The waters of Great Slave Lake offer exciting paddling possibilities - sometimes a bit too exciting.

Here, two members of Christopher Morris' group headed for Arctic Sound are making the crossing

at the east end of the lake to Reliance just ahead of an approaching thunderstorm.

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Uncovering an
Arctic Legend**

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Winter Packet

It sometimes takes the intervention of a third party to make two sides see things clearly. And how often is it something trivial that causes a falling out. This is not something that *Che-Mun* practices but that's what happened after the Outfit 86 interview with Don Starkell. We received this letter from Starkell's erstwhile partner, **Victoria Jason** who also lives in Winnipeg.

"With amusement, I read "A Talk with Arctic and Amazon Man Don Starkell" in the Autumn issue of *Che-Mun*.

"My name is Victoria Jason and I am the one who supposedly dumped on him, according to Don Starkell.

"In my book, *Kabloona in the Yellow Kayak*, I wrote the story the way it was. I know of no other way to tell a true story. The funniest part was about the knife that the Russell people gave him.

"He willingly gave it to me in exchange for an antique, wooden beer bottle case he desperately wanted. It was not a one-of-a-kind knife. There are many on the market and it was not engraved to him either.

"When he saw the Inuk with the identical knife he assumed I had given mine away. After four years, thanks to your article, the reason why he was so nasty has come to light.

"To top it off, I did not give it away. Indigo had his own Russell knife. The knife has been in my utility drawer for the last four years because I have a folding one I prefer. But I will dispose of it now.

"I showed Don the knife while at a Christmas party on December 7. He recognized it immediately. When I left the party, his mouth was still open and it was the first time I saw him with nothing to say.

"He could have spared himself four years of brooding by simply asking, 'Did you give your knife to Indigo?'

"Respectful . . . and a team player? I don't think so! I doubt he has a clue of what respect is. I 2.

saw no example of it. The 'jumping around' part is too stupid to address. It is explained on page 118 of *Kabloona*."

"Thanks. I just wanted to set it straight."

To follow that amazing letter with a perfect rejoinder, **Gwyneth Hoyle**, editor of *Canoeing North into the Unknown* and a faithful reader wrote in regard to Outfit 86.

"Thanks for another great issue! It begins to feel like a newsletter of old friends for me. A photograph of Gwen Hayball and George Luste taken at Bathurst Inlet last summer sits on our mantelpiece, I had a letter from Elliott Merrick this week, I saw Victoria Jason's sister last week and we talked about Don Starkell and also saw Dick Irwin at the Snow Walker's Rendezvous in Vermont in October.

"Was the interview with Starkell in person or by phone? [Ed. Note: By phone] I believe that he and Victoria have supporters who are as polarized as Mina Hubbard and Dillon Wallace, the difference is in the times. The Victorian code of restraint, which imposed silence over both parties, added to the interest and mystery, and made people curious to know what really happened. In the '90s we let everything hang out, and the dirt flies. I happen to like and admire Victoria, but also found Starkell interesting – but not one I would like to have travelled with.

"A friend who is more of the old school than I am, found Victoria's sniping comments about Starkell very tedious in *Kabloona*. Is there more to be said on the two of them? The conflict of two strong personalities is always intriguing.

"Having met and corresponded with Victoria, I am in her camp, but I was also glad that you gave Don Starkell an interview."

Veteran solo paddler **Herb Pohl** dropped us a line from his home in Burlington, Ontario.

"The last issue of *Che-Mun* reminded me that it was time to renew my subscription and I thought it better to do so before bank balances take a sharp turn for the worse during the Christmas season. Are there no seniors' discounts? [Ed Note - No. Actually we're thinking of raising seniors' prices]

"By the way, I'm still waiting to hear John Winter's side of the George Luste trip around the tip of Labrador, never mind George Grinnell's story of last summer's journey. All these questions marks just confirm that travelling in association with other people is hazardous and to be avoided if at all possible.

"My own travels last summer took me back to Labrador after an absence of four years. I thought I'd better get it in before the ghosts of Voiseys Bay despoil the surrounding area forever. As well, I realized that the debilitation of old age would soon condemn me to consider trips in areas frequented by crowds of 'groupies'.

"In the past, my trips in the region always had an east-west orientation, starting at Schefferville and finishing on the Atlantic coast. This time I tried to stay on a northerly course close to the height of land which constitutes the boundary between Quebec and Labrador. I had planned originally to start at the headwaters of the Kanairiktok River but a close examination of my bank book revealed that a cheaper alternative was needed, so I flew into Lac Raude instead and worked my way up to the height of land from there.

"It proved to be the buggiest and windiest trip ever. That's a strange combination, I know, but a perfect example of Murphy's Law in operation. During the day, while on lake or portage, the wind

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Editor's Notebook

I was quite astonished to read the letter from Victoria Jason, which leads off the Winter Packet opposite. The revelations by her fellow-traveller, Don Starkell, in our last issue about the ownership of a particular knife seemed to be a small yet critical part of their falling out. Equally pointed was the observation by the astute Gwyneth Hoyle that the pair seem to be a modern version of Mina Hubbard and Dillon Wallace of George River fame. The comparisons are fascinating.

With regard to the Outfit 86 story on the *Backcountry* show, we have an update. The show is now called *Anyplace Wild*. They had to change the name because there already was a show called *Backcountry* somewhere else. The new show will air on PBS beginning June 4. The exact schedule will depend on your local PBS affiliate. For more info they gave me a website, which is due to be up and running by the time you read this: www.bpbasencamp.com/anyplacewildtv

Speaking of websites, the one I told you about at www.canoe.ca titled All About Canoes is finally getting re-organized by *Che-Mun*. The process has been slow but by the time you read this there should already be some changes made. We hope to re-do what's there and make it a great destination for wilderness canoeists as well as a valuable resource location. It will not become an on-line version of *Che-Mun* but we hope an nice accompaniment to it.

Winter is a time for planning and the Hide-Away Canoe Club is hard at it again for 1997. We have something very different and unique in mind for this summer. I can't tell you the plans yet but it involves a big river in northern Quebec and a chance to get a lot of people involved in the trip. More details in Outfit 88.

I hope you will enjoy our long-promised look at John Rae. He was truly a remarkable man of tremendous strength and vigour. Despite all he that did, Rae was the only major Franklin search explorer who wasn't knighted. One detractor sniffed, "Anyone can succeed, if he is willing to go native." Rae combined the natural savvy of the Inuit with European technology to become the best in his field. A fact not realized, or admitted, by most of his peers.

Elsewhere you can read about the latest paddling adventures of Chris Morris, a young man with a most ambitious pad-

Michael Peake, Editor.

Building that yellow brick

Prospects for more mine and road development in the Kitikmeot region of the NWT (Nunavut) are beginning to be discussed again.

Arauco Resources Corp., a Toronto-based mining company, is meeting with the Kitikmeot Corporation about plans to develop six gold properties 40 miles south of Bathurst Inlet.

The Kitikmeot Corporation is the birthright development corporation for the Inuit of the Kitikmeot region.

The company recently struck a deal with a consortium of firms to buy the properties for \$28.5 million. The properties cover 138,000 acres of the Kitikmeot region near George Lake and the Back River. The land is Inuit-owned, as are at least some of the sub-surface rights. That means the regional Inuit association will collect any royalties from eventual mining production.

Arauco acquired an option to buy the George Lake and Back River sites last summer. The purchase has kindled fresh speculation about the need for new road construction in the region. They will meet with representatives of the Kitikmeot Inuit Association to discuss possible ways of servicing the site.

"If we're successful in going ahead and developing the mine, at some point a road will be put in somewhere," a spokesman said. "But the road could simply be from the coast, down from the bottom of Bathurst Inlet to our property, and maybe eventually some of the other miners there would like to take that and extend it."

No other exploration projects in the region are currently advanced enough to require road access.

Another alternative for the George Lake and Back River site is a winter road extending west 100 miles to Contwoyto Lake, where it would link up with the existing winter road from Yellowknife to the Lupin gold mine, operated by Echo Bay Mines.

Metall Mining Corp.'s base-metals project at Izok Lake to the west of Contwoyto Lake sparked a controversy in 1993 after various people, including the GNWT, promoted the idea of building an all-weather road from Yellowknife to the Arctic coast. Neither the road nor a proposed deep-water port in the Coronation Gulf were ever built and the Izok project has since been put on hold.

Arauco hopes to begin conducting a feasibility study at the site later this year.

A Rae ahead of his time

Capt. John Rae of the Hudson's Bay Company found the first traces of the lost Franklin expedition. Rae was the only major Arctic explorer who was never knighted despite his incredible journeys and remarkable achievements. His native-based travel methods, which were suspect at the time, no doubt accounted for both his success and snubbing. The key element of Rae's travels was that, unlike every one of his fellow explorers, he was, primarily, self-reliant. It has taken us quite a while to appreciate him.

Coppermine (on foot) and over to Fort Confidence via the Kendall River and Dismal Lakes where they overwintered in 1848-49. In 1850, the HBC again sent him north where he mapped 725 miles of coastline and received the Founder's Medal from the Royal Geographical Society.

Rae was famed for his speed of travel. He went

faster and harder than anyone else. Rae was able to move quickly across the land and live off of it because he learned how from those who had been doing it for centuries. He liked the natives for their abilities in the bush and their physical prowess. Rae adopted the small Indian sledge to haul goods. Each sled weighed no more than 75 pounds - Rae's personal load was just 40 which enabled him to move more freely to do mapping. Fast and light was his method - unheard of for the time.

A good contrast between the official government method and Rae's natives way was in the weight of bedding. Most Arctic expeditions carried 25 pounds per man of blankets alone. Rae's sleeping robes, a combination of blankets and strips of caribou skins with the hair on weighed only five pounds. When it was really cold the men would all sleep together - Rae always taking the outside position, which required occasional turning to keep warm.

His personal kit consisted of the above plus Inuit snow goggles, his gun, watch, chronometers, telescope and needle case. He also carried a few books including a volume of Shakespeare and a book of poems. When the pages of his books frozen, Rae took them to bed to thaw out. Rae's effigy, pictured in Outfit 84, shows

When it comes to Arctic explorers, Dr. John Rae, an Orkneyman employed by the Hudson's Bay Company, was in a class all by himself.

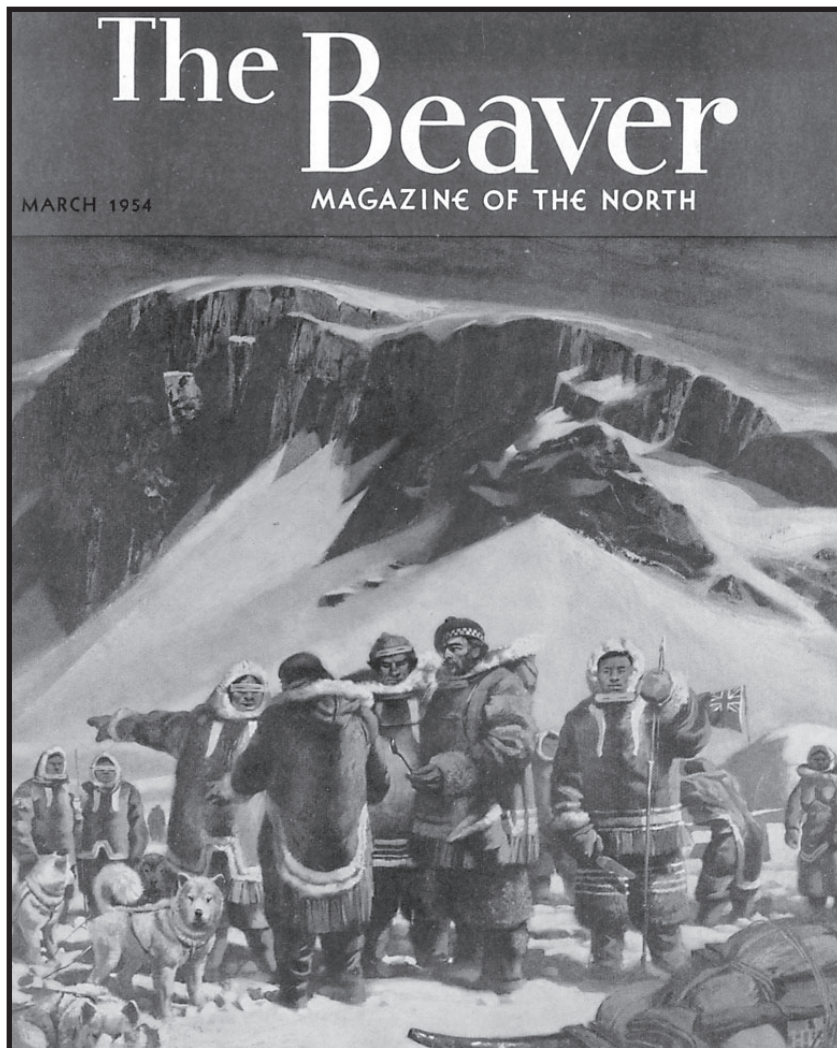
Rae followed the custom of the time for young men on the rugged, northern Scottish Orkney Islands and came to Canada in the employ of The Hudson's Bay Co. in 1833 when he was 20 years old. He had just graduated in medicine and served as the ship's doctor on the voyage to Moose Factory in James Bay.

Rae loved the new frontier and remained at the fort as a clerk and surgeon until 1844. He was soon after sent north by famed HBC Governor George Simpson. Though a European, Rae quickly assessed that the ways of the North American natives - and the natives themselves - had much to offer a man in his position.

Rae's first assignments were to fill in the gaps on the map left by previous explorations. He quickly demonstrated his abilities and competence in Arctic conditions. In the winter of 1846-47, Rae's group of 12 people in Repluse Bay became the first European-led party to overwinter and live off the land. The only previous groups to do it required huge quantities of gear provided by ships.

In 1848, Rae was asked to accompany Sir John

Richardson on his search for the missing Franklin expedition. Richardson was highly complimentary on Rae's abilities. He and Richardson searched the Arctic coast and eventually made their way up the



The Rae Centenary issue of the HBC magazine The Beaver in March 1954. The painting shows Rae meeting with Inuit who had recovered relics of the lost Franklin expedition.

Northern Legends

him dressed in skins, lying down reading a book, a gun at his side.

Rae was called into action again in 1853 and sent north to be one of many who were looking for Franklin and hoping to reap the huge rewards awaiting such a discovery. After overwintering at Repulse Bay he proceeded on to Pelly Bay in early 1854, where he met a group of Inuit who told him about the sighting in 1850 of a group of 40 white men dragging a boat along the west coast of King William Island. Rae purchased several relics from the group including spoons and forks, a medal and a small plate engraved "Sir John Franklin, K.C.B".

Rae returned to London and received the £10,000 reward for his findings but only after a great deal of investigation. He was not the person the Admiralty had in mind to receive this money and fame. It would take until 1959 when positive proof of the expedition was found by McClintock in a cairn on Victory Point on the northwest coast of King William Island. It was an 1848 message by Franklin's second in command, a Lieut. Crozier, writing of the death of Franklin and the abandoning of the ships. Franklin's journal was never found and remains the ultimate hope of searchers.

Rae retired from the HBC in 1856 at the age of 43 after many years of great activity. He was estimated to have travelled 23,000 miles during his northern explorations. He continued to work and explore. [Doing survey work for the burgeoning telegraph industry among other things.] He even descended the mighty Fraser River in British Columbia without a guide in a dugout canoe! He married in 1860 but had no children and lived in London until his death in 1893.

Not one to hoard his knowledge, Rae had told his countrymen about his new ways of travel. He was resentful that the British government did not follow his recommendations. Throughout his life he continued to point out British expeditionary blunders in letters to the editor and various articles. (One of Rae's advances was the use of a portable folding boat which was featured in Outfit 84 in an article by Gwen Hayball).

In the issue of *The Beaver* pictured here are several articles on Rae. One of the most interesting is by Vilhjalmur Stefansson. In it, Stef recalls a fascinating quote from his much earlier book *My Life with the Eskimo*.

"This is but one of the many instances of which I am aware that show the excellence of the work of John Rae, a man exact and truthful and in his meth-

ods of travel a generation ahead of his time; for while his countrymen were still using (in many ways absurd) methods of travel which had handicapped them so greatly and led to so much needless suffering and so many deplorable tragedies, he had put into effect the only sound principle of the travel-



Magnificent Rae portrait by Stephen Pearce.

ler – that is of doing in Rome what the Romans do, which in the Arctic means using the methods which the forces of evolution have taught to the dwellers in icy lands, instead of methods which men some of them ingenious and energetic, have evolved from

their inner consciousness and the limited experience of a half-a-dozen years.

"It is striking that John Rae wintered in Repulse Bay, using only the food and fuel which nature had provided in Repulse Bay, and that he did this within a decade of the time when Sir John Franklin's entire company of able bodied Englishman equipped quite as well as Rae's party, starved helplessly and died to the last man . . . That the country in which Franklin's men starved is sufficiently provided with means of subsistence is shown by the fact it was people with Eskimos, both before and after the great tragedy. At the very time those Englishmen were dying of hunger there were living all about them Eskimo families which were taking care of their aged and bringing up their children in comparative plenty, unaided by the rifles and other excellent implements which the Englishmen had in abundance."

Noted northern scholar R.C. Wallace wrote of Rae in that 1954 issue of *The Beaver*, "The greatest honour that he could achieve and which he would have desired, was to be remembered as one of the great explorers and one of the greatest of travellers in the long history of northern exploration. That honour rests securely on the pages of history.

John Rae wrote one book, Narrative of an expedition to the shores of the Arctic sea in 1846 and 1847. London: T & W Boone. 247 p.

He also authored a number of articles for the Royal Geographical Society Journal. The one relat-

No Ordinary Journey

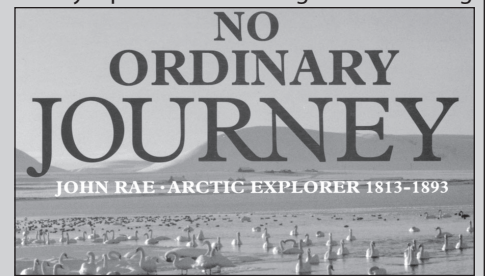
John Rae, Arctic Explorer 1813-1893
National Museums of Scotland &
McGill-Queen's University Press 116pp.
\$22.95Cdn. 1993. ISBN 0-7735-1107-5

Published in both Scotland and Canada in 1993, the centenary of John Rae's death, No Ordinary Journey is the perfect and portable purchase for those wanting a written and especially pictorial look at the life of this great explorer.

There are four co-authors of this book, all Scots, each of whom contributes a chapter or more. Headings include; Childhood in Orkney, Early Arctic Exploration, Rae in the Arctic, Rae and the Native Canadians and Rae as Collector and Ethnographer.

One of the great strengths of this book is the wonderful variety of artwork. Various paintings

and photos of Rae and many of his great artifacts appear. Also included are some lovely Arctic photographs by Fred Bruemmer and others and a very satisfying variety of sketches, maps and artwork that surround the Rae saga though strangely not the famed portrait of Rae by Pearce (above). The writing is straightforward and to the point. It is really much like a catalogue for a museum exhibit, which perhaps it partly was. It offers a most pleasant way to penetrate something of this fascinating



Paddle-bound for Arctic Sound

Story and photos
By CHRISTOPHER MORRIS

After my trip last year, I tried to write about what a first trip on the tundra was like. That was a difficult task: to put into words what by its very essence is something that is best felt through the senses, and not through the intellect.

After my trip this past summer (from Yellowknife to Arctic Sound, via Great Slave Lake, Pike's Portage Route, Artillery, Clinton-Colden, Aylmer, Savannah, Glowworm, Sterlet, Hardy, Pellatt, Contwoyto, Concession, Rockinghorse, and Takijuk Lakes, and the Hood River.) I was asked by *Che-Mun* to compare it with my first tundra experience. I do not feel that I can do that; this summer there were four of us, instead of two as the summer before. The experiences are too different to lend themselves to comparison; the larger the group, the more one's attention seems to focus within it. Even the constant sight of another canoe can become an unwanted distraction. Next summer its back to two, and so I can only offer a promissory note for an article next winter.

Instead, I would like to say something about a few of the wonderful people I met this summer. As our route lay to the west of that magic line, east of which lies nothing of commercial geological interest, I suppose it was inevitable that we would meet more people than the previous year.

But the tundra still provides enough solitude to make human contact a pleasure rather than an annoyance.

Things began in Yellowknife, where Teri Arychuk and the rest of the fine people at Air Tindi said that yes, they could drop our food packs at the Lupin Mine, and no, it wouldn't cost anything. And yes, like last summer, my family could call as often as we liked to see if we had been spotted. And yes, we could repack all of our gear in their office, and store my vehicle for the summer, and canoes over the winter, etc. Canoeists are probably a small fraction of their business, yet despite all of the attention we require, they are always happy to see us, and to keep an eye out for us.

That evening, I swung by the Gerle Gold Mining Company crew house to see Chris Hrkac, the geologist who runs their Yellowknife operation. Chris is an accomplished climber, with a first ascent in the Himalayas to his credit, a keen paddler, and dogsledder who the previous winter drove an team of Iditarod-bound

dogs 400 km down the north shore of Great Slave Lake. Last year he arranged a generous split charter for us, and provided us with otherwise unavailable maps. This year he was no less helpful. We must, he insisted, drop by one of their exploration camps near Clinton-Colden Lake for a visit, and yes of course they could fly some food packs there for us. And if we couldn't take the time for a detour to the camp, well then the helicopter based there could leave them anywhere we liked, as long as they were under 600 pounds!

On July 2nd we paddled away from the Air Tindi docks, and after almost being run over by a Twin Otter on its nose-up take-off run, escaped down Yellowknife Bay, and eastwards on Great Slave. Eight days later, we pulled into the homestead of Dave and Kristen Olsen and their 35 huskies, at the mouth of the Hoarfrost River. The Olsens weren't there, but a friend of theirs named Megan was, and she made us feel right at home with an endless supply of coffee, and cookies coming straight out of the oven.

The next day, after a brief stop at the Trophy Fishing Lodge in Reliance, which we were invited to for breakfast by two American fishermen from Las Vegas – in their 25th year of coming up here – we arrived at the foot of that formidable portage route named after the English adventurer Warburton Pike. As we pulled into the final bay, we were hailed from shore by three canoeists –



Christopher Morris survey a rapid on the turbulent Hood River whose last drop is the famous Wilberforce Falls.

Expeditions

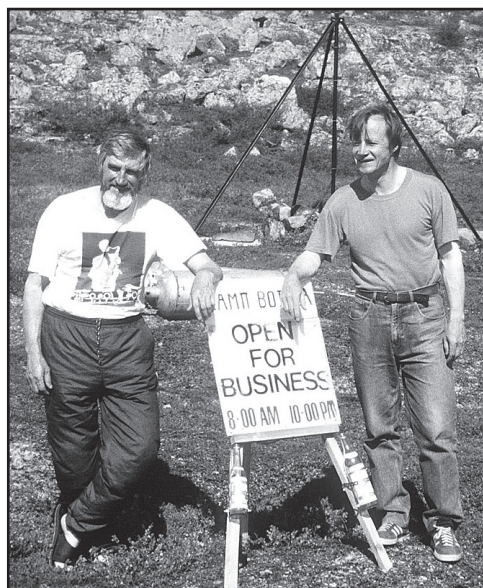
two old codgers, and the daughter of one of them – who had just come down the portage and were paddling back to Yellowknife in a square-stern Grumman. After our first load was safely at the top of the first leg (4.5 km and 600 ft up) they resuscitated us with piping-hot stew, and endless cups of tea, while one of them named Hugh Westheuser, regaled us with stories from his thirty-odd years with the RCMP, most of it spent in the Arctic.

With the nine carries of Pike's, a marathon all-day and all-night paddle up Artillery Lake, and many days of paddling in the blistering and merciless heat behind us, we were more than pleased to arrive at the end of the little bay of Clinton-Colden Lake from which we had to walk two kilometers to the Gerle Gold camp at Vodka Lake – so named because of the two Russian geologists working there. Once again, we were given a fine welcome: they had tried, Shannon the camp manager told us, to get ice-cream flown in for us, but due to the unavailability of planes that week the best they could manage was a big turkey dinner!

As it turned out, we ended up spending three days at Vodka Lake, enjoying hot showers, great food, and good company, while we waited for their next re-supply to bring in a replacement centre thwart that broken on Pike's. And no, they wouldn't accept any payment for feeding us for three days, running around Yellowknife buying rivets of various sizes, a rivet gun, a hacksaw, and several pieces of aluminum tubing for us, flying it out, or for our calls home from their satellite phone; or even for the numerous cigarettes bummed from the cook. Resupplied and rejuvenated, their helicopter ferried us back to our canoes, and the Kevin the pilot helped us drill out the old thwart and bolt in the new one from his vast supply of nuts and bolts.

Ten days later, after a tough crossing from Aylmer Lake to Contwoyto, with several more portages than expected, we slid, thoroughly exhausted, into the dock at the Lupin Mine after a 15½ hour, 68 km paddle down storm-threatened Contwoyto Lake. Waiting at the dock for us was Ken Sauve, the security officer who had been roused from bed by some miners returning from an afternoon of fishing, to meet us. When we asked where we could pitch our tents, he said anywhere, but that

we might prefer the rooms they had ready for us. So within five minutes we went from the black, cold water of Contwoyto, to a warm cafeteria, huge trays of hot food, and a big screen TV showing - live coverage of Canada's



Two Russian geologists at the Vodka Lake camp.

Olympic team winning the men's 4 x100m relay!

After that, it was off to bed, each of us with our own room, with an attached bath and clean sheets, all courtesy of Echo Bay Mines. The next morning the mine manager, Jerry McCrank, invited us to stay a second night even though, as we later found out, they normally charge \$250 per person per night for guests. But not to worry, Ken told us, "anyone that comes in off the land stays for free."

The next day, fattened up once again, and resupplied with an additional 20 pounds of flour [courtesy of the camp manager Paul Sine] to replace our bannock that had not survived the month in the storeroom, and extra naptha [courtesy of Ken] we set off again. Despite the predictions by several of the many Inuit who work at the mine and whose families live in the surrounding areas that the weather would worsen. Of course they were right, and we only made it to the end of the lake before having to make camp in the face of the driving wind and rain. After so many hot days, the weather was beginning to turn, and we were anxious to get to the Hood.

The country between Contwoyto and the Headwaters of the Hood is some of the most beautiful that I have seen anywhere in the barrenlands, being uncharacteristically hilly, particularly around the Avaarvik River, with its spectacular final canyon, and fun rapids beginning right out of Rockinghorse Lake. Unfortunately, one of our canoes suffered substantial damage in those rapids, and had it not been for the extra aluminum bits that we had brought with us from Vodka Lake and the large amounts of Kevlar and Cold Cure that we had carried, the trip might well have been over for half of us. But the repairs held, and we descended the Hood with no serious mishaps, other than losing half a sprayskirt and a camera tripod in a very chilly swim.

We arrived at Wilberforce Falls almost a week ahead of schedule, which turned out to be a good thing. It was here that we had our most disappointing meeting, with an adult group from Camp Wanapitei. Although their clients were quite pleasant, the two guides were downright rude and inhospitable, seeing fit to lecture us on how one should always defecate 200 yards from the river, after apparently finding some human turd amidst the vast quantities of caribou and wolf turd. After two months on the tundra, we were clearly more than a little peeved to be lectured at by two people who had done nothing more than float downstream for a week and a half. But as it turned out, their apparently vast wilderness knowledge was somewhat lacking.

With a storm obviously approaching, we moved our loads to the end of the portage and set up camp in the relative shelter at the bottom of the canyon. The Wanapitei group, apparently unfazed by the weather, were encamped high on a ridge. Over the next three days we were blasted by the first of the winter storms, and the Wanapitei group, high on their hill, were thoroughly miserable and forced to move camp in the midst of several inches of snow.

In meantime, we had been having a fine time. Early on the second evening a helicopter came creeping up the river valley and put down beside our camp. They were on their way from Resolute – where they had spent the summer picking up old fuel drums – to Yellowknife. The weather prevented them from crossing the

Expeditions

Continued from Page 7

Wilberforce Hills, and since we were, as they said, the biggest settlement between Cambridge Bay and Lupin, they asked if we could put them up for the night. After all the hospitality that we had received, we were more than willing, and spent an absolutely grand evening taking aerial photos of the falls, and listening to greatly exaggerated tales of heroic flying exploits by the Newfie pilot, Rob Carroll, accompanied by his portable CD player and vast CD collection.

The next morning, with the weather clearing, and the helicopter engine being warmed up by my Peak 1 stove, the two Wanapitei guides arrived at our camp. Despite their very relaxed schedule, they had apparently not allowed any time for the possibility of bad weather despite it being late August, and had planned to arrive at Arctic Sound the night before their morning pick-up, which they were now be unable to make. Could the helicopter pilot, on his arrival in Yellowknife, contact the air service and arrange for them to be picked up on the esker strip near Wilberforce instead?

We arrived at Arctic Sound without further mishap, and spent a leisurely two days exploring before our Air Tindi plane arrived, right on schedule, to collect us. After numerous cups of coffee with the two pilots – a bad move before a 5 and 1/2 hour flight – we took off for Yellowknife, where Teri, with some satisfaction, ticked us off her list as the last group of outstanding canoeists that they were keeping track of that summer.

Christopher Morris is a native Ontarian who is currently a doctoral student at Magdalene College at Cambridge in Great Britain. His E-mail: address is: rcm28@cam.ac.uk

MORE ON MORRIS: This coming summer Mr. Morris has a real doozy in mind. Titled 'The Rock'em, sock'em, break-up to Freeze-up Grand Tundra Canoe Tour'. This 98 day trip will take Morris and his fellow paddler all the way from Yellowknife to . . . Yellowknife!

Now, even he admits it's a stretch but the 27-year-old has youth on his side. He will also need a lot more like weather and good luck, especially since he is starting fairly late – at the end of June. Morris is unable to leave school before then and figures he would just be pulling on ice at that time of year. Morris plans to paddle back into Yellowknife on the second of October, no doubt in a snowstorm.

His route takes him east along Great Slave and up through the usual route to Beverly Lake on the Thelon. He will then head north to the source of the Morse River and down into the Back working his way to the Armark River to the Arctic Ocean.

The pair then heads west to Coppermine where it really gets interesting. Up the Coppermine to Big Bend and through the traditional native route on the Hook River to Great Bear Lake then up the Camsell River to Rae Lakes and then down the Marian River to Great Slave and before you know it – you're back in Yellowknife.

Ambitious? Yes. Possible? Maybe. Morris

Sic transit gloria mundi

Confessions of an Arctic plodder

*In the recent issue of Nastawgan, the organ of the Wilderness Canoe Association, **George Luste** reported on a part of his long expedition of last summer. We previously summarized George's story in Outfit 86. While George wrote primarily about his experiences on Great Slave Lake he also took a couple of paragraphs to reflect on strenuous canoeing and growing old. We thought his wise words bore repeating.*

I turned 56 this past August and George Grinnell is some six years older. Both of us are conscious of our slowly diminishing stamina. Thus it seemed best we do something like this sooner rather than later. While I am still in relatively good health, I no longer have the energy and recovery power of my youth and during the winter I tend to put on weight and become flabby. The only compensating factor is that perhaps I am a bit wiser and more experienced than I was 20 years ago.

So today I am more apprehensive about getting myself into dangerous and extreme situations. As I age I have become more conservative, more careful, in what I commit myself to. I no longer possess the physical resources of a younger man, and I try to use my experience, and "an ounce of prevention" instead of relying on quick reflexes and pure strength as a 'pound of cure'.

I am still a good 'plodder', however. I can put one foot in front of the other on a long steady grind on a good portage trail – but I no longer have the agility to skip across wet rocks while carrying a canoe. I no longer want to test my survival ability by running an intimidating rapid. I no longer care to be as casual in expending my energies in futile efforts. And so today I am more inclined to paddle long hours on a calm day or evening and not paddle at all if the weather looks unstable and threatening. I'm more inclined to stop early at the end of a normal if faced with a rapid, or the possibility of a dump, or even the need to make a marginal decision late in the day. I have convinced myself that plodding is alright when tired. Dealing with risk is not.

Thus I have come to embrace a varied and flexible paddling schedule on my long trips. There are advantages to doing so. One expends less energy for the same distance and I think it makes for a safer overall trip. But it also means that one is faced with more decisions and uncertainty about when to stop and start than a rigid nine-to-five routine implies. Perhaps, if the conditions are stable, then a schedule makes sense. If the conditions vary considerably, then a varied schedule is preferred.

Receiving the wonders of Cree-ation

By LAWRENCE MILLMAN

There are certain parts of the globe where you would not expect to find automobiles. Antarctica. The Arabian Desert. The Amazon rainforest. The Himalayas. And northern Quebec's Wapoose Lake. Then what was I doing on a road, or remote facsimile thereof, jolting along in a pickup truck en route to this remote location.

As a consultant to the Ouje-Bougoumou Cree, I was investigating a Summer/Fall tourism project. Take me into the bush, I'd told my hosts David and Anna Bosum, and do unto me exactly what you would do unto prospective paying visitors.

I'd already gone on a Winter/Spring bush trip with them; a trio where we'd camped 10 or so miles from Ouje-Bougoumou. But now they seem to have taken the word bush literally and we were heading deep into the heart of Canada's forest primeval.

On and on we drove. The road grew primeval itself with sandtraps, pot-holes, boreal bogs, small boulders and streams. The truck swayed, vibrated and sashayed like an exotic dancer. I was starting to feel a bit sick, as if my inner organs were being permanently re-arranged by all this up-and-down, back-and-forth movement. But I was sick too. For two weeks I'd had a cold that seemed on the verge of bronchitis.

At last, after four hours, we arrived at our destination. We pitched our tents amid a tumult of cold rain and immediately went to sleep. Later, when I went outside to answer Nature's proverbial call, it was so dark that I stepped right into Wapoose Lake. Uh-oh, I thought, now I'll come down with pneumonia.

It wasn't much lighter the next morning. It was still raining too, although the temperature seemed cold enough for snow. Coughing and wheezing, I stumbled into David and Anna's tent, then plunked myself down on its spruce bough floor. My hosts took one look at me, their ailing charge, and plotted a course of action.

First, David picked some Labrador tea. He boiled this heath shrub for half an hour; leaves, branches and all, then poured the brownish liquid into my cup.

"We call Labrador tea *katicibogotik*," he told me. "That means 'the plant which does not die.' We pick it in the winter, in the summer, all the time. You, too, won't die if you drink this tea. At least you won't die right now . . ."

Encouraging words. But I did in fact feel a bit better after consuming that cup of somewhat acrid-tasting tea.

At this point Ann mentioned several other bush remedies. If you take juice from the glands of the beaver and squirt it into your eyes, it'll cure snowblindness. (Thankfully, I was not suffering from that ailment!) Also you can make ointment from tamarack (larch) bark that'll relieve eczema. Frog urine heals snake bites. And if you suffer from heart trouble, put some bear pee in your tea – it'll make your ticker good as new in practically no time.

A while later David presented me with a moose's leg bone. If I gnawed at the sinews, he told me, my own legs would become strong again. So I gnawed away.

After I finished gnawing, he splintered the bone and removed a broken strip of marrow. This he proceeded to make into a thin grey broth called *mooskimee* – the Cree chicken soup. Skimming off some foam, he offered it

to me. "Have some *mooskawanu*," he said. It tasted not unlike ice cream – if you can imagine hot, moose-flavoured ice cream.

As for the marrow broth itself, its taste was so strongly medicinal, that it reminded me of, well, medicine.

By mid-afternoon I felt much better. Indeed, I felt well enough to go paddling with David. We went out to a place on Wapoose Lake where he set down his fish net. A wind blowing off the land caused the canoe to dance somewhat like the truck had done earlier. The wind also blew directly into my sinuses so that by the time we got back, I felt a relapse coming on.

No problem. I just drank more *katicibogotik* and *mooskimee*.

For supper, Anna had cooked up the following Cree delicacies: partridge liver boiled in the bird's own gizzard; rabbit dumplings; beaver cutlets garnished with bear grease; bannock laced with bear blood and moose hearts.

After eating this robust meal, I felt like going out and slaying a family of *adooses*. (In local mythology, an *adoose* is a cannibalistic giant similar to the better-known *windigo*.) But I didn't slay an *adoose* that night. For my hosts had something else planned – a scapula divination. This unusual ritual, known among the Cree as *mutnsaawn*, dates all the way back to the last Ice Age.

Attaching a rabbit's scapula bone to the end of a stick, David put it in the stove. He kept it there for a minute or so, warning me not to look at it. It's very bad luck to look at a scapula while it's still in the fire, he said. If you do so, you might in fact die. Then he took out the bone and began 'reading' its cracks and char marks.

"The rabbit sees a little hill across the lake. Maybe there's game over there, perhaps a moose or caribou. The rabbit is trying to see this game, but he can't see anything for sure. There are too many clouds in the sky."

"Does the rabbit see anything relating to me?" I asked. "Like whether I'll get real sick as a result of this trip?"

"The rabbit doesn't know the answer to that question," David said. "But if you ask me, I think you'll be just fine."

By the time I got up the next morning, David had already gone out to his net. Piled up at the bottom of his canoe was a rich assortment of walleye, whitefish, pickerel and lake trout – Nature's bounty from these frigid northern waters.

Later Anna made *skekaaawn*, a Cree specialty that combines fillets of fish, the fish intestines and blueberries, all cooked in bear grease. "*Sheekaaawn* is a very healthy food," Anna said.

I put a bite in my mouth. It tasted not only healthy but scrumptious too. So scrumptious that I would not have exchanged my plate for *sheekaaawn* for all the truffles in Lyons.

And so it went. Whenever I seemed to falter, my hosts gave me a time-honoured restorative from the Cree larder. By the end of the trip, I was feeling fine . . . just as David had predicted. Actually, I was feeling better than fine – on the jolting, tooth-rattling trip back to Ouje-Bougoumou, I found myself dancing right along with the truck.

*Lawrence Millman is the author of eight books including **Our Like Will Not Be Here Again** and **A Kayak Full of Ghosts**. He also writes for National Geographic, and the London Sunday Times. When not on the road he makes his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

News & Notes

CAIRN CANOEISTS... We received a press release from the small but interesting Betelgeuse Books of Toronto regarding their upcoming publication. *Arctic Cairn Notes: Canoeists Reflections of the Hanbury-Thelon and Kazan Rivers* is the title of a new northern book set to appear April 1st. The reason they are publicizing this is that you can save 20% by ordering now.

The 230-page book is a facsimile collection of nearly 200 handwritten notes left in the cairns beside the two famed northern rivers. Betelgeuse notes that, "taken together, they offer an unparalleled insight into the wilderness experience of canoeists on these remote rivers, beginning with the first recreational trip in the barrenlands, led by Eric Morse in 1962."

Noted contributors include Pierre Trudeau, The Duchess of York, John Hornby, George Luste, Gordon Lightfoot, David Pelly and Akitosha Nishimura. The original notes, from the Helen Falls cairn on the Hanbury and Kazan Falls locations were removed and placed in the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife. The originals were replaced with waterproof copies. It should be noted that as of August 1995, that copy was missing from the Helen Falls location. To order the book at a 20% saving

send C\$16.95 (US\$13.95) to Betelgeuse Books, 193-55 McCaul St, Toronto, ON M5T 2W7 before March 15.

MCS XII... The annual get together at Camp Winona better known as the Maine Canoe Symposium is on again, set for June 6-8 1997. The Peake brothers will be there again (showing the Lands Forlorn show) as will many regulars including poler Harry Rock and Becky Mason (who will be doing her noted Canoescapes talk). Sadly Maine Guides Garrett and Alexandra Conover will not be able to attend. We've been talking about and reporting on these session for a long time and we're happy to have see some friends and readers attend over the years.

It's always a great event, relaxed and easygoing with its own special charm. Registration is \$55 and the food was fantastic last year. You can read all about it on the their website at www.mcs.gen.me.us or write The Maine Canoe Symposium, c/o Jerry Kocher, 41 Leighton Rd, Wellsley, MA USA 02181-6926.

STAMP OF APPROVAL... Canoeist Wayne Bagley of Windsor, Ontario, has been working tirelessly for years on a letter-writing and media campaign to have a commemorative Bill Mason stamp developed by Canada Post. A great deal of support has been raised thus far, including letters of support from such notables as Pierre Trudeau, the former Prime Minister of Canada. It takes a lot of time and effort to create such an honour. Please take a few minutes and contact the post office to tell them how you feel.

To lend your support for a Bill Mason stamp, please contact Wayne Bagley, 1160 Felix Ave., Windsor, Ontario, N9C 3L7; phone (519) 255 1081. A letter should also be mailed to the National Philatelic Centre Stamp Advisory Committee, 75 St. Ninian St., Antigonish, Nova Scotia, B2G 2R8.

Our Back Pages

The following back issues of Che-Mun are available at \$5 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 - Across 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
Outfit 82 - Arctic Land Expedition report, Book reviews, Nunavut
Outfit 83 - Jacobson's Caribou River, *Canoescapes* rev, Franklin's journal
Outfit 84 - 1955 Moffatt Exped., Winisk R., John Rae's effigy & Cloak-boat
Outfit 85 - Rocky Defiled, Grey Owl movie, Bill Mason bio, Canoe Museum
Outfit 86 - PBS's Backcountry, E. Merrick's Labrador photos, Summerwrap

Winter Packet. Continued from Page 2.

made progress hard work. But as soon as I stopped, the wind would die down completely and the pests emerge, full of purpose and united in action.

“Somewhat surprising was the almost complete absence of (other) wildlife or signs of human occupancy, old or new; no trails or campsites. The few streams which I had hoped to utilize between lakes were rock-strewn and miniscule. Despite the frequency of beautiful vistas, the cumulative effect of overwork was taking much of the joy out of the proceedings. A bad case of fasciitis made portaging unpleasant, and so, when I reached a fly-in fishing camp on Mistinibi Lake I bailed out and went home. Well, the challenge at that point was pretty well over anyway as the remainder of the planned journey was mostly on the large lakes of the Labrador highlands.”

We were happy to hear from another northern solo legend - **Akitoshi Nishimura** - better known as **Aki** - who wrote to renew from Japan.

“Thank you for continuing to send *Che-Mun* [Ed. Note - Thanks for paying!] I always enjoy reading it.

“I haven’t had a chance to visit the NWT for some time. Last summer was the first year I didn’t make a canoe trip in the NWT for the past 10 years. I now work in an animal hospital as a veterinarian and I got married last March which means I have more responsibilities to make a living.

“Now I am far away from the wilderness of the Canadian Arctic but I am sure that someday I will return to the NWT with an even longer solo canoe trip.

“Until then I’m going to continue thinking about getting back there step by step and in the meantime I will continue reading *Che-Mun*.”

David Pelly, who now lives in Cambridge Bay (Ekaluktutiak) on Victoria Island in the Arctic, had some comments on some comments made about his book in Outfit 85 by James Murphy.

“I cannot let Jim Murphy’s remarks go by without comment, lest any readers (or prospective readers!) of my book *Thelon: A River Sanctuary* be misled.

“From today’s perspective (which Jim and I and the readers all enjoy) we know that wolf poisoning is a bad idea. But this book is not my soapbox. My purpose in the book was largely

historical: I want readers to know the thinking at the time of these (and other) events in the Thelon’s remarkable history. That’s why I quoted biologists who were active in the field at the time of the so-called predator control program.

“When I visited the late Dr. John Kelsall (who ran the wolf-kill campaign in the 1950s), and sat in the sunny study of his sea-front home south of Vancouver listening to his tales from the Thelon, he said – with the advantage of hindsight – that the caribou ‘population seems to operate independent of how they’re managed.’ For someone who spent many years of his life trying to manage the barren-ground caribou population, that’s quite a statement – much more interesting than anything I might have to say about wolf poisoning.

“In this way the book is historical. It tells the Thelon’s story, not mine. I hope, thereby, it celebrates the Thelon wilderness. Secondly, I must take issue with Jim’s assertion that I am ‘way too optimistic about the effects on wildlife of Native hunting with high-powered rifles and snowmobiles in the sanctuary.’

“Actually, in the book, I say, “While traditional hunting – before the sanctuary – may well have been non-intrusive, hunting today with heavy-duty snowmobiles and high-powered rifles is not the same thing.” [This, of course, is the part of the book, the conclusion, where I did allow myself to voice personal opinion.] I must point out that I go on to express concern that allowing Native hunting in the sanctuary may be the thin end of the wedge, and may make it more difficult for future (Native) managers of the sanctuary to prohibit mineral exploration. I have voiced the same concern to Inuit friends on the Akiliniq Planning Committee, whose responsibility it is to reach consensus on the final management plan for the sanctuary.

“They have, to some extent, agreed and reacted accordingly (since publication of the book). That’s reason for optimism. The reality upon which I base my general optimism has two elements: (1) it is a very long drive on a snowmobile from Baker Lake to the sanctuary (I know, I’ve done it!), so it is unlikely many hunters would undertake it when there are both caribou and musk-ox much closer to town; (2) Native subsistence hunting alone is sustainable, it has never endangered any species in the North.

“It might interest Jim and your other readers to know that one of the proposals in the draft management plan for the sanctuary will re-introduce mandatory registration of canoe parties, in an effort to encourage more responsible behaviour,

and eliminate abandoned canoes and other detritus, such as Jim reports finding.

“The Thelon is a special place; Jim and I agree on that (and many other things, I think!) It is special not only because of its pristine nature as untouched wilderness, but also because of its colourful and diverse human history. That’s what sets it apart: it is a wilderness with history. And that’s the central message in *Thelon: A River Sanctuary*.”

Perhaps our longest running subscriber is **Hermann Harbisch** of Stromberg, Germany.

“For nearly 20 years I have been a subscriber to *Che-Mun* and I always enjoy reading it.

“Last year I didn’t paddle in Canada. A friend and I had chosen Glacier Bay in Alaska for a trip with our folding kayaks. It was an easy and successful trip – into a land and on the sea ringed with high mountains and ice – and lots of brown bears. Three times bears came into our camp but they were not aggressive and we had carefully stored our food in bear-proof canisters.

“Only on the last evening did we have some problems when two grizzly youngsters came into our camp, curious and hungry. So I took our two red emergency flares and scared them away.

“In 1995 we paddled with a group of friends on the Natla and Keele in the N.W.T. also with folding kayaks. The first 25 miles downstream below O’Grady Lake we had a lot of low water –and lots of problems with our folding boats. We only made three or four miles a day and often had to wade with our boats. We spent many evenings repairing the wooden parts of our boats. Only my feathercraft K1 had no damage.

“After the upper part of the Natla River we had a very successful and nice trip through the wilderness of the Mackenzie Mountains ‘til the mouth of the Keele at the Mackenzie River where we got picked up. After that we paddled the South Nahanni River from Virginia Falls to Blackstone Landing. This was my third trip on the Nahanni but it was the easiest. Both times before we had started on Divide Lake and paddled down the Broken Skull River to the Nahanni and then to Ft. Simpson.

“This year I will paddle the Baltic Sea, probably from Sweden to Finland via the Åland Islands. But in any case, next year we will return to the Northwest Territories. We will probably paddle the Horton River. After trips on the Coppermine, Kazan, Back and Anderson rivers, this will be my fifth Barrenlands river in Canada.”



photo: Chris Morris

ARCTIC SCENE -- The Avaarvik River tortuously empties itself into Takijuq Lake which lies east of

the Coppermine and just to the west of the Hood River system. The lake is a popular starting

point for Scandinavian canoe parties for some reason.

Upcoming Events

- ☼ The fourth biennial WaterWalker Film Festival kicks off at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa on Feb. 28 & March 1.
- ☼ The second annual CRCA Canoe and Kayak Show will be held in Ottawa from April 25-27.
- ☼ The 12th annual Maine Canoe Symposium will be held at Camp Winona in Bridgton, Maine June 6-8.

CHE-MUN

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