
CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 78

CHE-MUN

AUTUMN 1994

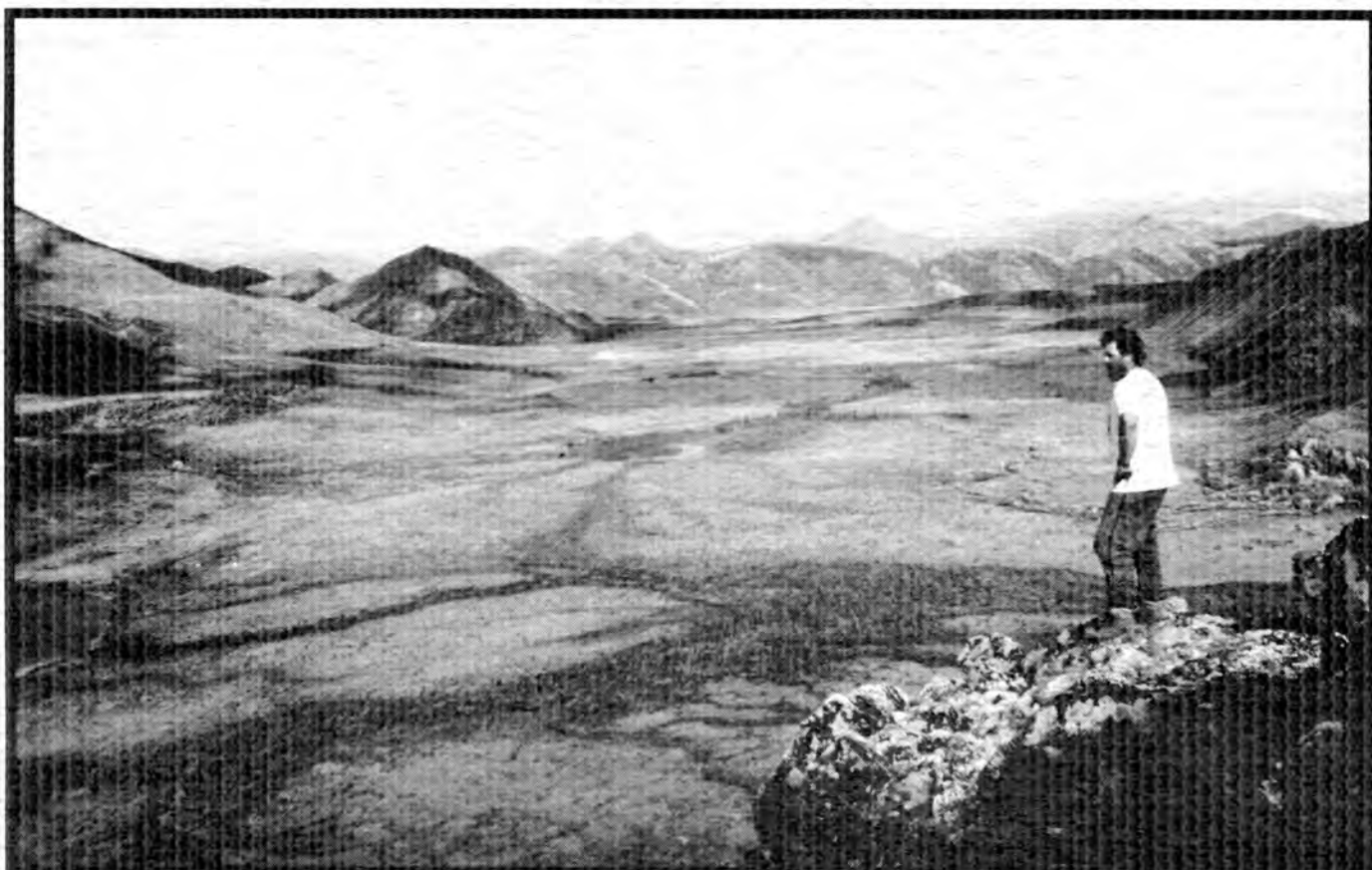


photo: Michael Peake

TAKING A PASS -- Che-Mun Editor Michael Peake takes a good look at McDougall Pass, the lowest point in the entire western cordillera at just over 1000 feet. The lake on the left is Summit Lake

which lies about 200 yards into the Yukon Territory. The lake in the distance is Olgilvie and the entire portage route between the NWT and Yukon can easily be seen. The Richardson Mountains, rising to

over 5000 feet, ring the area. The pass lies about 70 miles north of the Arctic Circle. Peake and five other were participants in the *Across the Arctic Mountains* canoe trip. Details of the journey begin on Page 6.

Let's dry it.

The way to great food

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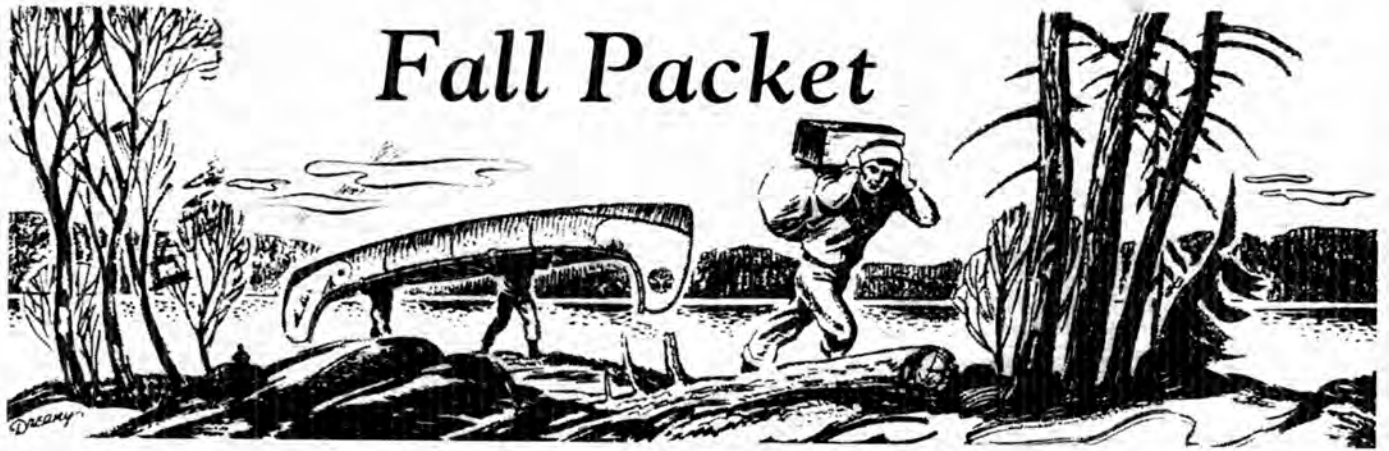
HACC's Across the Arctic Mountains

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La Vanishing Voyageur Portage

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Fall Packet



When last we heard from Toronto's **George Luste**, he was heading out to the southern barrens for a month long solo canoe trip (see Outfit 77). George returned safely and dropped Che-Mun a line.

"The trip went well, albeit with very low water on the upper Nowleye River and the unnamed river leading to Nowyak Lake. I could not get into the McConnell River due to the lack of water in the tributary to it so went down the Tha-Anne to the Bay. A fine river!

"But it put me further down the coast from Arviat (Eskimo Point) - where I sat for three days due to stormy/unstable weather. Two Inuit from Arviat came along in two Honda four-wheel ATVs and thought they could drive me and my gear (which included a 16-foot canoe) back to Arviat.

"It was an interesting 50 mile ride over the tidal flats, creek beds (including the McConnell) and the tundra - in cold, windy conditions. But we made it in about five hours.

"I don't recommend canoeing along the tidal flats of the western Hudson Bay coast. You really are at the mercy of the weather - far more than Ungava Bay, where the tides are 30-40 feet or the Labrador Coast."

Got a great letter from South Dakota's **Jim Murphy** along with three book reviews we'll print in the next Outfit.

"Ivan Robertson and I just finished a most memorable run down the Back River, Air Tindi flew us out of Yellowknife on July 8 in a turbo Beaver to Portage Bay on Mackay Lake. We then followed the Lockhart River to Aylmer Lake, crossed the height-of-land at the north end of Aylmer and then followed the Back to Chantry Inlet.

"We had wanted to do the Back for years and fears about diamond mining and road

building prompted us to go this year. Yellowknife was certainly hopping and we saw evidence of recent staking all along the upper river. We even saw a helicopter near the end of Beechey Lake. After that, however, we saw no evidence of claim exploration. We did see footprints and vinyl on the rocks of the height-of-land so we knew we were following other canoeists.

"Though we encountered no massive migration of caribou, we saw them in small groups the entire way. We also saw many muskox, innumerable birds, had great fishing and a couple of extraordinary encounters with wolves in the Thelon Game Sanctuary. Tent rings, food caches, hunting blinds and Inukshuks were everywhere. How white males could ever have thought they were discovering this area is beyond me.

"The Bloodvein River in Manitoba was once described to me as being 'intimate' which in some ways it proved to be. The Back, however, is grandiose in every respect. Even having run the Thelon and Kazan did not prepare me for the immensity and power of the lower Back. The arrogant editor of Canoe Magazine titled his 1975 article 'Conquest of the Back River.' I had another title in mind.

"One cannot cross such a vast landscape and witness the powerful forces of nature without feeling appropriately tiny and insignificant. I would like to especially thank Bob O'Hara and Bob Dannert who separately had run the river and loaned me their maps to copy trip notations. This proved immensely helpful in negotiating rapids and portages because as Dannert pointed out, just choosing what side of the river to go to is a major decision. We were able to shoot or line just about everything, a spray cover is an absolute must. Quite frankly, we were scared near the end. The currents and eddies were more powerful than anything either of us had ever seen and I

would strongly recommend you have either two canoes or portage. It's too risky having all your eggs in one basket.

"Though we didn't stay, there is a nice cabin maintained by Water Resources of Canada just before Franklin Lake and it is left open for canoeists to use. The log book entries since 1987 confirmed our suspicion that most people head for Baker Lake. There were only seven or eight entries in all that time and most of them were to be picked up in Franklin Lake.

"We cringed to read Aki's note saying he had lost 20 pound by the time he got there, he obviously was in trouble. I also had to shake my head at Robert Perkin's entry of last year saying he had run parts of the river six times and spent five days watching a muskox corpse decay. Oh well, whatever turns you on! My attitude is that life is short, there are too many rivers and not enough time and Keewatin alone is a very big place.

"When we got to Franklin Falls, we spent two days catching huge trout and char and eating caribou on the beach with an Inuit family camped there. This was a wonderful multicultural experience for us. It is hard to describe how it felt, after our isolation to try raw caribou while listening to Hank Williams Jr. surrounded by 13 incredibly friendly people.

"The weather was starting to turn so we arranged to be picked up by boat from Gjoa Haven on the south end of Victoria Headland. Our final campsite was there, beneath a beautiful waterfall. Our fears about the weather were confirmed by a bad three day storm.

"We went about 811 miles in 40 days. It was a rather routine trip in retrospect, certainly no "firsts" of any kind but no "lasts" either. It was recreational canoeing at its best - exciting and fun."

CANOE TOONS PAUL MASON



Editor's Notebook

Once again it is time to retreat to the historical volumes and library shelves that make up much of the winter for a planning canoeist.

We'll be warmed with the memory of the great time on our Across the Arctic Mountains canoe trip this summer which you can read all about in this 78th Outfit of Che-Mun. The scenery was spectacular and the weather most accommodating. Canoeist George Luste tells me that it was very windy in the eastern NWT and Barrenlands area this summer. We were blessed with mostly sun and mostly gentle winds.

I am facing a dilemma next summer - a wonderful dilemma. Through the generous use of an every ten years of service sabbatical program I will have a total of 14 weeks off in 1995. Naturally a good chunk of that time will be spent paddling. It was this program in 1985 that enabled me to take part in the Journey Across the Barrenlands canoe trip that named a river for Eric Morse during a 55 day, 1000 mile trip.

Nothing will ever duplicate that trip of a lifetime - and it would be stupid to try. In keeping with our historical basis we do have one interesting idea on the burner. No one person determines the trip for the Hide-Away Canoe Club. We decide during an annual meeting or at our annual dinner - the highlight of the winter social season.

This special banquet is held every December 28 - the birthday of Eric Morse, our patron. This year, as always, we will feature some mementos of our canoe trip earlier in the year. We were lucky enough to return from Old Crow with frozen fresh and smoked salmon as well as a piece of caribou - all this courtesy of some friends in Old Crow. We also brought wood and water from a pure, ice-cold stream that flowed in the pristine highlands above Summit Lake in the McDougall Pass.

It's a raucous evening and perhaps my favourite one of the year. Trip plans are discussed and debated. Special memories - the kind that are burnished by the strength of a wonderful northern canoe trip - are recalled in the glow of candlelight and wine. It is indeed a highlight in the lowest time of the year.

I hope you all are warmed by your paddling memories and the next several months will give you time to plan to build a canoeing adventure that will last a lifetime.

Michael Peake, Editor.

Coppermine road might be rolling again

The company that cancelled their plans for a giant lead-zinc mine near the headwaters of the Coppermine River appears to be having second thoughts about the project.

Metall Canada is looking at ways of reviving the Izok Lake project following the completion of infrastructure studies recently.

The mine required a couple of extra items to make it work; a port near the town of Coppermine and a road to it. The company withdrew from the environmental screening process last winter when questions about the two large and intrusive infrastructure items were raised.

The 500 mile road would cost an estimated \$600 million and the obvious question arises - who will pay for it? The federal government, who traditionally would pay for the biggest share, has asked Metall to consider other options such as a toll to be paid by industrial users.

There is also the option that the company could build a winter road instead of the much more expensive - and intrusive - all-weather road. Metall seems to be waiting for the various levels of government to sort out the financing i.e. pay for it, and they will go back to the work of getting the mine going.

Meanwhile the governments want to know how much Metall wants for the project and to define it more fully.

All the details of this proposal mask a much larger question that will not be addressed by the large economic forces in the NWT. This is one of what will become a tide of extraction companies who are salivating at the prospect of getting their bulldozers into the flesh of the NWT.

With the balkanization of the NWT occurring over the next few years as smaller chunks of it will come into a greater number of governing bureaucracies.

We have even heard rumblings of a great deal of financial irregularities with regard to the spending of portions of the land claims settlements that have been flying around the north for several years. This story will be around for a while.

For Sale: Canoeing heritage

It's where the two Trans-Canada Highways cross, though it now rarely rates little more than a head turn from passing motorists hurtling along the modern version. But canoeists worth their salt should apply the brakes and have a look.

And that look until recently would have shown that the historic plaque marking the location of the La Vase Portages just east of North Bay, Ontario had a big For Sale sign plunked down right next to it.

For 250 years, the La Vase Portages were a crucial section along the Voyageurs Highway which spanned a continent by canoe and carry. They were the link between Lake Nipissing which is drained by the historic French River and the Mattawa River which flows directly into the Ottawa River. Both the French and the Mattawa have been designated Canadian Heritage Rivers.

The original use of this route predates recorded history by thousand of years. Indigenous peoples were likely using the La Vase route at the end of the Nipissing Great Lakes phases 4000 years ago when the Lake Nipissing basin was flooded and drainage occurred in an easterly direction down the Mattawa and Ottawa Rivers.

The voyageurs and coureur de bois before them, had several routes between Trout Lake and Nipissing to choose from when an intercontinental canoe route was being sought. They chose the La Vase because of its better suitability to convey larger canoes. Wide portages were eventually hacked out of the wilderness and some of the earliest dams con-



structed in Canada were erected between the La Vase's muddy banks to maintain adequate water levels.

There is evidence to suggest these dams were operated by a conscripted native person. The route currently has a number of registered archeological sites along it and undoubtedly many more remain to be

found.

And now a crucial piece of history between these two is for sale.

But to be more precise - was for sale. One of the crucial pieces of this series of admittedly scenically unspectacular portages has been purchased by a concerned group who hope to preserve them. Time and ever-increasing development have steadily encroached on this historic route. And now may be the last chance to save a representative portion of it.

Che-Mun is grateful to subscriber Paul Chivers, a photographer at the North Bay *Nuggett*, for sending along this info as well as his great photo of the site. Paul is part of the group that is trying to save the La Vase Portages.

Unfortunately some of the historic route has been eaten into by a gravel pit, other parts remain in private hands and a chunk is Crown land - owned by the Ontario Government.

Along these trails marched Samuel de Champlain, Alexander Mackenzie and John Franklin among others. Thousands of bales of furs along with everything from livestock to whisky barrels were tumped, dragged or manhandled over rocky outcrops and through swamps and marshes.

The route lost significance in 1821 following the takeover of the Northwest Company by the Hudson's Bay. The old east-west route was abandoned to goods heading north to York Factory on Hudson Bay.

Those wishing to retrace the historic La Vase Route have been forced to finish their portaging through the

Eric Morse's description of La Vase in *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada/Then and Now*. (1969)

"Trout Lake is the head of the Mattawa. In order to get to Lake Nipissing, a divide must now be crossed, over a series of granite ridges, sandwiching bogs... First there was a 1500-yard portage, flat, but winding, over the low height of land. This portage led out of the pond across the highway south of Dugas Bay on Trout Lake. An Ontario historical plaque marks the point at which the canoe route crossed the Trans-Canada Highway. The Height of Land Portage, separating Ottawa from Lake Huron waters, set the big canoes in a beaver pond on the tiny tributary of the La Vase (i.e. muddy). Were it not for beaver damming this trifling stream, the portage would have been considerably longer - which apparently was actually the case following extermination of local beaver. Except for two short portages, a succession of pond and creek now carried the big canoes - sometimes with branches brushing their sides - down to Lake Nipissing. It is still possible to paddle over this section of the old route, for the beaver are back, helpfully damming the same old spots, and converting an unnavigable creek into a canal. The whole distance from Trout Lake to Lake Nipissing is about seven miles, of which five are still

Heritage



streets of North Bay. The portages are currently impassable due to private ownership or blocked access.

Of the three main portages on the route one is built over despite being designated a provincial historic site, the other is crossed by the current Trans-Canada Highway and the third is still intact.

It is this parcel that the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority has purchased and has until the end of the year to raise \$100,000. Some of this money will come from government and the full amount will allow for the \$70,000 purchase price plus funds for restoration purposes.

In order to help preserve a vital part of our canoeing heritage please send your donation to:

North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority

R.R. #5, Site 12, Comp. 5

233 Birche Rd.

North Bay, ON

P1B 8Z4

705/474-5420

705/474-9793 - Fax

Donations of \$20 and up will receive a tax receipt. \$100 donations will also get a free T-shirt showing the La Vase cartoon. \$300 donors will receive an original signed print.

Makes cheques payable to: LaVase Project/CA.

News & Notes

DECA-FEST. . . The tenth annual Canoeing and Wilderness Symposium will again be held in Toronto at the end of January. The theme of this one is 'A Northern Overview'. It will be held on January 27-28. The theme departs from the usual geographic routine that featured one particular northern area each year. The event is extremely popular drawing about 700 canoe-starved paddlers from Ontario, Quebec and the northern states.

There will be 19 presentations on various aspects of northern travel. We hear that they will be focusing on those paddlers who have done very long northern trips. Topics will also include, natives, conservation, the environment and winter travel.

Registration forms are available from the Wilderness Canoe Symposium. For info call organizer George Luste at 416-534-9313 or fax him at 416-531-8873. You can also write to the WCA at Box 211, Station P, Toronto, ON

M5S 2S7. The location is the same as the last few years - Monarch Park Collegiate in Toronto's east end. Don't wait too long in ordering tickets once the call goes out. Specific seats are reserved for the event.

CANOEBOOKS UPDATE. . . A couple of new canoeing guides are winging their way towards North American paddlers. A Northwest Territories canoe guide is being published by the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association and edited by Mary McCreadie. It will examine a number of rivers in the richest paddling area of Canada. Of course, the name NWT will only be around for a few more years so the book could be an instant collector's item. Also from the CRCA will be a paddling guide on the beautiful and threatened Missinaibi River.

The Missinaibi came under a great deal of media speculation earlier this year when it was called a killer river in an irresponsible story in the Toronto *Star*. They focused on a two deaths at Thunderhouse Falls - a pair of American canoeists using an old map took out on the wrong side of the river just above the fatal falls. The story tried to drop the blame on the map people and stated that the river was killing a lot of people. In fact, of the last 35 who had died along the river, half were at the bottom near James Bay and most of the rest were scattered along the 300-plus miles of waterway.

Look for both of these books in that late fall, Che-Mun will be reviewing them.

CANOEBOOK II . . . The CRCA is also busy putting together "Canoebooks", the working title of a vol- ➤ *Continued on Page 10*

Across the Arctic Mountains

By **GEOFFREY PEAKE**
HACC Chief Guide

I accepted the inevitable as my feet oozed into the heavy mud that lined the river banks below Fort McPherson. With the texture of chocolate pudding (but with a lot fewer calories) the silty deposits of the Peel River which have accumulated here for thousands of years were now swallowing me up as I struggled to get to open water.

The weight of the packs pushed me down further into the ooze that, by now, bordered thigh-deep, and no end in sight - except my own!. Just a few more feet to where my canoe floated on the thin film of water that covered this prehistoric muck. As my hands finally reached the gunwales and I unloaded my burden into the canoe that - surprise - had also acquired a liberal quantity of that very same Peel River mud, one thought surfaced from my unconscious and burned brightly before my eyes: This is not how a canoe trip should start!

So began another annual journey of the Hide-Away Canoe Club, this time from Fort McPherson, NWT, on the Peel River, to Old Crow, Yukon, a journey that would follow one of the oldest access routes to the Yukon and Alaska territories, the Rat-Bell Porcupine traverse of McDougall Pass. Originally used by the Hudson's Bay Co. as a trade route into the Yukon, it became the preferred access to the Klondike gold fields for scores of fortune seekers coming from Europe and Eastern Canada around the turn of the last century.

The Rat River rises in the Richardson Mountains of the NWT-Yukon Border which form the continental divide between Arctic and Pacific watersheds. In its brief 60 mile course, the Rat falls over 1000 feet to its destination - the Husky Channel of the Mackenzie River. It's a series of continuous swifts and rapids that would be a joy to descend and . . . well, let's say that going up takes a lot more effort and time than coming down.

Six paddlers flew to Inuvik at the end of July thanks to Canadian North Airlines one of our trip sponsors. Our group consisted of four Peake brothers (Michael, David, Sean and Geoffrey) regular Peter Brewster and a young newcomer - 21-year-old Andrew Macdonald.

Once in Inuvik, through quick negotiations and some fabled northern hospitality, we were able to secure a rental vehicle when all the

Across the Arctic Mountains Sponsors

The Hide-Away Canoe Club gratefully acknowledges the support of these companies who made the trip possible:

Woods Canada
Canadian North Airlines
President's Choice
Toronto Sun

trucks were rented and our reservation been mysteriously cancelled.

We not only ended up with a truck that could hold food, equipment and canoes for six people, but could also squeeze the six paddlers in the large cab with the driver, who was also the rental agent. She had agreed to drive us because the "official" driver that had been arranged for us wanted \$200 for the 3 hour drive from Inuvik to McPherson. Micky, our friendly Avis agent, told this fine gentleman that he was "out to lunch" and volunteered to do the drive herself. When she learned we were on a tight budget she



Andrew Macdonald get the rookie "splash-in" salute as he joins the HACC fraternity.

tore up the rental agreement and gave it to us for free. We were shocked but very pleased with how apparent disaster turned into such good fortune.

Once we had extricated ourselves from the mud we started our journey to the Rat River. Before its union with the Mackenzie, the Peel breaks off into what is called Husky Channel. This is considered a branch of the mighty Mackenzie as it flows through the immense Mackenzie Delta to the Beaufort Sea. There are three mouths of the Rat which flow into Husky Channel. We chose the third because it allowed us maximum downstream time on the Mackenzie and the shortest distance to where the Rat becomes one channel.

We were able to cover our distance on the Husky in one day, although the Mackenzie Delta is definitely not the spot for recreational canoeing. The area is a maze of twisting channels and numerous bogs - a bird's paradise. The banks are steep and muddy with very few places to land, let alone camp. The river is slow and very silty. That day the temperature rose to about 90°F and paddling in that heat with not a breath of wind was most uncomfortable. We were obliged to have lunch on a large floating mat of driftwood that was half-moored to the bank, but offered precarious footing. The one advantage of the heat is that the mosquitoes could not bear it either so we were not forced to endure paddling with headnets on.

We reached our Rat channel on the evening of the second day and from there our upstream travel began. Campsites were few (we passed only one suitable site which we were obliged to use) until you reach the first rapids about 12 miles upstream, the site of Destruction City and the beginning of the hard work.

Destruction City, which now exists in name only, was the wintering place of a hundreds of gold seekers to the Klondike in 1897-9. The place was so named because of the large amount of boats and equipment wrecked on the rapids by travellers who for the most part were total novices to life in the north, let alone to proper navigation of rapids with overloaded boats.



photos: Michael Peake

A REAL DRAG-- There was no shortage of days like this. Miles and miles of water that had to be pulled up - the old fashioned way - by hand.

The hot weather continued for that first week, and the long hours of daylight meant it didn't cool off at night. The rapids on the Rat start off gently and slowly increase in difficulty. The lower stretches were easy to track up or wade when the current became too swift but there were still places where brisk paddling was fastest. As a mountain river, the Rat has a large fluctuation in flow volume. In spring, the water rises considerably and travel up the river would be quite difficult. Even heavy rains will see the water rise by two feet or more overnight. We were fortunate to have a steady flow that allowed us to float the boats easily, but did not flood out the gravel bars which are essential for easy lining. The river twists and curves in its descent from the mountains, frequently splitting into several channels and constantly eroding new banks. In general we would take the inside curves where slower water and gravel bars made travel easy, but this entails crossing the river many times a day.

Going up the Rat is an exercise in patience. We had a trip report from the Eric Morse journey of 1965 written by current subscriber Terk Bayley (see Outfit 76) and tried to keep to their schedule. We averaged about 6 miles a day on the river.

From Husky Channel to Summit Lake is

about 60 miles - not a lot of miles but a lot of work. The valley starts off well-treed and quite defined, cutting several hundred feet into the surrounding plains. It's broad and blessed with abundant camping on gravel bars. As we progressed upstream the trees dwindled and we were rewarded with the open vistas of the surrounding areas and the mountains beyond - our eventual destination. We had originally imagined the Rat to be a much smaller and closed-in river, but with a day's travel above Destruction City, the claustrophobia had disappeared, and barren hillsides flanked the river

The three mile section above the mouth of the tributary Barrier River was the most difficult as the river dropped up to 100 ft. per mile. The rocks are a lot larger in these rapids, making walking more difficult. Wading in the fast water is hard work - a real chore for the legs and a battle for balance at times. It's hard enough for the Peakes and Andrew - all over six feet tall. For Peter Brewster at five-foot-six, it was even more of a challenge.

The Rat flows through a canyon where the river is channeled through a 200-foot deep gorge. The walls are not sheer though and in our water levels the footing was good. Above this section the river flows more gently and progress is much

faster as it becomes a walk along the gravel beaches with canoes in tow. Also the vista continually improves as the trees recede and mountains loom, the banks become lower and less well defined. We camped at a huge cutbank above the canyon where the exposed permafrost was dropping mud and debris like a lava flow into the river on a continuous basis.

This erosion workshop entertained us all night with its incessant activity of this bizarre and prehistoric phenomenon. We took a rest day here on Day 9, as we were feeling somewhat run down from the hauling and dragging. A light rain gave some degree of legitimacy to this idea, and we spent the day reading and relaxing.

The last section towards Summit Lake was the most scenic, as we neared the divide. We were able to travel the final 24 miles to the pass in three days. The open patches of tundra now directly about the river and we started to see more caribou. The river rises about 300 feet in this section, but as it diminishes in size, we found that we must cross more frequently to take advantage of the deeper channel. There is still a generous flow at this time, partly due to the rain which raised the river another six inches.

As we drew closer, the mountains flanked us in every direction. Andrew took advantage of this and went exploring nearly every evening.

Expeditions

The mountains here have beautifully long ridges that look like they have been perfectly sculptured into neat geometric shapes.

A few miles from The Forks, where the Rat, Fish and Sheep creeks merge to form the main flow of the Rat, we passed a large cutbank that was dumping much silt into the water. After this point the water was miraculously crystal clear. For all the good things about the Rat, the one thing we did not like was the silty water. That last night on the river we enjoyed the deliciously clear water that we usually expect in the north. The next day we were actually able to see the bottom of the riverbed and guide our footing. Ironically, however, our footing got much worse as algae grew on the rocks thanks to the increased visibility.

At The Forks, the main flow of Fish River continues many miles to the north, and provides the majority of the flow. The Rat enters as a small creek from the west, tumbling over a rocky four foot falls as it enters the Fish River. We decided to haul up this little section but the current was much swifter than we realized. Sean and Andrew's canoe broached here and filled with water. Fortunately everything was lashed in so that the only article lost was the aluminum pole.

After all those miles hauling up the river, there was a certain irony that the only mishap occurred on such a small obstacle at the last real hazard on the river. We're also pretty sure this was the same dumping ground for Verlen Kruger and Clint Waddell who came through here on their marathon cross country canoe trip in 1971.

The last section of the Rat leading to the pass follows a 12 mile paddle up a narrow, meandering stream with countless identical oxbows through a tunnel of trees. The first mile or so was fast flowing, then the current dwindles to nearly nothing. The river flows several feet below the surrounding banks and visibility is poor. In places the banks had slid, blocking our way with piles of mud, alder and spruce. We were able to paddle most of this section though, the most actual paddling we had done since the Peel.

Six hours later we reached Twin Lakes. The river from here to Ogilvie Lake was just wide enough to fit a canoe. Several beaver dams on

this last section helped. The last dam before the lake was a full four feet high and sixty feet wide, one of the largest we have ever seen. There was enough water backed up behind this to run a small hydro station. We reached the end of our upstream travel at 10 pm, and an incredible golden light bathed the hills.

We now prepared for our first portage, a



Geoff Peake poles up the final, narrow stretches of the Rat River.

lumpy 500 yard carry over the open tundra to a nameless lake. While unloading, Michael found a blade of a paddle left there perhaps 80 years ago. Tiny lichens were blooming on the well-weathered wood.

The actual height-of-land carry was next and a little longer and brought us into the Yukon Territory where we stopped and camped at on little rise above Summit Lake which offered drier ground and a view of the pass. The land in McDougall Pass is open, with only isolated clumps of trees to be found. We all reached the lake at midnight and ceremonially turned our watches back to Yukon time. which as David noted, allowed for an extra hour of work. We

were exhausted but thrilled to be in such a beautiful place with all our hard work behind us. A ceremonial *Boisson* was declared to honour the occasion.

We spend two full days at the summit, re-organizing our gear and taking stock of the food supplies. Our first day there was August 12 which happens to be an official Hide-Away Canoe Club holiday, as it marks the anniversary of Peter & Elizabeth Scott, HACC members in good standing. Peter was missing an HACC expedition for the first time - unable to come on this trip due to an incredibly poor pre-trip planning error (Elizabeth was due to give birth in a weeks time but in a subtle twist of fate did not until the day after we returned. They had a beautiful baby girl - Rebecca.) Peter's absence did not deter us from our annual outdoor party featuring crab salad, French patè, Swiss chocolate and many rounds of Triple Cs - cognac, coffee and (Cuban) cigars.

The next day, for penance, we climbed towering Mt. Russell to the north of the lake and obtained a truly grand view of the Rat River and of the Mackenzie Delta beyond. By now the feel of fall was in the air; the nights were cooler, and the winds began to blow. We also noticed many caribou around the pass as they began to prepare for their southward migration.

On August 14, the 15th day after leaving Fort McPherson, we started our downstream descent into the Yukon. A strong westerly wind blew as we crossed Summit Lake and started down the tiny creek that drained it and joined the Little Bell River. Summit Creek was very narrow and so choked with brush we had difficulty in floating the canoes down. After about 100

yards we opted to portage. The trail was short and easy and proved to be a smart decision, saving us about an hour of pointless struggle down Summit Cree

At last we were on Little Bell River, and we were pleased that there was a good and deep flow of clear crisp water. The Little Bell has been described as a ditch inside a tunnel of trees, but with a strong headwind today, we were quite happy to avoid the wind and take advantage of the first real downstream travel of the trip. The Little Bell flows about 3 mph but follows a very convoluted route to the Bell. In a straight line the Bell is about 4 miles from the Summit Lake but we travelled three times that. We even passed

►Continued on Page 11

Some non-trying drying

By DAVID PEAKE
HACC

For those who have spent any time in the north or been on an extended weekend in the wild reaches of this country, we all come to realize one simple truth; the weather can be miserable, our clothing inadequate, but the food had better be good!

There is nothing more buoying for one's spirits than food that has flavor, texture and variety. And one of the best ways to ensure that, is to take along plenty of dried fruits, vegetables, and foodstuffs. It is one of the closest substitutes to having the real thing with you in the wilds. Beholding a hot and steaming rice dish full of fresh sprigs of broccoli with plump peas and spears of zucchini is a sure way to distract one's attention from the sore muscles from that last long portage. The biggest secret of drying food is that . . . there isn't any. There are a few guidelines to follow but for the most part - anything goes.

Almost any food can be dried, be it fruit, vegetable, or even pre cooked dishes. If you plan to try food drying, it would be wise to invest in a food dehydrator that will do most of the work for you. Food driers come in a variety of sizes and price ranges, which are too numerous to mention here. However consider on what your needs will be. Better to get one that will do more than you need, you never know when there will be extra hungry paddlers along.

The HACC uses one that is manufactured in British Columbia called the "Berron Food Dehydrator". It is a great machine with six different temperature settings and a fan that is fairly quiet. Included with it is a 20-page book that gives approximate drying times and temperature settings for different foods as well as recipes. The company makes two sizes, a six tray unit and one with ten. The larger size was our choice as we are planning for anywhere from four to six healthy appetites. The larger unit is also more convenient because I can be drying salsa on three trays, and on the remaining seven trays do green peppers and onions.

The first and most important rule of drying is use only the freshest and best quality food that you can

find. By that I don't mean expensive, but food that is free of bruises and dents and other defects that could cause the food to mould when in the dried stage. If in doubt when preparing the food remove the object in question. There is nothing like taking out a bag of dried veg's and find that the bag is all full of wonderfully coloured mouldy science experiment. All fruit and veggies should be well washed and cleaned. Slice foods in the same way as you would want to cook them, the larger and fatter the slice the longer it takes to dry. Meats such as hamburger, chicken and tuna can also be dried, although with meats one has to be careful about bacteria and all the fat must be removed. As many of our meals are all vegetable we don't dry

be investigated. Beef stews, spaghetti sauces and salsa, are easy to do, and it allows you to take some of your favorite recipes with you into the wild. Many sauces are dried as a kind of leather, in that they are dried yet still pliable; laying out sheets of a plastic food wrap on the drying trays, you can pour the more liquid sauces on to and when dry you can roll them up and tuck them into a plastic bag until needed. This brings us to the third most important factor in food drying - storage.

Store dried foods in a clean air tight and cool dark space after they have been dried. Dried foods do not take kindly to being left out in strong light in warm rooms. Foods that are properly can last months if not years if they have to with little loss in nutrient loss. Although I don't profess to drying food for years down the road, it will keep if it has to. As with every adventure there are hits and misses. This year's drying fiasco was messing up about six bunches of asparagus which turned into the *Creature from the Plastic Bag*. I hadn't cut the pieces small enough and when they had dried . . . well, they hadn't. It was better to find out before our trip that they had spoiled than to find out while on the trip.

The final important rule is, if your going to rely on something for nourishment out in the middle of nowhere, then test it out a few times

before you go. Those kind of surprises are not welcome ones. One very pleasant surprise was when I tried drying fresh pineapple and it was fantastic. Drying condenses the flavor of the sweet pineapple so that the flavor explodes in your mouth.

As with everything, I find that experimenting is the best teacher for drying, remember that it is like cooking, some recipes just work better than others so keep trying. Now if I could only figure out a way to dry a couple bottles of scotch for our next trip . . . or perhaps a dry martini is best!

For information on the Berron Food Dehydrator call or write to

Berron Enterprises Ltd.
359 240th St. R.R. #9
Langley B.C. V3A - 6H5




This jerk's a real treat

Commercially dried food is always an alternative if the product is of high quality. On the Across the Arctic Mountains trips we gave Turkey Jerky a try and it will now be on our food list for all future trips. This dark, chewy dried turkey was a very big hit with all our paddlers.

Charqui Chef's Jerky is a product of Simuva Foods of Toronto and is the brainchild of Rein Raamat, a commercial photographer and partner Avo Kittask.

It comes in a vacuum packed, 3.5 oz. portion mixed with a very tasty selection of dried cranberries and pecans. It also comes as straight turkey. The meat is treated with a secret and very tasty marinade. We used it for lunch and had planned to rehydrate some for dinner but the lunch hogs devoured every speck. It's a good chew so you have to have your teeth in.

Turkey Jerky is still a small business that's trying to get bigger. If you want to obtain it ask you local outfitter to find it or contact Simuva Foods at 416-481-3616.



Charqui Chef
NEW GOURMET™

much meat but it isn't difficult. Experience is really the best teacher, and as you try different foods you will quickly learn certain personal preferences and techniques. Potatoes for example should be blanched lightly before they are dried, or they'll go purple in spots. The discoloration won't affect the taste, it's all visual.

The second basic rule of drying is that the greater the moisture content of an item the longer the drying time and in the summer months hot, humid days will stretch out the drying time even further. There is no set drying time because all foods are different. Things like cabbage dry in about six or seven hours, whereas tomatoes take much longer. A food dehydrator allows you to dry foods as they are available during the season and at their flavourful best.

Drying precooked foods is another aspect that can

News & Notes cont'd

ume being edited by Alister Thomas, from Calgary and a *Che-Mun* subscriber, who has solicited 100 canoe trip stories from across the country. (*Che-Mun* Editor Michael Peake was a contributor.) This book is still a year away and the 100 trip goal may be ambitious. The book will also include a chapter on waterway management and an introduction to the history of Canadian paddling. Canoebooks is intended to be 8 x 10 or 9 x 6 inches with several sections of colour photos. They're aiming to keep the book under \$30 which apparently is a real price threshold.

DEM BONES. . . There was certainly a hive of activity on mostly deserted King William Island north of the mouth of the Back River this summer. An amateur historian from southern Ontario uncovered the remains of a long-lost camp where four members of the famed Franklin expedition died.

Barry Ranford found remnants of a 33-foot-long boat used to transport items from the ice-locked ships carrying Franklin's men.

The site was first discovered by Sir Leopold McClintock in 1859, one of the many trips sent to discover the whereabouts of Franklin. He reported finding two bodies at the time though the area was still covered in ice and snow. In 1879, the Schwatka expedition found the spot - the last group to do so - and buried four men and recovered the prow of the ship which was later returned to England.

It was Ranford's third summer on the barren, windswept island but this time he was accompanied for a while by a CBC television crew. It is Ranford's theory that the four bodies buried there were the remains of a larger group that was striking out for the south after years of being held by the Arctic ice. None of the other group made it more than 100 miles.

Ranford also feels that the oppressive conditions had more to do with the ultimate fate of the 133 man crew than the much trumpeted lead poisoning.

WABIKIMI BATTLE . . . There's a fight going on right now to decide the future of a chunk of northern Ontario wilderness. The decision is whether to triple Wabikimi Provincial Park's 390,000 acres or - do nothing. The area of pristine boreal forest lies north of Lake Superior west of Armstrong and northeast of Thunder Bay. Environmentalists insist that the area now represented by the park is useless since it doesn't include enough land mass to support a significant ecosystem. The area is great for canoeing with the headwa-

ters of the Ogoki River running through the generally interconnected water system.

Loggers and natives don't want to see the park expanded saying it will cause them to have a timber shortfall. The natives in the area are opposed fearing it would impair their ability to expand their areas. Wabikimi is home to a small population of the increasingly scarce woodland caribou. They do not mix well with people and need large areas of undisturbed land to live in. Local in nearby Armstrong also vehemently opposed the 'bloody environmentalists'.

One simple airplane ride over the region will show you the truth. Northwestern Ontario is being logged to death. Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources which is supposed to be in charge of the parks and forests is selling them off as fast as they can. It's a story that will explode before too long. You heard it here first.

PADDLING PALACE . . . The Canadian Canoe Museum, after years of trying to get off the ground, appears to be flying. They have settled their debt with "founder" Kirk Wipper and are launching a major fund raising campaign in January 1995. Acting as Honorary Chairman of the fund raising campaign will be noted Toronto lawyer - and *Che-Mun* subscriber - Eddie Goodman.

The groups has plans for a beautiful facility to be built in Peterborough, Ontario. Currently the collection of hundred of boats and related material is stored in two locations; the original location in Haliburton and a large metal warehouse near Peterborough. You will be hearing a lot more about the Canadian Canoe Museum in the near future.

The latest member to the museum board is author - and *Che-Mun* subscriber - Gwyneth Hoyle. Her latest book, co-written with Bruce Hodgins will be out by Christmas and is titled *Canoeing North into the Unknown* which we will review in detail for Outfit 79.

Also, noted canoe builder Walter Walker was honoured by the Museum this year by being inducted as the first Canoe Builder Emeritus for the future Canoe Builders' Hall of Fame, part of the Canadian Canoe Museum. For more than 60 years Walter has been making exemplary canoes - and he's still at it. One of his beautiful cedarstrip canoes went to a young Prince Andrew when he was a student at nearby Lakefield College in 1977.

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 - Thlewiazia 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

10.

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 78 - River stamps, Exploration of N. Canada, book reviews

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some bona fide rapids that required some special maneuvering around the ever-present grasping hands of willow and alder bushes. The flow was just sufficient to let us pass and by evening we reached the Bell, a much slower and less interesting river.

The Bell continues for 80 miles to its junction with the Porcupine. By this point of the trip we had to make some real progress; we managed to make it to the Porcupine in two and a half days. We tried to find the site of La Pierre House, the original Hudson's Bay Co. reprovisioning post mid-way down the Bell, but the bush has reclaimed it over the years, and no obvious signs remained.

The Bell is a slow flowing river and it was only in the lower reaches, as it widened out and gave a broader view of the surrounding hills, that the river became more scenic and interesting. We met the first people we'd seen - a group of Germans travelling in inflatable boats. They had put in from the Dempster Highway and come down the Eagle River. Apparently this is a very popular route with Germans judging by the traffic this summer. No fewer than 8 parties took that same route. We met another couple who simply saw the route on a map in Germany and decided they wanted to make the trip themselves.

There was more wildlife here than on the Rat. We passed a bull moose striding down the main channel of the Bell, and further on we saw a black bear who was lounging on shore. Peter also managed to catch enough fish for a reasonable dinner of grayling, but

we were unable to get any salmon. Apparently the only way to do it is with a net.

As we neared the Porcupine, we had several windy days. It was strong enough to raise three-foot standing waves in mid-channel and obliged us to crawl along the shore, taking what little shelter we could, and losing any downstream benefit from the current. The Porcupine is a substantially larger river with a stronger flow than the Bell, and also more exposed. We were windbound one full day just below Salmon Cache Canyon with gusts over 40 mph. Our original plan had been to paddle to the Yukon-Alaska border, but with the wind problems we were having, we were worried we might not make it to Old Crow. We rose early to avoid the worst of the it.

After working so hard struggling up the Rat, it was frustrating to be now battling into the wind day after day. As we neared Old Crow though, the current picked up and the wind was not as relentless. We noticed many hunting camps and stopped in to visit a Gwitch'in Indian youth camp the elders had started about 10 miles above town. We were greeted warmly and offered fresh caribou and we gave them in return a loaf of our home-baked bread and one of the large chocolate bars. They took a great interest in our Coleman oven, so we gave it to them also, but not before we used it one more time to make bread and some delicious cinnamon buns. Our last night on the river, day 21, was on a gravel bar

a mile above our final destination.

Old Crow is a small and picturesque village of about 250. Because everything has to be flown in, including fuel for the town generator, it's very expensive. Natives here rely on caribou and salmon to make ends meet, as even simple objects like skim milk powder are outrageously expensive. We were impressed by how neat the town was. Lawns were actually cut and gardens planted. Normally we have found northern towns to be poor places for camping and were worried about spending a night in Old Crow. We were pleased that they had a fine group campsite right on the water with picnic tables and a fire pit. We have never seen any other town have such a convenient arrangement.

We thought of our missing canoeist Peter Scott when we found our campsite was located across the road from the historic Anglican Church. Peter is entering his third year of theological studies at the University of Toronto and hopes to be ordained in 1995.

We naturally had a wide variety of visitors curious to know our story - besides the assorted town dogs who had slipped their traces to check us out. In particular, Victor Peterson, who is the "town philosopher", gave us a behind the scenes look at the politics of living in Old Crow. Victor had been born out on the trapline on the vast Old Crow Flats north of town and was a wealth of local history.

Another interesting man was Alan Benjamin who was supposed to pick us up at the Alaska border. The previous winter, Alan, who is the caretaker at the local school, entered the 100 mile snowshoe race which forms part of the athletic activities around the famous Iditerod Dogsled Races in Alaska.

Despite arriving late he edged out the seven-time winner by *one second in an 18 hour race!* An astounding feat of endurance. Alan was the only native and only Canadian in the race. He got badly frostbitten feet for his troubles but hopes to defend his title next year. We wish him all the luck in the world.

We had chartered a DC-3 to ship all our gear, including canoes, with us to Inuvik and then back to Toronto and Vancouver Island via *Canadian North*. Our flight to Inuvik took us over the same mountains we had paddled and waded up and over for 23 days. The flight took 90 minutes. We were back to the modern world where the dreams begin again for next year's adventure.

Anatomy of a Che-Mun mailing label

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There is lingering confusion about expiry dates for Che-Mun subscriptions. You will note the date at the end of the bottom line. This is when you expire i.e now - Autumn 1994. You will be sent one additional issue after that - both with expiry warnings - in the hope you will keep subscribing.



WITH APOLOGIES TO MR. ADDAMS ~ Notice something unusual about this photo? Perhaps it's just how some stern paddlers really feel about certain bow paddlers. We present this photo funny with deep

apologies to the late, great New Yorker cartoonist Charles Addams who originally penned this idea in a cartoon. Here we used the magic of the computer program Adobe Photoshop to get the results we wanted. Our

patient paddlers and models are Sean and Geoffrey Peake. The photo was taken during a rare calm day along the Porcupine River in the Yukon during last August's Across the Arctic Mountains canoe trip.

Upcoming Che-Mun

The Classics returns with a look at *True North* by Elliot Merrick, a look at his rugged life in Labrador in the early part of this century.

We will also have reviews of several new books that will be out for the holiday season including one that features a complete list of historical canoe trips.

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