

WITTEHORSE MOTORS SALUTES

JANE GAFFIN

CHAMPION FOR THE YUKON'S MINING INDUSTRY

Since her arrival in the Yukon in 1966, Kentucky-born writer Jane Gaffin has chronicled the many ups and downs of the Yukon's mining industry. Jane's articles on mining and other topics appear in the *Yukon News*. She has written three books with Yukon themes: *Cashing In*, a history of the Yukon mining industry, *Chuchi*, the story of her Siberian husky, and *Missing in Life*, an inquiry into a mysterious plane crash. Her story about Al Kulan, the Yukon's most successful prospector, appears inside this issue.





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Cover photo: Darlee Norquay at Tagish Lake, Yukon. Photo by John Hatch.



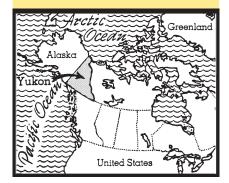
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From the Editor

Well, now we know the difference betweeen short grain and long grain paper. The last two covers were printed on 80 pound short grain glossy paper. We ordered it again but they sent 80 pound long grain. You can see it's a lot thinner, and it was much harder to get through the press. If you find any nicks on your cover, don't blame the post office. The old press didn't like that paper any more than I did.

In this issue, we have finished two long series: The White Pass story by W.J. Swanson, and *The Goldseeker*, by yours truly. I would love to start another novel, but let's give it a rest for a while and make room for others in the magazine.

You will notice that for the first time, we are charging G.S.T. on subscriptions and books. That's because we went over the limit and now have a GST number. We are now tax collectors for the government. It is a lot of work. We had to buy a new bookkeeping program and upgrade the computer besides. Dianne has been at her computer for days on end trying to figure out how to track everything.

Next time you get a resentment when you pay GST, think of the little business folk who have to add it all up and send it to Ottawa. The government gets all that work free.

In the meantime, it feels like spring. The cats are wandering around in the yard and some of the mess out there is sticking up out of the snow. And the bugs will soon be here. Oh well, another winter is on its way.

So long for now,

Editor's Note:

This letter section is longer than usual so we can catch up a bit. I hope you enjoy these personal notes as much as we did receiving them.

Hi Sam:

Looking through my old diary, I found this story I heard on Channel 4441 while I was out on my trapline about 15 years ago. I thought maybe you'd like to put it in the Yukoner. It might give some people a chuckle or two.

I'm 88 now and my trapping days are over at least for a long line. I do get a wolf and a fox and lynx or two each year around our garbage dump. I've moved into Ross River to be near the hospital and the stores so it's a lot easier for me and Mom.

My hands a re a bit shaky but I tried to do the best I could so you could read it. I got the back issues and sent them to my daughter in Buffalo, N.Y. It's a wonderful magazine and I wouldn't miss it at any price. We all wish it was published every week instead of so far apart.

Best wishes; looking forward to next issue of Yukoner.

Tensley Johnston

Ross River, Yukon

Now here is the story:

February 1980 at Fox Creek, South Canol Road, Yukon.Radio conversation overheard on 4441 Channel.

"XXX to OOO"

"Hi honey, how are you?"

"I'm fine except for the hole in the floor."

"Oh, what hole is that?"

"Well, you know I set traps and caught all those mice but there was a shrew I couldn't catch so I decided to shoot it because they are supposed ot be very poisonous if they bite you.

"Yes, I guess a No. 2 wouldn't do much damage inside the cabin."

"Well, because these shrews are dangerous, I decided to use the 45-70 and I'm glad I had all that military training."

"Why was that?"

"Well, that old gun hadn't been cleaned in several years and for the first hour after I shot, I couldn't see or hear good."

"I can understand that. Did you get the shrew?"

"Well, I haven't looked good yet. I was looking for a couple of pieces of 2X8 to fix the hole but it's hard to walk with the floor slanted so bad. Somehow I'd

put a bullet hole in 3 skillets, the tea kettle and the coffee pot and all the cups and all the plates fell and broke too."

"That's too bad but we'll get some more. Did you do any more damage?"
"Yes. The shot had blown the main floor joist in half. That's why the floor slanted and the dog was sleeping under the house and I'd shot her tail off."
"Well,honey, that's the way it goes. Anything else?"

"No, but but you know there was a mouse in my sleeping bag and if that shrew had got in there and bit me, I might woke up in the morning DEAD!" "Oh dear, I wouldn't want that to happen. Well, take care, over and out." From Tin (Tensley Johnston's nickname.

Hello neigbours-

It seems we have a lot in common. I decided to inform you of a little of my past.

I was born in Toronto, Ontario on July 30, 1917. After my school years I



Tensley Johnson of Ross River with some wolf hides. Kris Gustafson photo, 1984).

obtained a job during the Depression with a northern Ontario timber and lumber company. I retired in 1983 after 46 years as a labourer, mechanic and finally superintendent. My first long holiday trip in 1983 was to Anchorage, Alaska to visit cousins. Then there were three trips coast to coast plus the Dempster Highway.

My late mother's eldest aunt, Margaret Maggie Godfrey, was married to Michael James Haney (NOT HENEY, as written in history books of the west).

As a small boy I well remember uncle Mike after he retired as an old gentleman. While he was building the CR rail line from Kingston to Ottawa he met his wife (my great aunt, Maggie). He and two other contractors, Russell and Stewart, built the Soo Locks at Sault Ste. Marie. He was president of the Home Bank also. Long years ago. He had many jobs contracted during the building of the CPR to the West.

Uncle Mike Haney constructed the White Pass narrow guage rail line from Skagway to Whitehorse. His construction business terminated at Port Credit on his Lakeshore estate west of Toronto in about 1924.

His history is mentioned in many pages of Pierre Berton's book, *The Last Spike*. Uncle's last days were spent in a modest home in Toronto's Rosedale district. He and his wife raised two daughters, Eilene Haney, a spinster and ambulance driver during 1914-18 war. The other daughter, Alice (Ali) married a contractor named Ralph who built Timothy Eaton's College St. store, long ago during my childhood days. Uncle Mike was interred in Mount Pleasant Cemetery on Yonge St., Toronto.

I'm in my 84th year and still enjoying pretty good health and hoping to visit the Yukon again soon. Spent my life inthe outdoor fresh air.

Keep up your good work.

Your distant neighbour, also a Yukoner at heart.

Myron Austin

Nara Centre, Ontario

Editor: In this issue, toward the end of the White Pass story is an historian's account of Michael Heney's death. Is this the same Heney (or Haney) mentioned in your letter?

Dear Sam & Dianne:

I congratulate you on a wonderul magazine. I love stories about people who have lived in the bush and still do. All too often, we are forgotten.

I enclosed a picture of "White Moose" that I took on Ground Hog Lake, Ontario, in 1996. My late husband and I first saw a large white cow moose in 1989 on my trapline. Now I have seen about three and many people take pictures of them in the summer.



I would like to hear from anyone in the Yukon, B.C. or Alaska that have seen any any of these white moose (they have brown eyes and are not albinos). They are true Canadian.

My your portage be a short one.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth (Betty) Dingie Ethier

Foheyet, Ontario

Dear Sam:

As a subscriber to your magazine, I thought my daughter in Wisconsin should enjoy it also. She literally "grew up" in Dawson City some 40-odd years ago. She went there as a young waitress expecting to make money but came out without a bean. Hence was unable to continue her studies at UBC.

Still, she was very fond of the Yukon and in our travels we enjoyed it even more, except for the buses filled with "been there, done that" tourists.

For all of us that remember, keep up the good work.

R.G. Garry

Mission, B.C.

Dear Sam:

Please forgive the familiarity but I really must thank you for your fantastic magazine. I am writing from a much warmer climate (Preston, Lancashire, England). Ye Gods, how do you stand that weather?

Sorry to admit it but I have never bought one single copy of The Yukoner. I have many pen pals and one of them, Mrs. Jacqueline Smorden, has sent me a couple of copies.

The first time I saw the photo of your magazine office, I was completely flummoxed. How on earth do you manage to turn out quality like this from such a place?

Could you please thank Jackie for letting me share with her this magazine.

Norman Hunnisett Lancashire, England.

Editor:

Space is tight all right, but it's very warm in this cabin. To get the magazine out in a more timely fashion, I am going to install another press in here and run them both at once. That should be fun.

P.S. Overseas subscriptions do cost a fortune to mail out. We have to charge \$48.00 Cdn to mail them out first class.

Dear Editor:

We have your wonderful stories about the Yukon in our English class for adults translated. It was very interesting and very funny.

Many greetings from Germany

Karl Wich

Dianne & Sam

I really enjoy your magazine, having lived & worked in the Yukon from 1982-90. I loved it. My heart is still in the Yukon. Have visted many times since.

I worked from Faro, Mayo, Dawson, two years in Old Crow and Carmacks, as a nurse. Lots of horror stories but also some wonderful memories.

Thanks so much, Rose Scrivens, Nova Scotia

Dear Yukon Magazine;

Enclosed my renewal to the magazine which is read from cover to cover. We were married in the Old Log Church (in Whitehorse) in 1954, lived in the Yukon for 20 years, had four babies there. So it's always home to me. My oldest daughter lives there yet so we gets back every couple of years. She lets me know when the crocusses are out and when the first snow is on Grey Mountain with the sun shining on it. I miss it very much. Such good times were had.

Keep up the good work,

J. Holmes

Kamloops, B.C.

Dear Sam & Dianne

I was born and raised in Skagway (100 miles over the mountain passes from Whitehorse). Before "THE ROAD" I took many trips on the White Pass & Yukon Railway. My dad was a conductor and retired from the railroad to live in Terrakee.

He had a cabin on the Yukon River and I dipped many a bucket full to haul to the cabin. My husband and I have a cabin at Carcross on Lake Bennett. We have driven around Army Beach many times trying to find your cabin.

I am writing from Mesa, Arizona as now spend our winters here. BUT, we are sure ready to come back to the cabin, the Yukon, the fishing and the people in April.

Keep up the good work, Bea & Benny Lingle Mesa, Arizona



riving a long, tedious road, it's easy to be envious of the bush pilot flying his plane above you through mountain valleys. The view would be fantastic and the freedom intoxicating.

But chances are the pilot is working harder than you.

The only thing you have to do is watch the road. The pilot has to watch the air ... which is as difficult as it sounds.

Picking a point on the horizon, the pilot flys toward it. If he drifts to the left or right, he will know he has a cross wind. If he doesn't drift, he has to decide if he has a tail wind or a head wind. To do this, he'll judge his distance travelled over a ten-minute period. If it isn't as far as he judges it should be, he has a head wind. If he travels farther, he is getting help from a tail wind.

It is important to know what the air is doing around his bush plane. To fly out of the valley he will probably have to fly over a ridge. Is there a downdraft waiting for him at the ridge to throw his plane into the valley floor? He looks for a clue: If there are clouds or puffs of snow being pushed down from the cliff, he will know one of his worst enemies awaits.

And how far away is that ridge? A stark landscape and not knowing how tall the trees are (if any) robs the pilot of the visual per-

spectives we all use to judge

Besides watching the the ground. He keeps a climb indicator to see if An aircraft losing altirise from his seat givof climbing. A windshield could be a

A careful pilot ley so that the ground plane. But if his enany of a hundred reaprefer flying up the slower speed over the emergency landing. air, the pilot has to watch close eye on the rate-of-

distances.

he is going up or down. tude causes the pilot to ing him the sensation treeline rising in the surprise.

likes to fly down a valfalls away from his gine should stall for sons, he would actually valley to give him a ground for a safer Besides watching constantly for possible landing sites, the pilot must also watch out for other aircraft. Unfortunately, his field of vision only allows him to watch 30 to 40 percent of the space around him.

It's tough being a bush pilot ... it takes a relentless pursuit of perfection to prevent a crash. And if a crash happens anyway, or a landing strip can't be found, or the plane can't take off again, it is up to the bush pilot to protect the passengers, cargo and plane.

There is a peculiar kind of competition among bush pilots. They all want to be the best, yet they hate to see a colleague fail to measure up. They all want to believe their planes are the safest in the air because they are the pilot. And yet they are never satisfied with their own level of skill since their goal is to be an even better bush pilot.

Lloyd Ryder is proud to be a bush pilot.

Sitting in the cab of his truck, Lloyd Ryder watches a bush plane take off from Schwatka Lake. He is amazed the pilot has chosen to take off from the centre of the lake. Obviously this bush pilot is not a professional. Lloyd, and any other bush pilot who can be trusted, would start from the end of the lake. Sure, it would take extra time to taxi to the end, but it

would give a much greater speed and more lift, and if would still be time to land this amateur would never dam if he hadn't veered off



margin of error. More anything goes wrong there again on the lake. As it was, have been able to clear the to one side. Lloyd doesn't

think much of this pilot. That is as unkind as he is willing to voice. But if the errant pilot had known this was the opinion of a colleague as well respected as Lloyd, someone who embodies all that has to be special about the northern bush pilot, he would have been devastated.

Flyers have an old saying: "There are old pilots and there are bold pilots, but there are no old, bold pilots."

Lloyd flew for 40 years and he was never "bold" about it. If he couldn't find a safe place to land, he wouldn't land. Perhaps the sun was high and behind the clouds, the lack of shadows would hide any snow drifts or cracks in the ice and so, even though he would forfeit his fee, Lloyd would head back.

Some people would be disappointed to learn that most bush pilots aren't the wild bunch fiction would have us believe. Lloyd takes great pride in being careful. A good bush pilot would never run out of gas and every trip would be thought out to the smallest detail.

Lloyd would begin each trip with an inspection of his plane. Even though he filled his tanks with gas and engine with oil the night before (to prevent condensation in the tank overnight), he would check the levels again with a stick. Besides the plane itself, he would ensure his load is evenly balanced. And he would check the weather with a care that takes 15 to 20 minutes. He needs to know what the air around him will be doing.

He never misses a step. He might hurry, but he will never miss a step. Even today, he still checks his oil before driving his car. It is a habit he cannot break.

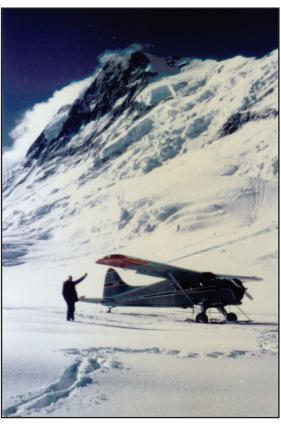
If there is to be any trouble on a flight, he wants to know about it while he is still on the ground.

There was the time Lloyd was asked to fly kitchen cupboards to Johnny Johns' cabin on Rose Lake. They were too big to fit inside the plane, so they wrapped them in plastic and tied them to his pontoons. He was supposed to charge him for an "external load", but he wanted to keep a good customer happy. As he took off, the plastic filled with air and billowed just out of reach of his knife as he tried to reduce the drag and attain more height. It stopped billowing after a while, but he was still unable to turn back since he wasn't high enough for the loss in elevation a deep turn causes. And he wasn't able to climb over any hills. So he took the long way to Rose Lake ... a trip that was supposed to last only 25 minutes took him 90.

Lloyd's definition of a bush pilot is "anyone who flies to an isolated lake or field". If you think about it, that's saying a lot.

The Yukon has a whole lot of nothing between isolated lakes and isolated fields. If a bush plane goes down ... with no warning ... the pilot needs to survive the landing and then survive the wait for rescue. That takes self reliance and ingenuity in doses most of us don't have. Fortunately, most of us don't have the Yukon wilderness hanging 1,000 feet beneath our office desks

Lloyd said he would fall asleep at a desk. He enjoys the fact he is always busy while flying and always enjoys the "fabulous" landscape



Lloyd Ryder near Mount Kennedy, 1956.

from high up. There is always something new to see from this perspective and he believes he knows the Yukon better than most truck drivers.

Every landing is a new experience as well. He will always fly over the "landing strip" he has chosen looking for rough ground or wildlife and testing the wind. Even landing on water he may encounter a floating branch and he'll need to know which way the current is running to decide from which direction to approach his "dock".

A lack of ripples on water is a concern as well. A flat lake may be pretty to look at, but bush pilots hate landing on them because they can't judge how high up they are (especially when it is reflecting the sky). As well for taking off, a flat water surface sucks down on the pontoons making it difficult to lift off again which is especially tough on a day with no wind.

In situations like this, Lloyd has taxied back and forth to create his own ripples to "bounce" from in order to get air under his pontoons.

Then there was the time Lloyd landed on a glacier to load up a surveying camp. The skis heated up with the friction from landing and the snow stuck to them. An experienced bush pilot knows what to do in a situation like this: They cut branches from trees and make a bed for the plane to taxi up onto. Air can now reach the underside of the skis and cool them off. But there are no trees on a glacier. Instead, Lloyd had to wait three hours until a wind cooled off the snow's surface.

Lloyd's love of flying developed over many years. Born in Whitehorse in 1922, it would be 10 years before the British Yukon Navigation Company would start bringing in planes. He remembers his father, George Ryder, delivering a load with his horse and sleigh up alongside the Ford Tri-Motor with a silver, corrugated aluminium fuselage.

His father operated a water and fuel delivery business and headed one of the grand, old families of the Yukon along with the Drurys, Cyrs, Taylors and Hougens.

Lloyd, the oldest of four children, learned self-reliance early in life. He and Bill Drury would snare rabbits and sell them for 25 cents each. When they were 10, they started an ice cream business. They made the soft ice cream and sold cones at ball tournaments and other special occasions.

They picked up business advice from Bill's father, William Drury (half of the Taylor and Drury team who bought equipment from frustrated Stampeders and sold them to the hopeful still headed to the Klondike ... and then parlayed this success into a chain of stores).

In 1939, Lloyd took an airplane mechanics course in Vancouver and returned to apprentice with White Pass (as the British Yukon Navigation Company was called). He worked with Gordon Cameron, who would later go on to become commissioner of the Yukon. Lloyd quit in 1941 when he got work on a surveying crew building the Whitehorse airport. His salary jumped from \$85 a month to \$225.

With the extra money, and help from his father, he was able to put a

down payment on a dump truck just eight months later. After expenses, his take home pay was now \$800 a month. A lot of Yukoners bought dump trucks at that time and they were all kept busy with the building of airports and other major projects in those heady times of the north.

With the war on, Whitehorse saw 100 flights a day arrive and take off as part of the Northwest Staging Route. And so, when Lloyd received his letter calling him to duty, he chose the air force to become a pilot or navigator.

He and a gang of his friends went to the Edmonton Manning Depot together. And yes, they drank a lot of beer while waiting to be assigned, but they also ate a lot of pineapple and water melons for the sheer novelty of it.

After two months, the air force informed him they had enough pilots and navigators. So he and Gordon Cameron were sent to Vancouver to join the army. They sent them to Orillia, Ontario to train as tank repairmen since airplanes and tanks used the same engines.

But then they were sent to Aldershot, Nova Scotia, to train as infantry. From there to Aldershot, England, for more training and then to Holland. Before he saw any action, however, he developed pneumonia from sleeping on the ground and was sent back to England to recuperate. While there, he worked with the Salvation Army, delivered mail to the hospital and, at the end of the war, worked as a bartender in a Re-Patriation Camp for another six months.

There wasn't much work for dump truck owners when he got back home from the war. So he went into business with his father, who at that time was



Lloyd Ryder, mid-1960s. Whitehorse Star photo.

also the fire chief and undertaker. He was also elected a city councillor in 1950, but died later that year.

Lloyd took over the business and concentrated on wood and oil since the army started putting in a water system.

By April of 1956, a lot of Lloyd's friends were getting pilot's licenses, so he decided to take lessons from Dawn Connelly and take up flying for the fun of it. He earned his wings in June of that year.

And then there was a time a group of friends decided to fly to Northway, Alaska for the weekend. It was 1962, Lloyd and his wife were joined by Art and Ione Christensen in his one-year-old Cessna 172 while the rest of the gang left in two other planes. They got as far as Kluane Lake when the weather turned bad fast. He turned the plane around and headed back to Whitehorse, but hit another storm just 13 kilometres from the airport. He saw the Takhini River and then the highway and decided to follow them back to Whitehorse. Bob Campbell was ahead of him, having turned back as well, but he decided conditions were worsening toward Whitehorse. He turned again to try a landing at Haines Junction. Both planes came within 500 feet of hitting as they passed. Lloyd, too, decided to turn around and follow the highway back to Haines Junction keeping low to fly beneath the clouds. One second he could see only white, then he could see only trees. He figured he had a minute to climb above the hill they were headed for and wasn't sure if they would make it. They didn't. Hitting the trees at 120 kilometres an hour, they could hear trees snapping and metal crunching. The snow was a good cushion and Lloyd was left with a gash, while Art broke his arm and fractured his skull. They heard a vehicle, so they knew they were close to the highway. Two minutes later, the same storm caused another of his friends to crash into Teslin Lake.

After the accident, Lloyd decided to fly commercially. He didn't deliver a lot of fuel in the summer months, so it would fill in nicely. He found it more difficult earning his commercial license than the first one since he had to learn theory and gain more experience. At the same time, he earned his instructor rating.

 $Lloyd\ Romfo, owner\ of\ Yukon\ Flying\ Service, hired\ him\ and\ helped\ him\ log\ hours\ to\ become\ fully\ qualified.$

Flying the company's Cessna 180, Lloyd flew hunters and fishers into remote areas. Some were tourists, but mostly they were locals. There was also exploration camps to help set up and then re-supply.

At the time, there were approximately 50 helicopter and bush pilots in the Yukon, so just about everybody knew at least one pilot. But in Vancouver, people envied his lifestyle as a Yukon bush pilot.

He thought it was a great life, too. With all of the mining activity and surveying and outfitting it was a busy time. Every job was different and he met different people.

Three years later, Yukon Flying Service was bought by Great Northern Airways where he continued with the same kind of work.

Lloyd flew the advance party for Bobby Kennedy's ascent of Mount Kennedy. But it was a military helicopter that flew the brother of the slain president since the Canadian government didn't want him flying in a bush plane.

By 1971, GNA had grown too big, too fast. Even though there was lots of work available, the expenses were too steep. After an aircraft crashed outside of Alert, a military listening post, and another skidded off the end of the Inuvik runway, the company went bankrupt.

Lloyd went to work for his brother, Gordon, at Builders Supplyland, for a year until he was offered another flying job. Elvin's Equipment Sales needed him to fly mechanics to outlying communities and any other remote spot where heavy construction equipment required servicing.

He found it safer than flying outfitters around since he was landing on, and taking off from, prepared landing strips and known lakes and rivers.

After 20 years, in 1996, he retired. But only because the insurance premiums for a 72-year-old pilot was too high. He quit personal flying just a year ago for the same reason.

Today, Lloyd is busy curling, cross country skiing and walking his dog. Then there is his work as treasurer of CPR Yukon and, next year, he will mark his 50th anniversary as a member of the Whitehorse Lions Club.

An informal survey of Yukon bush pilots has proven Lloyd retired from flying with the best possible reputation: He always got the job done \dots and he was always careful about it.

Lloyd and his wife, Marni, at an airshow in Whitehorse, 1992.

The IX TO A TO THE TRUE TO THE TANK TO SO THE TANK

cereal story that should have wrapped up 45 years ago is far from over. The story begins in an era when breakfast cereal was shot from cannons and a red-coated Mountie doled out justice for the Yukon once a week on national television.

Flash back to Chicago, 1954. Advertising executive Bruce Baker is looking for a scheme to sell more cereal for his client, the Quaker Coats Company. The promotion also has to tie in with Quaker's flagship radio program about a Canadian Mountie, Sergeant Preston of the Yukon.

Eureka! Baker hits upon a neat idea: to give square inch plots of Yukon land to kids who are able to persuade their mothers to buy Quaker Oats cereals.

In October 1954, Baker and his lawyer brother, John, charter a plane and fly to Whitehorse, Yukon. There, they ask law partners George Van Roggen & Erik Nielsen to put a deal together. The partners set up the Klondike Big Inch Land Co. Inc. and they find some land—a 19-acre lot on the Yukon River, 20 km upstream from Dawson City. As public administrator, Van Roggen is responsible for disposing of the land. Its former owner, a miner named Napoleon Marcoux, died without a will earlier in the year.

The Big Inch Land Company buys the land for \$200 and makes plans to divide a portion of the plot into 21 million square-inch lots. But there's a hitch. The Yukon land titles office will not accept a survey plan showing one-square-inch lots. A proper survey plan requires at least a square inch of space to record each deed number. The plan would be about the same size as the subdivision it represented — almost 3-1/2 acres. There can be no proper survey plan and no individually registered deeds.

Not to worry. While Van Roggan & Neilsen take care of the paper work, the Baker brothers fly to Dawson City then set out on a boat trip up the Yukon River to inspect their property. Their guide is Constable Paul Lecocq, a genuine Mountie who tranferred to the Yukon from Montreal in 1953. Later, Lecoq will receive the first Klondike Big Inch Land Company deed.

Although they wear warm sweaters and jackets, the brothers Baker are unprepared for the cold air and freezing spray off the river. Lecocq turns the boat toward shore and—Crash!—it smashes on a rock. About 15 gallons of water come in over the stern and immediately turn to ice in the bottom of the boat. The party paddles to shore and makes a quick inspection of the Big Inch property. It is fairly level with a rocky beach about 100 feet wide, and is thick with jackpine, spruce, poplar and birch. Wet and cold, the men drift back to Dawson in their disabled boat.

On January 27, 1955 Bruce Baker launches the greatest of all cerealbox giveaways. The promise of free gold rush land is advertised on the Sergeant Preston of the Yukon television show and in 93 newspapers. Mineral rights to the land are not included in the deal, but the Quaker Oats Company makes no mention of this in its promotion.

Sales of puffed wheat and puffed rice shoot skyward and the Quaker Oats Company mailroom staff shifts into overdrive. One man writes to announce that he has collected 10,800 deeds and is now the owner of 75 square feet of land. A youngster sends in four toothpicks and a piece of string asking the Quaker people to erect a fence around his property.

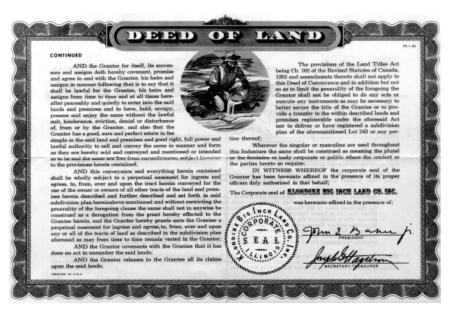
After a few months, the Quaker Oats Company stops stuffing deeds in its cereal boxes. That should be the end of the story but it isn't.

Forward flash, Whitehorse, March 2000. Prospector Al Downs gives our editor a Klondike Big Inch Land Company deed that his aunt has sent him from Ottawa. "Maybe this is something you can use in your magazine. My aunt has lots more just like it," he tells Sam.

Sam checks the Internet to see of the deed has value. It has — at least \$20 US. "I guess we could do a story," Sam says.

I go to the government land titles office looking for information. The clerk hands me a package of photocopied newspaper articles, all on the Big Inch. "Do you get that many inquiries"? I ask. There's a loud shriek from the far corner of the room, like I've said something ridiculous. At the Yukon Archives, the scene is repeated.

It seems that Bruce Baker's brainchild has left a paper trail that extends across Canada and the United States and to other continents, too. Unlike the plastic toy prizes usually found in cereal boxes, Big Inch deeds got saved. Because the people who stored the deeds aren't always the people who have the deeds now, there's some confusion about the validity of the deeds.



The Yukon Land Titles office and the Archives get regular requests for information. Some of the inquiries come from beneficiaries of wills who want to know if their Big Inch deed is worth anything.

The answer is "Yes," and "No." The Big Inch deeds do have value as

After a few months, the Quaker Oats Company stops stuffing deeds in its cereal boxes. That should be the end of the story but it isn't.

collectors items, but they are no longer legally attached to lot 243—the Big Inch Land Co. property on the Yukon River. In the late 1980s, ownership of the land reverted to the Yukon government for non-payment of \$37.50 in property taxes. The Baker brothers had dissolved the Klondike Big Inch Land Co. in the early 1960s. Athough 21million deeds were distributed, there was no one to pay the tax bill.

Thanks to Al Downes for loaning us his deed.





A lan Kulan was an outstanding prospector whose unwavering optimism for the Yukon's vast mineral potential was a great inspirational legacy to others.

The successful minefinder is most celebrated as the discoverer of the now-exhausted 60-million-tonne Faro lead-zinc-silver deposit, which put the Yukon on the world map in 1969.

He also discovered the world's best-known source of lazulite crystals in the northeast corner of the Yukon in 1974. Two years later, the bluish-purple gemstone was designated the Yukon's official gemstone.

In the same Blow River locale, he miraculously uncovered 10 new mineral species, unknown until then. The first in the series was appropriately named kulanite.

A successful prospector has to maintain a maximum amount of personal initiative and freedom, contended Kulan, who had plenty of both. Without these traits, what he achieved for Canadians would not have been possible.

"I found the Vangorda mines," he explained. "Then I found a repetition. I was fortunate to find the Faro. A prospector has to be extremely optimistic. The Geological Survey of Canada reports indicated the area was unsuitable for mineralization."

Besides being an optimist who exuded confidence, Kulan was charitable. Many individuals and families relied on him as a one-man welfare department. He invested large sums to start people in businesses. He assisted numerous community projects ranging from tree-planting in Whitehorse to pirating a television signal for the villagers of Ross River. He often shared his material possessions. His luxurious silver Rolls Royce might be needed to haul paraphernalia around in the bush or to transport the local Ross River hockey team in style to out-of-town competitions.

Kulan started his career as a penniless prospector who tacked cardboard to the bottom of his worn-out boots. By 1953, the 31-year-old began to enjoy a fair amount of good fortune following a discovery near Vangorda Creek.

Prospectors Airways, one of the earliest mineral exploration companies into the Yukon, optioned the lead-zinc find from Kulan and his grubstaker, Bert Law. Then, 12 miles to the northwest, he found the next mineral deposit that evolved into the Faro mine. It ultimately became Cana-

da's top lead producer. Kulan's convictions, along with the hard-work ethics he learned on the prairies, had paid off.

Born Julian Lawrence Alan Kula, in Winnipeg on December 20, 1921, Al Kulan was the sixth child and first son of Lawrence and Katherine Kula. His parents had met and married in Manitoba. Yet both had lived in the same town in Galacia, a farming region west of Russia's Ukraine.

The 16-year-old Lawrence came to Canada with his pioneer family in 1898. Within a few years, the ambitious young Kula bought his own 80-acre parcel in the fertile soil of an ancient lakebed in the Beausejour region, near the Ontario border.

About 1923, after a 15-year marriage, the young Mrs. Kula died suddenly. She had given birth to her seventh baby, Edward, who died a week later. The oldest child, 14-year-old Anne, took charge and became the mother figure with help from Sophie Jean, 12; Victoria, 10; Gertrude, 8; and



Alan Kulan's Army uniform decorations were identified by Duke Connelly of Whitehorse. They are (I to r): the '39-'45 Star; the France and Germany Stars; and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and clasp.

four-year-old Pauline. Little Alan was only two years old.

Times were tough but worsened during the Depression years when Mr. Kula had to disperse his children to various relatives. Al's new home for the last half of his school-age years seems to have been in the Toronto area.

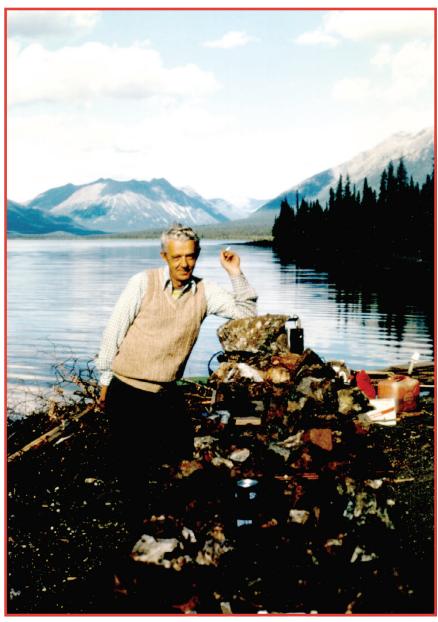
In a British-oriented society that discriminated against Ukrainian and Polish immigrants, Alan and two sisters thought an English-sounding surname might make life easier. Adding "n" to coin Kulan didn't help the family's employment prospects, however. There were no jobs for anyone.

When Al turned age 18 in December, 1939, he joined the army. From 1941 to 1945, he served in Italy, Sicily, Belgium, France and Germany. As the war escalated, he was elevated to sergeant in the tank corps.

Near the end of the European Theatre, the 23-year-old soldier was introduced to more horror. He was with the Western Ally troops who liberated the first Nazi concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen in April, 1945. When Victory was declared, Kulan was demobilized. He never wanted to see Europe again and vowed never to be restricted by working for others.

Back on Canadian soil, he began his wanderings as an independent prospector. In 1947, he and two fellows took passage on a northbound bus from Grande Prairie, Alberta, where they had landed after a nine-month stint in the Northwest Territories. They ended up bunking in a Lower Post cabin, which they used as a base camp while they prospected the Cassiar country in northern British Columbia near the Yukon border.

Kulan was attracted to the tall, auburn-haired employee who waited



Alan Kulan, the day before he was murdered. Photo by Pete Risby.

tables in the cafe and clerked in the store. The 25-year-old Winnifred Catherine Camsell, an adventurer in her own right, came from a long line of famous Hudson's Bay explorers.

In fine family tradition, she had exchanged an office job in Penticton for one farther north in Dawson Creek, B.C. The town was Mile "0" for the Alaska Highway which the military had recently opened to civilian traffic. A while later, she had bought a ticket on a northbound bus that took her to the job at Lower Post.

One night, Kulan, armed with a cribbage board, knocked on her door. She felt virtuous for not breaking another date to stay home and get to know



In March, 1968, minefinder A1 Kulan stopped into the Main Street office of Flo Whyard, editor of the Whitehorse Star. At this time, he made arrangements for Jane Gaffin to visit the Faro, which was undergoing development in the remote Pelly River country.

Note the headline of a clipping tacked to the wall above Kulan's head that reads: "High costs curb Yukon mining."

Photo credit: Yukon Archives, Whitehorse Star Collection

Al better. Soon, he asked her to a barn dance where a lively native band entertained with great fiddle music.

Al Kulan and Wynne Camsell were married on May 23, 1950. They didn't know anybody in the little highway burg of Whitehorse and had no money. So, Geoff Bidlake, an Anglican minister and Justice of the Peace, performed a quiet ceremony in the old territorial office building on First Avenue.

The next year, Kulan's 68-year-old father died. The young prospector, who was destined to become a wealthy mining magnate of world stature, suffered much grief and guilt. He didn't have a cent to go to his own father's funeral.

When Kulan did come into money, he was hurled into a business world he knew little about. "I learned quickly. But only after I lost a million dollars," he recalled.

In early 1977, Al, Wynne and children Barry, Brian and Bev relocated the family's permanent home from Ross River in central Yukon to Vernon, B.C. It was more accessible to education facilities for the kids and to Al's business contacts in larger centres. Also, the climate was favorable for Al to grow magnificent yellow roses and plump red strawberries.

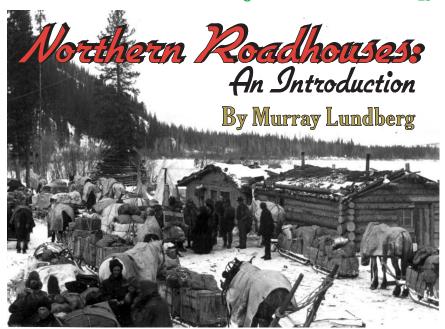
That summer, Kulan returned to the Yukon on an exploration trip related to one of his Vancouver-based companies. He rendezvoused in Ross River with a Welcome North Mines geologist and the owner of a mineral property.

On the evening of September 12, 1977, the trio engaged in deep discussions regarding an option agreement. About 8 p.m., they decided to relax over a drink in the Ross River lounge. A local resident, John Benedict Rolls, 62, approached the table with a purposeful gait and shot Kulan in the face with a .357-magnum handgun. Later, the gunman was diagnosed as being crazed by depression and feelings of jealousy and paranoia, aggravated by alcohol abuse.

Kulan was first on a list of prominent Yukoners Rolls intended to kill. He believed certain people had conspired to intentionally engineer his business failures and financial pressures. Rolls was charged with first-degree murder. Due to flaws in the justice system and careless newspaper reporting, he only served 10 years in prison. He died shortly after his parole.

Although it has been more than 20 years since Al Kulan's death, many people still speak his hame. A 6,500-foot memorial mountain in the Tay River region near Faro was officially named Mount Kulan by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names in December of 1977. The Alan Kulan Memorial Lectureship Series pays tribute for his generous scientific contributions to academic institutions such as the Royal Ontario Museum and the University of Toronto.

This article was made possible with information and photographs from Wynne Kulan, her son Barry, and daughter Bev, as well as financial assistance from Yukon prospector Al Carlos.



Surely one of the most colour-ful of the institutions in the his-tory of the Yukon and Alaska is the roadhouse. Few pioneers' memoirs don't have fond recollections of this vital aspect of life on the Northern frontier.

Whether they were acting as restaurant, saloon, hotel, community hall, general store, or just a warm place to escape the frozen wilderness for a few hours, roadhouses were found along virtually every route that prospectors traveled on a regular basis. Despite that, little beyond anecdotal mentions has been written about them.

A precise definition of what is meant by the term "roadhouse" is impossible - they ranged from dugouts and dirty tents to relatively luxurious 2-storey complexes, from boomtown main streets to wilderness riversides. Due to the fact that a roadhouse was generally the first business to open in a new mining area, towns often grew up around those buildings, blurring the definition even more. They might be called either "Roadhouse" or "Hotel", without regard to the type or quality of accommodation provided. Rooms and meals were offered by barbers, bath-houses, freighters, and just about any other business that might be located along a transportation route of any kind.

For some, operating a temporary roadhouse could supply the cash needed for a special project, and in some cases seems to have happened without planning - people just started dropping in at someone's cabin and staying overnight. During the rush from the Klondike to Nome in 1900, many of the wood camps along the Yukon River opened their doors to travelers,

although the conditions were sometimes appalling. The "Muskrat Roadhouse", eight miles upriver from Circle, was a 10 x 10- foot dugout covered with muskrat skins, and served "caribou" stew with strangely small bones in it! The cash derived from these woodcamp-roadhouses would allow at least one of the woodcutters to get to Nome to stake claims.

In March 1906, John A. Clark visited several roadhouses along the Valdez Trail while bicycling to Fairbanks, and recorded his impressions:

"Road houses on that trail that year were much alike. They had been built in a hurry to meet an emergency and were spaced from 15 to 20 miles apart - too short generally for a one-day journey, yet so far apart that for the ordinary horse-drawn rig it was difficult to make two road houses in a day.

Meals at the Valdez end - that is, for the first hundred miles, were \$1.50 and beds \$1.50 to \$2. 'Beds' is a misnomer, for generally they were only bunks built against the wall, usually in tiers of two or four, depending upon the height of the roof. The bunks were constructed of round spruce poles and the mattresses and springs of the same material.

Some of the roadhouse keepers, having evidently been accustomed to luxuries before they came to Alaska, sprinkled a few spruce boughs over the poles, and some of them actually had a few blankets to spread over the boughs. After sleeping on one of them, I concluded that the blankets were for the purpose of concealment."

It appears from studying the ownership records of the roadhouses that running a roadhouse was generally a temporary situation for the owners. Most people owned their roadhouse for less than two years, and then moved into other businesses or jobs. There were, of course, exceptions to that. The



White Pass Hotel, with Brackett Wagon Road to the right. From the collection of Cynthia Brackett Driscoll (used with permission).

most famous roadhouse owner is certainly Belinda Mulrooney, who between 1897 and 1900 parlayed a \$5,000 shipment of hot-water bottles and silk and cotton into a Dawson lunch counter, then the Grand Forks Hotel, and finally the Fairview Hotel, the finest in Dawson.

"Big Bill" Anderson and his wife Emma owned no fewer than seven roadhouses and hotels in Bennett, the Atlin area, Carcross, Dawson and



"Between Dances at Evaline's Road House, #41 Gold Run" personal collection (print bought on eBay)

Wynton between 1899 and 1907, when Bill left for Victoria (Emma stayed in Dawson, operating the Celtic Hotel).

The roadhouses which were built along the mining stampede routes were generally intended to be transient affairs, operating from tents which could be relocated quickly, or wooden buildings which were hastily erected and then abandoned when the rush had moved on. It was unusual to see any of these businesses for sale - the \$80 asked for Mr. Burt's "well outfitted" roadhouse on Lake Bennett (below), was basically the value of the lumber.

By the 1920s, roadhouse meals were generally highly regarded. There were, however, exceptions. One stopping-place on the road to the Keno silver mines was described as being run by two men who were "...indescribably filthy with long, greasy uncombed hair, unshaven faces, grease-ringed mouths and short, dirty mackinaws. Snow containing sawdust, rabbit turds and occasional urination was melted for water and black moosemeat, coated with dirt and gravel from the floor was cut into a greasy pan without cleaning and served with a cup of muddy coffee.(Aho)."

Most roadhouses were individually owned; it was not common for companies to be involved in operating several. The White Pass & Yukon Route, however, ran some of the best roadhouses in the North, along the winter road between Whitehorse and Dawson. Some of these establishments were owned outright by the company with hired staff, others were leased to the operators, while others were privately owned, with service contracts with the White Pass.



Montague House, still standing beside the Klondike Highway between Whitehorse and Carmacks. [S.H. photo]

In the Yukon and Alaska, there were possibly 3,000 businesses which offered meals and/or lodging prior to World War I. My inventory of such businesses in Skagway, Dyea, Atlin and the Yukon lists 1,447 to which I can put a date, and location, name or owner. Few of these original roadhouses survive in either the Yukon or Alaska - fire destroyed many, and neglect allowed Nature to reclaim the rest. However, thousands of people fondly remember the atmosphere and characters surrounding places like the Miller Roadhouse, which was built near Circle City in 1896.

In the Yukon, the government has restored the Carmacks Roadhouse, and stabilized the Montague and Robinson Roadhouses; in Alaska, private enterprise has thankfully been more productive, with several roadhouses having been rebuilt, either as businesses of various kinds, or as private residences. Original buildings such as Rika's Landing Roadhouse, the Cape Nome Roadhouse, the Gakona Lodge and the Copper Center Lodge offer people a genuine look back at life in a pioneer roadhouse.

Editor's Note:

Murray has a very interesting northern history website at www.yukonalaska.com.



A Gold Rush Era bakery at Carmacks, where they produced all the baked goods for the roadhouse just down from here (which is also still standing. (SH photo).

The Spell of the Yukon

By Robert W. Service

wanted the gold, and I sought it, I scrabbled and mucked like a slave. Was it famine or scurvy — I fought it; I hurled my youth into a grave. I wanted the gold, and I got it — Came out with a fortune last fall, — Yet somehow life's not what I thought it, And somehow the gold isn't all.



No! There's the land. (Have you seen it?) It's the cussedest land that I know, From the big, dizzy mountains that screen it To the deep, deathlike valleys below. Some say God was tired when He made it; Some say it's a fine land to shun; Maybe; but there's some as would trade it For no land on earth — and I'm one.



You come to get rich (damned good reason); You feel like an exile at first; You hate it like hell for a season, And then you are worse than the worst. It grips you like some kinds of sinning; It twists you from foe to a friend; It seems it's been since the beginning; It seems it will be to the end.



I've stood in some mighty-mouthed hollow That's plumb-full of hush to the brim; I've watched the big, husky sun wallow In crimson and gold, and grow dim, Till the moon set the pearly peaks gleaming, And the stars tumbled out, neck and crop; And I've thought that I surely was dreaming, With the peace o' the world piled on top.



The summer — no sweeter was ever;
The sunshiny woods all athrill;
The grayling aleap in the river,
The bighorn asleep on the hill.
The strong life that never knows harness;
The wilds where the caribou call;
The freshness, the freedom, the farness —
O God! how I'm stuck on it all.



The winter! the brightness that blinds you,
The white land locked tight as a drum,
The cold fear that follows and finds you,
The silence that bludgeons you dumb.
The snows that are older than history,
The woods where the weird shadows slant;
The stillness, the moonlight, the mystery,
I've bade 'em good-by — but I can't.



There's a land where the mountains are nameless,
And the rivers all run God knows where;
There are lives that are erring and aimless,
And deaths that just hang by a hair;
There are hardships that nobody reckons;
There are valleys unpeopled and still;
There's a land — oh, it beckons and beckons,
And I want to go back — and I will.

They're making my money diminish;
I'm sick of the taste of champagne.
Thank God! when I'm skinned to a finish
I'll pike to the Yukon again.
I'll fight — and you bet it's no sham-fight;
It's hell! — but I've been there before;
And it's better than this by a damsite —
So me for the Yukon once more.



There's gold, and it's haunting and haunting; It's luring me on as of old;
Yet it isn't the gold that I'm wanting
So much as just finding the gold.
It's the great, big, broad land 'way up yonder,
It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that thrills me with wonder,
It's the stillness that fills me with peace.



I MABBIED THE NOBTH By Elizabeth Reid More Tales of the Arctic 1945-53

Willie

...When we first arrived at Liard, Jim was at a distinct disadvantage not being able to speak the Slavey language. Gestures worked only to a point. The O.C. had stated he did not like a member to make patrols alone and notified Reid to hire a special Constable, one who could act as a guide as well as an interpreter. Here Jim was very lucky.

The Hudson's Bay manager, John Forrest, had a chap working for him, both in the store as interpreter and as a handy man. His name was Willie McLeod. Now Willie also ran a trap line but because he had a regular work schedule at the Bay he couldn't leave for any length of time to visit his traps. He was a little envious of the natives who brought in a good number of pelts while he was unable to get away.

While talking to Jim one morning he told him he was thinking of leaving the Bay and going on his own. He had a wife and three children and found it tough going on his salary. Jim didn't say anything to Willie but approached John, the Bay manager and asked him if he'd resent it if Jim offered Willie a job with the Police. John being an understanding employer as well as being an efficient manager readily agreed and Willie was duly hired as a special Constable. And it was agreed if ever John needed him in a pinch he would help his old employer.

When Jim inquired into Willie's background, Willie told him his father was a Scot and his mother was a native. He jokingly stated that he, Willie, was an improved Scotsman. He proved to be an invaluable asset.

The next problem was to obtain sleigh dogs. Distemper had gone through the area and many good dogs were lost. He had little Toby and another cast off dog named Fisher. Two other unwanted animals appeared and were added to the make-shift team.

Jim had to laugh when he would take out the toboggan and harness, all dogs would disappear into their dog houses. But gradually they realized they wouldn't be abused and grew more cooperative and regular meals worked wonders.

Finally a good lead dog was flown in from Fort Norman. What an improvement he made. His name was Monty and he was no ordinary dog but an exceptional animal with brains and a load of loyalty. Gentle and friendly he was an American husky and well trained. Without him a team could wander aimlessly looking for a filled- in trail or worse, they might desert their driver and leave him stranded. He understood verbal commands immediately.

Monty weighed approximately one hundred pounds, was grey in colour and with black points; his ears were erect, his eyes alert. He was a much admired specimen of a working dog but he had one flaw. His neck was larger than his finely shaped head. He could slip his collar and get loose. This drawback nearly cost him his life.

The weather was cold but clear, the temperature at minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit, so that the two men decided to make a routine trip to a native camp about 90 miles away. Together they packed their toboggans, taking bannock and beans and some canned meat. Dog food made up the remainder of the load. They agreed to leave the following morning after breakfast.

Next day Jim laid out his harness for the team, this was done in the tandem style because the trails would be narrow. Then he went to get his leader, Monty, because he always put the lead dog in harness first to keep the traces taut.

Well, when Jim went to get his leader, the big dog was nowhere to be seen. His collar lay empty in the snow. Jim whistled and called but no answering bark came from the dog. Surely he wouldn't have gone visiting dogs in the settlement, Jim thought, because things were very quiet. If a loose dog was about there would be a great ruckus by the other tied-up dogs.

Suddenly Jim remembered the trap he had set out on the back trail, behind the doghouses. A large timber wolf had been prowling in that area and sleigh dogs were too precious to be maimed or killed. With a sense of foreboding Jim rounded the bend in the trail and was shocked to see his lead dog caught by his front paw in the steel jaws of the number three trap.

Quickly Jim opened the trap and released Monty's foot. It was frozen

solid. He led the limping dog back to the warehouse and put him inside while he went to get help from his partner. Together they discussed the situation and naturally the planned trip was canceled. But the immediate problem was - what to do for the dog. His paw did not appear to be broken but he might lose it because of frost bite. Likely gangrene would set in. In the back of Jim's mind he remembered a story a trapper once told him. The same thing had happened to one of his dogs.

He had told Jim that he took coal oil and put the paw in it. Jim decided to try it so the two men warmed some coal oil just enough to take the frost out of it. Then they put the paw in the solution and held it there for several minutes. The howls of pain were deafening when the frost started coming



Monty, our proud lead dog, with Jamie and a friend.

out of the frozen paw, but gradually the circulation was restored. The pain eased and the paw was gently dried off. The dog limped back to his house where he curled up in the snow to rest after his all night ordeal. Two days rest Monty was back to his old form; his pad on the foot didn't even show a crack.

Three days passed and after a good snowfall Jim and Willie decided to make the postponed trip. On the way Willie checked one of his traps that had been set out a few days earlier. In one of his number four traps he found a dead wolf, frozen. He was going to dispose of it but Jim said he would like to have it for the hide. So they loaded it onto Jim's toboggan and continued on their way.

On approaching the camp Willie told Jim to cover the wolf up well as the natives would be very upset to have a wolf, even a dead one in their camp. They believed that in killing a wolf they would be killing the spirit of their grandmother and that their rifle would never again shoot straight. So the carcass was completely hidden under a tarp.

When the men arrived home it was time for the evening meal. The natives were cooking a large whitefish and they invited Jim and Willie to sit with them - the men gladly accepted the offer. To have to eat canned food, half frozen after a long day traveling wasn't too appealing. Jim offered them canned meat in exchange for warm fish. Willie, watching closely told him to ake sure they didn't spot the hidden wolf or they wouldn't touch the cans of supplies.

All went well. The men thoroughly enjoyed the fresh fish which had been cooked, innards and all and the natives were delighted to get the canned goods in exchange.

The nnatives were very superstitious in other ways. If a member of the family was very ill that person would be moved out into a tent, the reason being if a person died in a cabin, that dwelling would have to be destroyed; a tent was easier to replace.

Also the belongings of the deceased person could either be buried or burned. One case we were made aware of was a member of the band who passed away and money he had eposited in the Bay vault for safe keeping was never touched by the survivors. They wouldn't have anything to do with it.

When the Chief of the Trout Lake band went through the ice and drowned, all of his dishes, and personal belongings were done away with. I was fortunate to be able to buy a jacket of his, a beautiful moose hide coat with fringe across the back yoke and on the sleeves.

All down the front was exquisite silk work. The wife told Willie it was for the 'policeman's wife'. I lost the coat in a fire when we returned outside to Ottawa. Maybe that was the way it was meant to be. Was I beginning to think like the natives? I could do a lot worse.

Nahanni Tragedy

One fall in mid - November Jim, and Willie decided to make a patrol to South Nahanni to check on conditions

of the natives in that area. By dog team it was a distance of 85 miles, one way.

The next two days the men repaired and inspected their harness and collected rations that would be cached along the way and made available if any emergency arose. Sometimes I think they were glad to get away and renew old friendships.

They set out on a frosty morning, it was around -22 degrees but the dogs were rested and the trail was firm and they fairly flew the first two or three miles. Then the team settled down to a steady trot and they swung from the bush trail out onto an old route on the river. It was colder without the protection of the spruce, but it was easier on the dogs.

Around three thirty in the afternoon the men and their two teams left the river trail and stopped at a sheltered clearing where they had made camp on previous trips. There they pitched a tent and while Jim fed the dogs, Willie cut some boughs to put under their sleeping bags.

With the heat from their little metal stove they were very comfortable and by the light of a Coleman lantern they drew a rough map for future reference.

The night faded into dawn which was grey and cold but after a hearty breakfast of thawed bannock and beans they broke camp and set off on the remainder of their trip.

In the early afternoon the men arrived at a trapper's cabin. What a noisy welcome they received from their friend's dogs. The trapper's name was Stan Turner. He not only trapped for a living but ran a little trading post to accommodate the few native families living along the river.

He welcomed the two police and after they tied up their teams a safe distance from the resident dogs, and they went for a welcome cup of tea. Like most Northern travelers they relished their tea and seldom made coffee on the trail. Stan's cabin was made of logs and their living quarters were very cozy. Stan's wife, Vera, was a real homemaker and had several afghans and rugs on the walls and chairs and the bright colors brought out the gold color of the peeled logs.

The group sat around for quite some time discussing the price of fur and which hides brought in the most money. Then Stan told them he had some disturbing news and that he was glad they had come as he intended sending a message to ask them for their help.

Stan told them that the natives living near him couldn't travel further up the Nahanni River because the water was too low and their hunting and trapping were too limited where they were in Headless Valley. Stan got to know the group as they frequented his store for staples.

This group consisted of about two dozen natives. Among them was a newly married couple; a man had married a young native girl who had been brought up in the Roman Catholic Mission. He was the brother of a very domineering women who elected herself leader and chief of the group. She

was very jealous of the younger woman and often ordered the girl to do menial tasks, and she forbade the girl's husband to help her.

After several months of physical and mental abuse the young wife felt she could stand it no longer and secretly planned to run away one night.

Trying to escape without being detected, she didn't dare take down her warmest parka which was hanging above her husband's head, but simply put a deerskin jacket over her sweater, then silently crept out of the tent. She carried her moccasins a short distance then pulled them on over her damp socks. Tying them around the cuffs of her slacks she knew it was a cold night to run away but her mind was made up. She didn't care that it was well below zero. She was desperate.

Running quietly down the trail that led over a small mountain to South Nahanni soon she came to a fork in the path and became confused and followed the one to the right. On she jogged, slowly realizing she had gone in the wrong direction, when her path faded out. It had led to a favorite hunting area where it ended.

Discouraged and desperately tired she thought she'd rest for a few minutes and crept under the sweeping branches of a big spruce. The extreme cold lulled her into a deep sleep and as she drifted off she told herself she'd continue as soon as she had a rest.

Her rest lasted all night, well into morning. In the meantime the sky had clouded over and snow fell covering her tracks.

The next day she was reported missing. At first her husband thought she might be visiting a friend who had been teaching her how to fashion bead work but on checking, realized she wasn't anywhere close by and a search party was formed.

Half a day later she was found huddled in the snow, under the branches of the big spruce.

She told them her feet had no feeling and she couldn't walk. They were frozen.

Taking her back to camp they feared she would likely lose her feet and worse she could die, and with their belief in their legend that when one died that shelter had to be destroyed, she would be put in a tent away from other members. The young woman was moved to an 8 by 10 foot tent, given one blanket, no food, no heat. Her husband was forbidden to give her help of any kind. She had matches and if she wanted to make a small fire at the entrance of the tent she had to crawl on her hands and knees to get wood. Her husband would steal the odd meat scraps and slip them under the tent flap at night.

This was the report given to Jim and Willie by the trapper and his wife. Later that evening the two men decided to return to Fort Liard in order that they might request the use of the police plane to fly in and rescue her. Next morning they set off on their return trip home. Their trail was still clean so they wasted no time.

A wire was sent out on the Hudson Bay wireless and two days later the plane arrived and the pilot was prepared to fly directly to Headless Valley. The two men took one team of dogs in case they couldn't land near the camp.

As luck would have it a native heard the plane coming and stuck small spruce trees in the snow, marking a landing site.

Jim, Willie and the pilot were able to walk to the tent where they found the young woman inside. The odor was over-powering. She had been kept there six weeks and when Jim unwrapped the ragged blanket from around her frozen feet he found her ten toes were black with the bones protruding two inches where flesh had been eaten away by gangrene. Also she was pregnant.

The men made a stretcher and carried her to the plane. The weather was starting to close in, so quickly they took off and flew to the hospital at Fort Simpson, on the MacKenzie River.

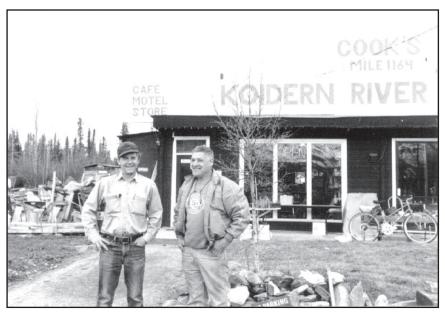
The resident doctor at Fort Simpson Hospital kept her there until her baby was born at which time she passed away.

Jim had the husband charged with neglect and he was found guilty and received 3-1/2 years in Prince Albert Penitentiary.

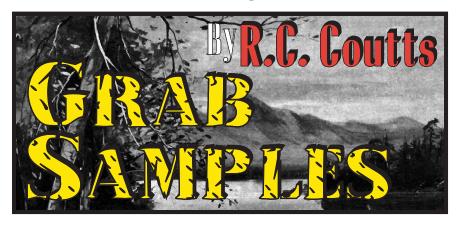
There is a little cross marking a small grave behind the Roman Catholic cemetery at Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories.

No word was received regarding the fate of the baby, but in all likelihood it would have been adopted into the band and cared for as one of their own.

More stories from Betty Reid in the next issue



Your editor and Jim Cook (owner, with wife Dorothy) at Koidern River Lodge, near Beaver Creek on the Alaska Highway, in 1991.



RUMOURS AND STAMPEDES

Sam Carson finally passed away one fine fall day while he was checking a promising new vein he had just found. As his find had attracted many others to the area, his burial was well attended.

As usual with all good prospectors he arrived at the Pearly Gates carrying his stampede pack and axe. He knocked and waited. After a moment the wicket opened and St. Peter looked out and enquireD his business.

"I'm Sam Carson and they sent me here," he asserted boldly.

St. Peter asked his profession and Sam replied proudly that he was a Prospector.

St. Peter checked his book, shook his head and said sympathetically to Sam, "I'm sorry or. Carson but we have just filled our quota of prospectors. You will have to go to the Other Place." He shut the wicket.

Sam walked away from the Pearly Gates and sat on a boulder by the side of the road and pondered his predicament. He lit his pipe and thought of possible ways to avoid the journey to the Other Place. Nearing the end of his pipe he had an IDEA!

He arose and, approaching the Pearly Gates, knocked boldly. The wicketopened and the good Saint looked out and asked his need.

"Can you tell me if Stampede John, Hardrock MacDonald, Chibougamou Bill and Jim Cameron are here?" he enquired.

Saint Peter checked his ledger and assured Sam that they were all present.

"Will you pass on a message from me to all of them? Tell them that Dirty Angus has just made a helluva strike in Hell, that it's rich and wide and the formation runs for miles. Only a handful of claims have been staked so far."

Saint Peter left immediately and Sam resumed his seat on the boulder.

^{*} A grab sample is a representative piece of rock from a vein or mineral deposit, taken to show the character of the deposit.

About fifteen minutes later the Pearly Gates opened and a stream of men emerged in haste, all laden with stampede packs and axes. They gave not a glance to Sam but hurried on down the rocky, steep road to the Other Place. He recognized all his old friends and many acquaintances.

As the last of them disappeared down the trail, he smiled to himself. He rose and again approached the Gates and knocked. When St. Peter appeared, he applied for admittance.

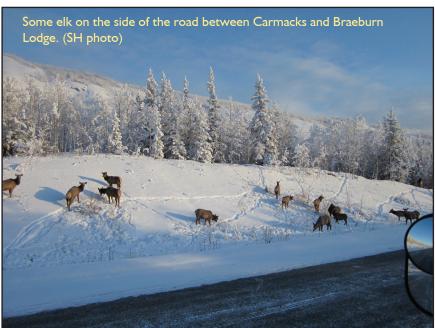
"Certainly," the Saint replied, "We have a lot of space. For some reason or other, every prospector in the place just checked out. Take your pick of any place you like."

Sam entered and strolled down the golden streets, admiring the snowy wings of the angels and listening to the music of the spheres. He finally entered a likely looking bar decorated as he remembered the best saloon in a mining town and was served with the finest whiskey. He enjoyed the beautiful scenery and slept in silken sheets in the most comfortable bed in paradise.

After a few days he began to miss his old friends. Drinking alone was no fun and he just couldn't talk to the church people and others whom he met. He began to yearn for bacon and beans rather than the ornate cuisine he was being given.

He picked up his axe and his pack and asked Saint Peter to open the gate. Saint Peter expressed surprise and asked his reason for leaving after so short a stay.

Sam sheepishly replied "You know the story you told them for me. Well I've been thinking it over and the boys are all there . I think I had better go too—there just might be something to it, so I'd better go and see!"



AXE WORK

Most old-timers took pride in their ability to use an axe. It was their most personal possession. It was much safer to use a man's tooth brush or steal his whiskey than to touch his axe. The most used axe was the Ox-Head with a two and a half pound head. The handle varied from twenty-four to thirty inches in length, depending on the man's own physical makeup. These axes were light enough to be easily carried and heavy enough to hew the largest trees. A double-bitted or two-faced axe was unknown and only used on the West coast in big timber.

They lavished care on them and used the utmost caution not to nick or damage the blade. They were constantly honing them and most possessed an Arkansas Oil Stone for that purpose. Many weary hours were spent turning the grindstone at camp to achieve a new edge after someone had damaged the axe. The use of a file on the edge was barely permissible. Damaging an axe by hitting a stone was a source of merriment to your companions and much embarrassment and ridicule to yourself. It was permissible to use the back of the axe to break rock samples.

Our foreman on a small mining project was Bill Youman. He was a tall, broad shouldered man. A superb bushman, he was very proud of his ability as an axe man. He was an easy man to get along with but could be upset by anyone abusing an axe. He was patient in instructing and aiding the younger men. He carried his axe everywhere with him and was constantly caring for it, honing the edge and cleaning it. He tested the edge by shaving a bit of hair from his forearm. He once, on a bet with a younger man, soaped his face and gave himself a clean shave with his axe.

My brother George was about sixteen and having been raised in the bush was knowledgeable with an axe. We were building log cabins for living quarters. On one of these buildings Bill took George under his wing.

They were cutting and notching logs for the cabin walls and were up about four rounds. Bill made sure that George's axe was in good shape and quite keen. He warned him of the dangers of bad balance while using it.

Bill was wearing a pair of Penetang boots. These were the very best and cost a week's pay. They were glove-soft and waterproof. Bill had them shining and spotless. Just before lunch, disaster struck. As Bill was about to cut a notch his foot was on a loose piece of bark and his foot slipped. The axe hit his foot, cutting between the toes. He scrambled down and tore off the boot to find that the boot and the sock were cut but that the axe had stopped before maining his foot. He was angry and ashamed. He cursed. My brother was wise enough not to say anything although the provocation was great as Bill had criticized him often.

Bill tried to conceal the cut boot from the crew at lunch and was successful. My brother said nothing except to tell me to bring some of the boys around to his working place after lunch. He left early.

Bill as usual led the way back to work. When we got to the cabin I saw my brother there. Bill stopped and my brother said to him, "Bill, I got worried about you so I got you something to help out."

He reached down and brought up a wash-tub and two lengths of stovepipe. "You just put the stovepipes on your legs and stand in the washtub Bill and you won't finish wrecking your boots," he instructed.

Everyone immediately looked at Bill's boots and saw the cut toe. The humour was instantaneous. The air rang with cat-calls and added advice to Bill. He had committed the cardinal sin. He had cut his boot!

Bill stood speechless for a moment, then he erupted. His face turned white, then bright rued. He roared at everyone to get to work immediately. He turned on his heel and went back to camp. We went to work. Bill did not appear that afternoon.

At supper time the Manager spoke to me.

"What happened to Bill today? He's badly upset about something and has quit."

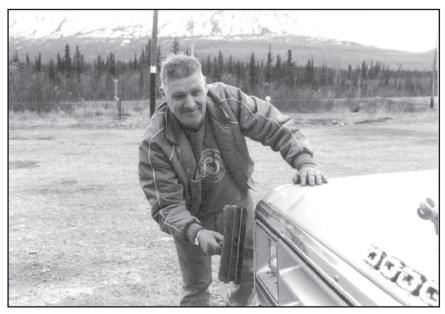
I told him the story and he went away. I went back to our camp and told the boys. No one was happy.

When Bill came in he said nothing to anyone but prepared for bed. Everyone was quiet there was no joking or laughter. Finally Harry Amy, well liked by all and a friend of Bill's asked, "What's all this bull about you quitting, Bill? The job is only half done. None of us knows how to finish it. You can't leave now."

Many other-voices joined in the pleas. My brother spoke to Bill in a low voice and apologized for his prank.

Bill sat expressionless then looked about him and broke into loud bursts of laughter. When he stopped, he stood and regarded us.

"All right you bunch of young bastards, I guess I had that one coming to me. But if anyone mentions boots and axes in the same breath for the rest of this summer, I'll feed them to him!"



Jim Cook of Koidern River Lodge in 1991 (there are many great stories about Jim, all of them true). SH photo.



y dad didn't like cops. So I knew that when Leroy McRobb showed up at the porch door of our farm house, wearing his stetson and his badge, there was going to be some fireworks.

Leroy wasn't much of a cop re-

ally, just the local excuse for law and order around our neighborhood of quiet farms and orchards. The local women felt better if there was some kind of law around, and somehow Leroy got the job. Well, I guess they got their wish anyway, 'cause Leroy was some kind of cop.

But now he was standing on our porch and Dad was looking at him with that look he usually reserved for Hitch, our mule. Or, sometimes, even for Grandpa. But usually he had a little more understanding in his eyes when he looked at Grandpa, because Grandpa had an excuse of sorts for doing the things he did. He'd fallen down the back stairs three years ago, when I was seven, and walloped his head. My Dad had found him laying in a heap, and, thinking Grandpa had killed himself this time (he was always falling off the steps), dragged him inside to the couch and then went out to the wood shop in back and built the old man a nice pine box to lay him out in. It was a beauty too, and took a piece of work to build, so when Dad came back in the house and found Grandpa sitting on the couch teasing the cat - well, he was some ticked off. I guess Grandpa had only been in a coma or something 'cause he was now lively as ever. Only trouble was, although everything about him seemed to work OK, something funny had happened to his head. He was never quite the same after that fall, and sometimes he'd even think my mom was my grandmother, who was dead, and he'd all of a sudden reach out and pinch her behind or jump up, throw his arms around her, and start gumming her neck. I used to figure Grandpa must be getting pretty lonely, what with grandma being long gone; but I remember the look Dad used to give him as he'd wrestle the old guy back to the couch. Just like he was looking at Leroy now.

"Mr. Harding", said Leroy, "I've got to take your boy into town and charge him with disturbing the peace".

"You do eh?"

"Yep," says Leroy getting all puffed up like, and hooking his thumbs on his belt, "He's been fighting with the Johnson kid again, and this time Mary Johnson's laying a complaint against him, so's I've got to take your son down to the station and write him up."

Now, my dad was a busy man what with a farm to handle, us kids to feed, and a crazy old man chasing his wife half the time, so I had the feeling he'd be putting the run on old Leroy one way or the other. I just hadn't figured out how yet.

I stood there, all innocent like, and waited to see what was going to happen as I watched Leroy getting himself worked up into what he thought was a display of officialdom or whatever he called it when he felt important.

I also notice my dad's eyes. They were staring over the top of Leroy's head and going in these crazy circles.

"Anyhow, Mr. Harding", says the local protector of our rights, "the thing is, I don't like to be hauling your boy off like this, but I got no real choice. Me being the only lawman around and all."

My dad's eyes hadn't missed a beat, and they were still circling Leroy's sweat stained Stetson hat. By this time, Leroy had finally noticed them too, and he sort of glanced up over his head, like he thought there might be something flying around him.

"Leroy", says my dad. "You know as well as I do that my son is only ten years old, and that's what ten year old boys do. They fight with their neighbor's kids. So why don't we just stop all this time wasting and you go on back into town and I'll get some work done."

And all the time his eyes haven't slowed a bit from going 'round and 'round above ol' Leroy's head.

Our local hero by now was getting nervous. He not only didn't know what kind of trouble he was going to have with my dad, but I could see that those eyes doing circles over his lawman's hat had him thinking for sure something was about to dive-bomb him.

"Now dang it, Mr. Harding, I'm just trying to do my job here", Leroy whined, "You know I've got to uphold the law around here and.....what the heck are you looking at over my head anyway?" says Leroy, as he whips off his Stetson and takes a swat in the vicinity of his bald crown.

Dad never even slowed his eyes down. In fact, I swear they started going faster yet as he calmly replied, "Oh, don't worry about it any Leroy, it's only one of those circle flies."

"Circle fly?" Hollers Leroy, now swatting furiously at thin air over his head. "What in the heck is a circle fly? Do they bite?" Do they sting? What do circle flies do? I ain't never heard of them before! Do they hurt you much when they get you?"

"Well", says Dad, in that voice he uses when he's talking to Mr. James, the preacher in town, "If you spent more time outside doing some honest work, instead of hiding in that office of yours, or riding around in that air conditioned car the taxpayer's bought you, then you'd know what they are. But you don't need to be too concerned about circle flies, Leroy. Mostly they just fly around the back end of old Hitch, and don't do a darn thing."

Now, as I've said, Leroy might have been a bit dense. But he wasn't dumb. He just kind of looked at Dad, and with a sort of sad voice said, "Mr. Harding." "Are you calling me a horses ass?"

"Why Leroy!", says dad, with a look of utmost piety. "Of course not. I'd never call an officer of the law a horses ass!"

Leroy started to look a bit relieved.

"But, on the other hand", Dad continued, "It is sure as heck is hard to fool one of them circle flies!."

A street scene in Whitehorse, 1951



First Avenue in Whitehorse on a busy day in 1951. A woman wearing high heels walks along the gravel toward the White Pass depot on the right. A couple of Army trucks are parked on the right side, and you can see the wheelhouse of a steamboat sticking up at the end of the street. This photo was probably taken in the fall because smoke is coming out of the White Pass warehouse on the right.

Things look fairly prosperous because most of the cars are almost new. Most of them look clean except for a couple of mud-spattered ones on the left.

The big building on the left, at the corner of First and Main is the Taylor & Drury store and NCC (Northern Commercial) It is still standing, now Horwood's Mall. White Pass moved out of the building on the right a couple of years ago and it is now a heritage site.

The beautiful Ford truck with stake body pulling onto Main Street has a couple of riders in the back. They look like First Nations fellows maybe heading out to the bush.

Someone mailed in this photo and I've lost your name. If you see this, please let me know. Editor.

The photos in this magazine are high resolution, which means you should be able to zoom in on the smallest details.

Engineering the White Pass Railway By Wal-Swanson

Construction—Skagway to the White Pass Summit (Continued from Issues 13 & 14) hrough all those setbacks, caused by both nature and man, Heney and Hislop, usually accompanied by Brydone-Jack, could be seen travelling the route during all kinds of weather. Brydone-

Jack, although employed by the financing organization, maintained a close and helpful relationship with both Heney and Hislop, and usually accompanied one or the other, or both, on their inspection trips along the route.

On the morning of February 4, 1899, with enthusiasm mounting as the rails neared the summit, Heney, Hislop and Brydone-Jack left Heney Station on a week-long trip to inspect construction operations from there to the summit - much of the trip would be on snowshoes and all of it on foot. Although all three were physically fit and capable of such travel, for some reason it became a competitive exercise to see who could reach the next objective in the least time; but Brydone-Jack had not been trail-hardened for as long as Heney and Hislop. On reaching the summit that evening Brydone-Jack appeared exhausted; it was extremely cold and their flapping tent gave little protection from the bitter Arctic wind. In spite of suggestions that he return to Skagway for medical attention, Brydone-Jack remained in the tent for another three days while his fever rose and his condition became worse. The next morning, overruling his request to stay, Heney and Hislop wrapped Brydone-Jack in blankets, carried him about one-and-a-half miles to the end of steel, commandeered a locomotive and took him directly to hospital in Skagway. Their efforts, however, did not save Brydone-Jack. His fever rose and he died the following day, February 13, 1899, of "apoplexy brought about by an attack of the grippe."

Heney and Hislop took the loss of such a close associate very hard as did all others who knew him. To show their esteem, they ordered all company offices closed and all locomotives draped in black during the day of Brydone-Jack's funeral service.

Five days after Brydone-Jack's death, with the temperature hovering at 20 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, the first carload of freight, attached to a work train, arrived at the summit of the White Pass. Only about 20 miles

of reasonably level grade remained to be completed between the White Pass summit and Bennett, the nearest navigation point on the upper Yukon River system.

Construction—White Pass Summit to Bennett

Following completion of that section of the rail from Skagway to the White Pass summit, which passed through some of the most ruggedly difficult construction-terrain ever penetrated by a railroad, the general opinion was that, having completed the most difficult part, the next section from the summit to Bennett - 20 miles or so on a reasonably level grade - would be a simple matter. But nature and unforseen events had ways of interfering with planned progress.

For several days prior to the arrival of that first passenger train at the summit, Heney had noticed that Hugh Foy was not well and that his condition was deteriorating; he'd urged him to take a vacation but Foy refused to leave until after the first passenger train had reached the summit. After the first train's arrival, and the following celebrations on February 20th, Foy made arrangements for a vacation, beginning eight days later, and he booked passage on the steamship Rosalie which was scheduled to leave Skagway on March 2, 1899.

But on February 24, two locomotives became trapped by snow, in a blinding blizzard, between Heney Station and the summit. Foy, along with a large party of men, worked through the entire night to free the engines. On returning to the summit next morning, Foy was exhausted and flushed with fever - he died on the morning he was to begin his vacation and his remains were shipped south on the steamship Rosalie.

As the symptoms exhibited by Foy appeared to be similar to those developed by Brydone-jack, one can only wonder if their lungs may have been partly frozen to bring-on those symptoms. Both had exposed themselves to extreme exertion in very low temperatures - although they may have felt warm because of their intense activity, their parka-hoods would probably have been thrown back and they would have been breathing-in great quantities of frigid air. I believe modern medical practitioners would have found that such patients had their lungs damaged by frost.

In that country raging winter storms can be expected, especially during the latter part of the winter: The huge mass of cold air covering the Arctic, being hidden from the sun's heat for several months each winter, gets denser and colder as it builds over the winter months until it eventually forms a huge lens of frigid air over the entire Arctic region. That mass of air is retained somewhat by the continental coast lines and by higher lands farther to the south. But that cold, fluid air, being heavier than the warmer air to the south and assisted somewhat by the jet stream, eventu-

ally begins to spill over the mountains and flow southwards, under the lighter, warmer air, into areas of lower atmospheric pressure.

That portion of the cold-air-lens situated over central Alaska and the Yukon is further retained by the Alaska Range, the St. Elias Mountains and the Coast Range in the south; the Mackenzie Mountains in the east and several lower ranges towards the southeast. But as the lens continues to build in the far north, the increased pressure forces the cold air southwards until it eventually begins to spill through the lower passes and valleys of the southern mountains. The White Pass, being one of the lower gaps through the coastal mountains, probably gets more that its share of that frigid air making its way south.

The result of that flow of frigid air, particularly during the late winter of early 1899, was bitterly cold winds of high velocity blowing southwards across that high plateau between the upper Yukon River area and the coastal mountains - the White Pass being lower, the wind would have been more concentrated and stronger through the pass. The result was incessant, high-velocity, frigid winds and continuous drifting snow that plagued operating crews both during and after the arrival of the first freight delivered to the Summit on February 18, 1899, and the arrival of the first passenger train two days later. Even though the weather cooperated by providing a clear, blue sky for the train's arrival and departure, it took the combined efforts of more than 100 men, working steadily with shovels, to keep the track from being blocked by drifting snow.

And inclement weather was not the only thing that impeded progress. In late January, 1899, the government of British Columbia passed the Exclusion Act which barred American miners from holding claims in the Atlin area - the passing of that Act immediately cut the movement of freight over the White Pass by more than 50 percent.

The financiers of the project had intended to use railroad earnings to finance much of the remaining construction cost - but those earnings had been cut, at least temporarily, by a drastic amount. In an effort to reduce maintenance and operating costs, Hawkins ordered wage rates cut to 30 cents an hour and limited work to ten hours a day. He further ordered that all non-essential office work be banned on Sundays and limited office work to ten hours a day.

The first news reaching most Skagway residents concerning a strike was when they read about it in the Skagway newspaper of February 28, 1899. It seems a small group of dissatisfied workmen got together, elected three of their members as a Strike Committee, and called a strike of all railroad workers. Their initial complaint was the reduction in pay from 35 to 30 cents an hour; an additional complaint stated that, "conditions and lack of Sunday work made the results too small for workmen to risk their lives for." Although most people in Skagway were against the strike, the people of Dyea, visualizing more business for packers and tramlines in

moving freight over the Chilkoot Pass, were generally in favor of such action.

The strike committee sent word to all camps up the line saying, "negotiations had failed", and, within a day or so, more than a thousand workers arrived in Skagway and drew their pay. It wasn't many days before most of those men had either spent their money at bars or lost it in games of chance - they were broke and had no place to sleep. Reverend John Sinclair, of the Union Church, then approached Hislop, who in addition to his engineering duties was then Mayor of Skagway, with the suggestion that strikers be allowed to sleep in the church's new parish hall. Hislop, after considering the matter, suggested the Reverend should do what he thought best - the idle miners were given access to the church's hall.

But, within a few days the strikers, led by their militant committee, literally took over the parish hall and erected a large sign proclaiming the place to be, "STRIKE HEADQUARTERS," thus giving the impression the church was backing their strike.

With that move, Sinclair began to take a more active role in their meetings, refuting false claims put forward by the committee as well as investigating and correcting erroneous statements; slowly but surely, many of the men came around to Sinclair's way of thinking.

In a desperate attempt to expand the strike and force the last few workers off the job, a group of about 90 strikers, under the direction of their militant leaders, decided to raid Camp 1, the first camp north of town, and demand that all workers join the walkout. On March 14th, the group set out for the camp but were stopped by Sinclair who persuaded many of them to abandon the raid and seek more rational means of settling their differences; however, about 35 continued the march.

But Sinclair's talk to the group of workers, in addition to reducing their numbers, had also given Hislop time to warn Heney, then at Camp 1, of the approaching strikers. Heney, along with the company's physician, Dr. Whiting, proceeded to the railroad yards where they arranged with Roadmaster Middaugh to park two locomotives on double tracks, with their headlights pointing back along the track along which the strikers would be advancing. As the strikers approached the glaring lights they could see three men waiting for them; Heney and Whiting each armed with a Winchester rifle, and Middaugh armed with a heavy club.

The leader of the strikers, an Englishman by the name of White, ordered his men to remain where they were while he advanced alone. He was met by Dr. Whiting who knocked the fellow down with his rifle-butt; the remaining strikers, after milling about briefly, disappeared into the darkness. By the following day more than 100 men had returned to work, more followed and by March 17th the strike was over.

The strike had actually worked to the company's advantage: In order to reduce costs, Hawkins had ordered that the work force be cut to between 300 and 350 men - the strike had already cut the work force and Heney continued to operate with a reduced crew until further financing had been ar-

ranged and until weather conditions improved somewhat with the coming of spring.

But in spite of restricted financing, Heney slowly built up his work force on both sides of the summit, until by the beginning of April about 500 men were employed; some worked on ballasting those parts of the track south of the summit that had been laid on packed snow; others worked on construction of bridges, rock blasting and snow removal.

From the time the railroad reached the summit, freight continued to pile up in large tent-warehouses and in boxcars parked on sidings. It could not be moved out as fast as it was arriving. Hency had formed The Red Line Transportation Company, which contracted with the railroad company to deliver their freight from the summit to Log Cabin or to Bennett, as required, by horses and sleighs. Without sufficient equipment and animals to move all the arriving freight, Hency attempted to subcontract part of the work. The contractors, however, on seeing the bind Hency was in, immediately increased their rates to a figure that Hency could not meet so freight continued to pile up at the summit.

In the meantime, on instructions from Hawkins, Hislop continued with his survey work. He sent crews to Carcross (then known as Caribou Crossing) and Whitehorse to lay out depots and railroad yards and he forwarded plans to Ottawa for approval and to be filed upon for land-use options.

It was about that time that Hawkins, on realizing the 27 or so miles of rail along the shores of Lake Bennett would be quite costly because of the amount of rock blasting required, made the suggestion to leave that section until the rail had been completed to Bennett and from Carcross to the northern terminus. In the meantime, the section from Bennett to Carcross could be serviced by steamboats and barges navigating along Lake Bennett during the summer and by horses and sleighs operating across lake-ice during the winter.

About mid May, 1899, in order to prevent the tramlines over the Chilkoot Pass from siphoning off too much of the freighting business, Hawkins made the suggestion that the railroad company should purchase all three tramlines then operating over the Chilkoot route; he was given approval to open negotiations for such a purchase. By the latter part of June, he closed a deal to purchase all three tramlines, along with their equipment, for the sum of \$100,000; that purchase gave the railroad company control of all freight passing between the Skagway area and the headwaters of the Yukon River system. For management personnel working in Skagway, there was no doubt that construction would continue - the only question was, when? At the same time, the financiers, working behind the scenes, were attempting to arrange funding to complete construction.

Heney had been slowly building up his work force until, by early June he had more than 800 men working along the grade between the summit and Lake Bennett and, by June 20th, he had completed a rough grade along that section which was adequate for horse-drawn sleighs; that grade enabled freight to be moved during the break-up period when sleighs could not cross the ice on the lakes. The following day Heney's crews began laying track from the summit, northward towards Bennett and on July 6, 1899, the line from Skagway to Bennett was officially opened.

The opening of that line was celebrated by sending the first passenger train from Skagway to Bennett. Aboard were 30 of Skagway's most prominent citizens. Because much of the recently-laid track had not been finally aligned and ballasted, the passenger coaches were left at the summit and passengers were transported on to Bennett by flat cars fitted with wooden benches. On the return trip to Skagway, 200 additional passengers, miners returning from Dawson City with their gold, also rode the newly-inaugurated train service from Bennett back to Skagway.

Although the rail line was open from Skagway to the headwaters of the Yukon River, there still existed three stretches of rapids: Miles Canyon, Squaw Rapids and White Horse Rapids, between Bennett and the fully navigable portion of the Yukon River. Below the White Horse Rapids the river was fully navigable, during the ice-free season, for its full length of about 1,900 miles to the shores of the Bering Sea.

In order to attain full benefit from the railroad it had to be completed to some point beyond the White Horse Rapids and, in order to make the system viable, it had to work in conjunction with a navigation company which would deliver freight and passengers to all points along the navigable river system.

Construction— Bennett to Whitehorse

Although the purchase of the Chilcoot Tramlines was finalized in June, those lines were not shut down until July 13, 1899; the reason for that delay was to permit the previous operators to move all freight that had piled up at Dyea, while awaiting movement over the Pass. With the shutting down of those tramlines, however, the railway's income from freight and passenger movements rose considerably. And, because the railroad company was then the only source of freight crossing Lake Bennett, its influence over the steamboat operators on the lake also rose significantly.

But Hawkins had two other major obstacles that had to deal with before railroad construction continued from Carcross to Whitehorse: The first of those problems involved two tramways that had been constructed, one on each side of the river, to haul freight from the upstream end of Miles Canyon, for six miles along the river to the downstream end of White Horse Rapids, thus bypassing three perilous sections of white water between the upper lakes and the fully navigable portion of the Yukon River. The first of those tramways had been built by Norman Macaulay, during early 1898, along the east side of the river; the second one, along the west side of the

river, had been constructed by John Hepburn but had been purchased by Macaulay who then controlled both sides of the river.

With the financiers' approval, Hawkins set out to gain control of both Macaulay's tramways, but in order to conceal the railway's interest the deal was handled through the managing director of the Alaska Steamship Company and both tramways were purchased for the sum of \$185,000. The railway then had control of both sides of the river along its full unnavigable length to Whitehorse, which provided them with a captive market from Skagway, through the White Pass, to Whitehorse.

The second problem Hawkins faced was the reluctance of his financiers to approve funds to finish construction. The London financial people had been invited to send one of their members to Skagway to inspect the project, and that invitation had been accepted by William Brooks Close, a member of Close Brothers & Company, a British financial organization with considerable interests in the United States of America. Close arrived in Skagway on August 20, 1899, and over the next few days he inspected the full length of the existing and proposed 110 miles of railroad from Skagway to Whitehorse. He was impressed. On August 24th, Close gave his approval to proceed with railroad construction from Carcross to Whitehorse; however, the section between Bennett and Carcross was to be held in abeyance until he had received approval for financing in London.

One other change, requested by Hawkins and approved by Close, was the appointment of Heney as an independent contractor who would complete construction of the railroad from Bennett to Whitehorse. That appointment effectively split the construction division from the operating division, thus reducing the mounting tension between those departments - Heney was, henceforth, a contractor responsible for constructing the railroad to the specifications of the Pacific Contract Company.

The Lake Bennett steamboats, although adequate for moving ordinary freight and passengers, had not been designed to carry the heavy loads needed for railroad construction. But Heney had been given approval to proceed with construction from Carcross to Whitehorse and one of his most pressing problems was the movement of 100s of tons of rail steel, ties, bridge materials, locomotives and other rolling stock along the lake from Bennett to Carcross.

William Robinson, commonly known as Stikine Bill because he had worked for Mackenzie & Mann on their investigation of the railroad access through the Stikine valley, was the man Heney turned to. Stikine Bill was a huge man of about six-feet-three-inches and 300 pounds; his size and his use of profanity resulted in immediate and full control over his work force. He had worked as a labour foreman since construction began and Heney had full confidence in his capability, so Stikine Bill was given the job of constructing a large scow, capable of carrying a total load of 150 tons, and fitted with rails to carry rolling stock.

That unit, built on the lakeshore near Bennett City, had the appearance

of a large, ungainly, rectangular box. Her speed was not excessive in spite of her three engines turning three propellers, but she served her purpose. Dubbed the "Torpedo Catcher", following her water trials she was immediately loaded with 150 tons of steel rail and dispatched to Carcross.

Prior to 1899 very little research had been done in North America concerning the action of permafrost, or construction thereon, and much of the railroad grade between the summit and Whitehorse was through permafrost. In general, providing there is no substantial lateral movement in the permafrost, the modern day practice is to ensure the underlying area is frozen, well insulated in order to keep it frozen, and build on top of it.

Should one decide to strip off the existing overburden during the warmer seasons; however, the underlying area will be exposed to warm air, sunlight and flowing surface water; should that underlying, frozen ground be comprised of clay, silt, gravel or a combination of those materials, it will probably also contain large lenses, or seams, of clear ice. Should those sections of ice be exposed to warm air or flowing water, they will melt; adjoining layers of silt and clay will thaw and be washed away by the flowing water. That flowing water will increase and form underground streams that can, ultimately, cause large areas of the ground surface to thaw, settle and sink. The results can be catastrophic.

In addition to the above problems, as many contractors have learned, the excavation of permafrost, in its frozen state, can be extremely difficult and costly - particularly if those materials comprise a mixture such as silt, clay and gravel.

By September 12, 1899, the grade had been completed 15 miles north of Carcross to the lower end of Lewes Lake. The original design had called for a short trestle across a small canyon through which the outlet of the lake flowed; however, in order to facilitate construction, the design engineers had decided to lower the lake level about ten feet, by cutting a fourfoot ditch through a 300-foot-wide sandy ridge that contained the outlet end of the lake - it was a disastrous mistake. As water began flowing through the ditch, it washed away the insulating sand and gravel, thus exposing the sides and bottom of the ditch to thawing action and flowing water - once the flow began there was no stopping it. The ditch became deeper and wider and the flow increased until, within about two days, the lake had all but ceased to exist and the water surface was more than 70 feet lower than it had been two days before.

The result of that fiasco was that, instead of building one short trestle, they then had to construct two trestles, each about 50 feet high and 600 feet long. And, because bridge materials had to be fabricated in Seattle, shipped to Skagway and transported across the White Pass, the laying of rail beyond Lewes Lake had been seriously delayed - no doubt certain design engineers had very red faces for a while.

On October 10, 1899, Hislop's crews completed the survey of the rail line from Carcross to Whitehorse. That same day the completed section of railway between Skagway and Bennett, which had been approved by government inspectors, was officially turned over from the construction division to the operating division so, as of that date, the operating division was responsible for maintenance of that section of track, thus relieving Heney of that responsibility.

A few days later, on October 27, 1899, Heney received instructions to accelerate the work. His first priority was to complete the Carcross to Whitehorse section of the railroad but he was also to begin work on rock removal and grade preparation for the Bennett to Carcross connection. Although instructions had arrived late in the year, arrangements were made for the Torpedo Catcher and other steamboats to continue operating on Lake Bennett until the lake was firmly closed by ice. By mid-November Heney had a huge quantity of materials stored at Carcross, including hundreds of tons of steel rail, a locomotive, other rolling stock, ties, railroad spikes, coal, etc., as well as the materials for the two long bridges that would carry the railroad across the recently formed chasm at the outlet of what had previously been Lewes Lake.

About mid-December, the entire area encompassing the recently-built railroad was beset by violent winds and the heaviest snowfall in the memory of local residents. The railroad had taken delivery of its first rotary snowplow just a short time previously and the unit was put to its first test. One morning that rotary plow, pushed by two locomotives pulling several freight cars and two coaches carrying 20 passengers, left Bennett and took five hours to travel the 20 miles to the summit. Farther along, in the vicinity of the switchback, the action of the rotary blower resulted in an avalanche that buried the snowplow and both locomotives, trapping the crews inside.

A maintenance crew travelling with the train, augmented by volunteers from among the passengers, rescued the crews in short order but several hours passed before the train was operating again. After an all-night battle with the elements, the train arrived in Skagway at seven o'clock the following morning.

On January 12, 1900, another violent series of storms began with temperatures at Whitehorse reaching as low as minus 64 degrees; railroad operations were shut down for a period of 18 days until the storms and temperature began to abate. During that period one train had remained, trapped in the snow near Bennett. With the weather easing somewhat, the rotary snowplow along with three locomotives, was dispatched from Skagway to clear the track and free the trapped train; after plowing steadily for more than 36 hours, the plough reached Bennett on January 30th - the first railway equipment to reach Bennett for 18 days. On arrival back in Skagway, the crews of the rotary and its accompanying locomotives had been working continuously for more than 48-eight hours.

Following that episode a program was initiated, by the maintenance division, to construct more than 2,000 lineal feet of snowsheds to protect portions of the track from heavy snow accumulation.

In early 1900, the Canadian government completed a telegraph line from Bennet to Whitehorse and on to Dawson City. That line was later extended to Skagway, Atlin and eventually on to Quesnel in British Columbia - communication was becoming easier and faster.

Although snow conditions beyond Bennett were somewhat less severe than on the climb to the summit, the winter temperatures at that higher elevation were more severe; and although construction crews probably did not work in temperatures below about minus 40 degrees, when weather permitted Heney's crews worked continuously on laying track north of Carcross, and on blasting rock cuts for the grade between Bennett and Carcross.

By early April, 1900, Heney had 750 men working and was attempting to increase that number. And by April 10th, he had two additional scows nearing completion on the lake ice near Bennett - they were being constructed in preparation for the massive movement of freight and railroad equipment to Carcross, to begin as soon as the ice went out of Bennet Lake.

Just one month later the two Lewes Lake trestles were completed and rail was in the process of being laid across them and on towards Whitehorse. On May 24th the ice broke-up in Lake Bennett and the first barge-load of freight and railroad materials left for Carcross that same day.

With the coming of warmer weather things were moving again; on June 6th, the railroad grade reached Whitehorse and the rail was less than three miles behind - those rails would carry the first locomotive to Whitehorse on the afternoon of June 8, 1900 - but there would be no celebration - that would have to wait until the gap had been closed so the rail would be continuous from Skagway to Whitehorse. Hency then diverted his full attention to the closing of that rail-gap between Bennett and Carcross.

But even without that gap closed, freight began piling-up in Whitehorse. It was clear to both Hawkins and Graves (who was then in Whitehorse) that the amount of freight arriving in Whitehorse could not be handled by the independently-owned river boats then in operation.

Graves, on reviewing the situation, decided to buy-out the existing operators and organize a steamboat company which would work in cooperation with the railroad. He first arranged the purchase of all ships belonging to the Canadian Development Company, which had been working closely with the railroad for some time. Hawkins, on taking over those steamships, operated them under the name of the White Pass River Division.

The railroad then purchased all northern assets of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company, which operated steamships on the Yukon River as well as on Bennett Lake, Taku Arm and Atlin Lake - those assets in-

cluded a horse-drawn railroad that operated between Taku Arm and Atlin Lake, across a strip of land known as the Taku Isthmus, a distance of a little over two miles. In short order Hawkins supplied that railroad with a locomotive. Thus the railroad company was taking shape and growing far beyond original expectations, and because of the acquisition of the river division, it was no longer considered necessary to extend the rail beyond Whitehorse.

Meanwhile Heney was working all-out in an attempt to meet his cited deadline of completing the rail line from Skagway to Whitehorse before the end of July. On July 28th, with the rail still six miles from Carcross, he told Hawkins that the rail would be completed by late afternoon on Sunday, July 29th.

That day dawned clear and cool. A party of guests, including Samuel Graves, had been transported from Skagway and carried from Bennett to Carcross on one of the lake steamers. By early afternoon about 50 visitors had arrived in Carcross from Bennett. They were soon joined by as many more from Whitehorse, until guests and workers numbered more than 1,000.

As guests and visitors watched, the last few hundred feet of track was laid and spiked to the ties. With all spikes driven save one, Stikine Bill Robinson produced a yellow-painted spike, tapped it part way into a drilled hole to keep it in place, and announced to the crowd, "This is the last spike, as you can see it is gold. We would ask Mr. Graves to begin driving this last spike."

Graves, holding up his hands for silence, invited Heney to say a few words, but Heney declined. Then, after a few brief remarks by Graves and Hawkins, several of the guests, including Heney, Hawkins and Hislop gave the spike a few taps, or near misses, until it was in place. Later, while the festivities were under way, one of the rail foremen removed the spike which was kept for posterity.

All Skagwayans were then boated back to Bennett where they boarded the waiting train that would take them back to Skagway. Before that train could leave, however, it was forced to await the passing of a long train that had originated in Whitehorse and was returning a number of empty boxcars to Skagway. That train of empties was the first train to travel the line from terminal to terminal, and the passing of that train was immortalized by a remark from one of the Irish trackmen who said something like, "Bejapers, isn't that something now; the first train through this country was the train out."

On July 30, 1900, the first passenger train made its run from Skagway to Whitehorse - the railroad was open for business.

Heney left the White Pass and Yukon Route project within a day or so of the ceremony at Carcross and, over the next few years, did considerable travelling. In 1905 he became involved in construction of the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad in Alaska, but he didn't live to see the completion of that project. In August of 1909 a ship in which he was travelling sunk along the northern British Columbia coast. Heney's long exposure to the cold water left him with a chest condition from which he never recovered. He died in San Francisco on October 4, 1910, at age 46.

Hawkins remained with the White Pass railroad company until 1902 when he left to promote and build the Klondike Mines Railway - a short line that ran from Dawson City to Grand Forks, on Bonanza Creek. He later worked with Heney on construction of the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad in Alaska and, with the completion of construction, served for a time as that company's vice-president and general manager.

He left the North in the latter part of 1911 then travelled to New York the following February to submit his final report to the board of directors. On arrival, he began to feel ill and was admitted to hospital where, at age 52 he died on April 9, 1912 following an operation,

Hislop, on completion of the White Pass Railway, requested one year's absence beginning on December 1, 1900. The following day he left for Chicago where he married his fiancee. On February 22, about one month after his marriage, while attempting to catch the Rock Island suburban train, he grasped the handrail and leaped onto steps of a moving coach; but his coat caught on a protruding trestle beam, he was dragged from the steps and flung under the following coach.

Critically injured, he was taken to the hospital where he was pronounced dead on arrival. He was forty-five years old.

Samuel Graves, the political motivator behind the formation of the company and the construction of the railroad, as well as the first president of the White Pass and Yukon Railway, died in his hotel bed, in Ottawa, sometime during the night of November 11, 1911. He was fifty-nine years old.

Although the principal individuals responsible for construction of the White Pass Railroad had all died within twelve years of its completion, their heritage lives on in the railroad that many said could never be built.

The author had occasion to ride that railroad from Skagway to Whitehorse in May, 1937, and March, 1939, and from Whitehorse to Skagway in September, 1939 - three trips that remain highlights in his memory.

Part Eight COLSBOAR © 1997 by Sam Holloway

Now we come to the end of this story. It's been running in the magazine for two years and I am going to miss it. Perhaps one day I'll start another one. But in the next issue we will begin "A Dogpuncher on the Yukon" by Arthur Walden. I believe it to be the finest account ever written about the pregold rush period.

...Manfred came by my cabin that afternoon.

"She wanted me to take my boots off at the door! Then she talked all the time about me taking some kind of job or settling down on a gold claim. I'm free, Hank. She knew that when I met her. How can I trade my freedom for money? For things that just wear out so you have make more money to buy more things?"

"So what'll she do now. Manfred? Go back to the dancehalls?"

"She says not. She hasn't taken a drink for some months now and she wants to find a housekeeping job or somesuch. There's not much work for a woman in this country you know. They either have to have a man to provide for them or stay in the dancehalls. I would have always made sure she had enough to eat. What more could a person ask?"

I finally got to ask him how things were with Beth.

"She's been puttering around in her new house since she got here. She'll have to make it on her own because I'm pulling out in the morning. I chopped enough firewood to last her a while. I told her to stay out of the cold storage dugout in case that bear was still living there. She didn't seem worried though. Had her big Bible open at the table and just smiled all the time."

"Where will you go, Manfred?"

He waved his arm toward the southwest.

"To freedom. Away from clocks and dishes and time schedules for when you eat and when you sleep. I already told Beth. I said you would be looking in on her."

"She said that would be okay?"

"Yes. You come by tomorrow. After I'm gone."

He had a glint in his eye, whether from my situation or from his own departure, I could not tell. We shook hands at my door and I watched his tall figure go over the rise. That evening I cut off my beard and mustache and dug out my cleanest clothes. In the morning I went for a walk along the little river. As I came back downstream, I noticed some big grizzly tracks in the mud along the shore. On the top of the bank, I could see where the bear had been digging for roots. At this time of year, before the berries came out,

there was very little food for grizzlies and they were said to meaner than usual.

Instead of going to her cabin the next day, I decided to wait. 'Let her feel how alone we are out here,' I thought. 'Perhaps I would be more welcome then.' That evening I heard a wolf pack baying, somewhere on the other side of the little river, obviously in pursuit of their prey. I climbed up the big hill behind my cabin until I came the grassy knoll where I could see all around. The evening sun cast my shadow long and darkly down the east side of the hill.

As I squinted into the sun, I saw two black forms close together in the river below. It was a female moose swimming the river with her calf hanging onto her tail as they struggled against the current. The wolf pack milled about on the far shore, their cries of frustration echoing up and down the river. The mother and calf scrambled up the bank, dripping a trail of water, and she stood for a moment to look over at her pursuers. Then she and her baby disappeared into the willows above the river.

The wolves ran along the far shore until they stood just opposite Beth's cabin where they sat in a ring and howled. Every wolf's voice had its own vibration so they sounded like a dozen violins all horribly out of tune with each other. Then I saw Beth come out of her little house and stand looking across the river. She clapped her hands, as a teacher would clap to silence a classroom, and the cacophony of screeches stopped abruptly. The wolves disappeared and she went inside.

I climbed down from my lookout and walked over the rise to her homestead. Even though I had known her for most of my life, I felt my knees trembling as I approached her door. The door opened and she stood there with her face glowing beautifully as the last rays of the sun filled the doorway. She smiled and stood aside as I walked in. On one wall hung a brightly coloured painting of Jesus with a soft halo around his head; on another wall hung a large photo of Father Judge. He peered down at me through his little round glasses.

Quite expertly it seemed, she stirred the fire and put the tea kettle on to boil. She set out the cups and I slumped into the chair opposite her.

"Manfred said you would be checking on me," she said. "Otherwise, he wouldn't have left. I told him he had to have a woman here; I didn't want him leering at me everytime I asked him to do something. So how have you been, Hank?"

"You already know. All they do in this country is talk, talk, talk. I'll bet everyone in the Klondike knows I'm sitting here right now. And they'll be trying to guess whether you and I will get married or something."

"Or something. And that something is that you will live at your place and I will live here. You're a violent man, Hank. Look what you did to my father, and you punched Jack Smith, among other things that I've heard about. I want a someone like him, Hank," she said, pointing to Father Judge's picture. "He got along with everybody, without ever using his fists or angry words. He never held a gun in his life."

I could see an argument starting already and I had only been with her for ten minutes.

"Beth, tell me how you got up here."

"When I didn't hear from you for a year, I asked my father for enough money to take the train out west. In Victoria I met an entertainment group leaving for the Klondike. They paid our way in here and I took a job at the Monte Carlo. Which I hated.

"All those men thought they could buy me with gold. Even after they knew I wasn't for sale, they still tried. Jack Smith was the worst. He borrowed money against his business to buy me things. I left all that stuff in Dawson."

"And what about the church, Beth? Weren't you thinking about taking vows or something?"

"Yes, I was. But I had no welcome in the church after Father Judge died. The women hated me, the men kept staring at me, and the new priest looked at me like I was the Devil come to haunt him. I tried some of the Protestant churches but they didn't want me there either. Nobody told me to leave and some of the people tried to be nice. But I didn't fit in."

"So you'll stay here? By yourself?"

"By myself for a while. Then I want to hire some people to fix up the buildings and help with the garden. I have quite a bit of money but it won't last forever."

"Well," I said, "Until that happens, I'll look in on you from time to time, okay?"

She had said everything she had planned to say to me, I could tell, and I got up to leave.

"Tomorrow?" I asked.

I looked directly into her eyes and she held my gaze. I saw a touch of fear there. Not of me. Of life, I thought. It was the same look she had as a little girl when her father was beating her and she would let no one know but me.

I left her there alone at her table. As I stepped outside into a light breeze from the north, I smelled something vile, evil, rotten. I glanced over at the old root cellar dug into the hillside. The door had been ripped away. Perhaps that was where the smell came from. But I was full of hope as I tramped over the rise to my own cabin.

Over the next few days, Beth and I planted the big garden behind her house. In exchange for my labour, we would share the crop over the coming winter. With the planting finished, I got up onto her roof and tarred the cracks in it, attached a new rope to the well bucket, mended her front steps, and spent very little time at my own place—except at night.

Manfred had left her a rifle, a hexagon-barrelled Winchester 38:55 that looked big enough to kill an elephant. I cleaned it and filled it with cartridges and left it standing beside her door. He had showed her what to do with it before he left, against all her protests. And I too insisted that she leave it where she—or I—could grab it in a hurry. I told her about the grizzly bear

and one evening before I went home, I showed her some fresh tracks down by the river's edge.

"But I would never, never kill anything," she said. "And you wouldn't shoot that bear just for hanging around here, would you?"

"Yes, I would. Because sooner or later we're going to have trouble with it. We're in that bear's territory. It was here before we came along. It slept all winter in the cold storage dugout and until the salmon come upstream and the berries come out, that bear is going to be crabby."

"Well, if it was here first, it has more rights than we do."

I changed the subject. We had gotten into the habit of spending our evenings together, talking about home and our folks or about people we had met in the Yukon. She never mentioned any of the men who had courted her with money or charm or both. She did say she would never marry a rich man—which had been her father's one big plan for Beth's life and his.

The summer solstice came: the day when the sun never sets in the Klondike, June 21st. I stayed in her cabin later than usual; we would often sit quietly, neither of us speaking, content with things exactly as they were at that moment of our lives. We could hear the big river murmuring past the front door and the gentle summer breeze sighing through the treetops. The evenings were always cool enough to have the woodstove lit and we sat soaking up the heat from it, catching pleasant whiffs of pinewood smoke drifting from the chimney in through the open door of the cabin. Finally I said goodnight and walked through the short grass in front of her cabin.

To my left, on the side opposite the river, I noticed a shadow, big enough to be cast by a large boulder. I looked again and the shadow moved—straight toward me. It was the old bear, come to drive us out of its homeland.

In the middle of the front yard stood a half-grown poplar tree, with a trunk about as big around as a man's thigh, with long, spindly branches snaking out on the south side of it. As the shadow came hurtling toward me, I ran for the tree and swung myself up onto the first branch, scrambling then to climb higher. I felt the tree shudder as the bear slammed into it and I climbed as far up as I could go—fast.

At last I looked down. The bear stood on its hind legs and began to push against the tree, rocking it back and forth. I hung onto the top branch and through my fingers I felt the vibrations of roots cracking as I swung back and forth. I looked toward the cabin and saw Beth standing just outside her door. The swinging motions of the tree grew longer and longer and I felt more snapping down near the base of it. The tree made one last swing and I felt and heard it break.

I twisted around so as to ride the tree down instead of having it fall on top of me. I hit the ground with the tree trunk under my chest and I rolled off it onto the grass, unable to breathe, unable to make a sound. Quickly, the bear straddled my chest and its huge paw swiped the left side of my face. One of the claws raked a long cut from just below my eye to the very bottom of my chin.

As I looked up into the bear's raging little eyes, I saw it blink and felt the massive body shudder, then I heard the blast of the rifle. The bear sprang upwards and wheeled toward the sound. The rifle fired again—and again, and again.

I rolled sideways to look toward the cabin and could see nothing but the hindquarters of the bear as it charged toward the cabin door. The rifle went off once more then I heard it click on an empty chamber. In all of this, neither the bear nor I nor Beth had made a sound. We were three souls in the wilderness, struggling silently for life and for death. I stood up then with blood pouring down my shirtfront, caught my balance and ran for the cabin, reaching at the same time for the folding knife in my front pocket.

Beth had tossed the rifle onto the grass and ran inside the cabin but she slammed the door so hard it flew open again. The bear collapsed just outside the door, its front shoulders shattered by bullets, but its brain very much alive. It pushed and squirmed its way through the doorframe, intent on killing the enemy within.

Beth stood in the furthest corner of her kitchen as the bear fastened its eyes upon her. It roared its hatred and pain and pushed its hairy mass toward her with its hind legs. I leaped onto the bear's back and slashed its throat with my knife. It tried to spin around but the doorframe caught the huge body and I was safe from the snout full of long fangs that glistened whitely in the sunlit doorway.

A thick pool of blood formed in front of the bear and spread slowly across the floor toward Beth. The bear uttered some final growls; slowly its head drooped to the floor and it lay still. I jumped over the body and my feet slipped in the gallons of blood covering the floor. Blood from the gash in my cheek flowed down to mix with the darker blood on the floor. I found a wet dish-cloth on the counter and held it against my face.

"C'mon," I said to her. "Let's go to my cabin. We'll clean this mess in the morning. I'll have to winch that bear out of your doorway."

She took my arm and we stepped through the congealing blood, already turning to the colour of rust. The bear's tongue hung out of its face and its eyes stared dimly toward where Beth had stood just a short time before. We clambered over it and stepped out into the still air. I felt her body shaking but other than that, she showed no effects from the battle.

In my cabin I lit the fire and set the tea kettle to boil. I went down to the river where I stripped and washed all the blood off myself. I put on some clean clothes and went back to the cabin. Beth had set out two cups of tea, and we sat across from each other at the small table, our heads almost touching, my hands held firmly in hers. We went to bed as if we had been doing so all our lives. The next day we cleaned up her cabin where we lived for the next five years.

One spring day, under a cloudless blue sky with the ground thawing from the hot rays of the sun, Beth stepped onto the shore ice of the mighty Yukon River where she leaned down to dip out a pail of water. The shore ice broke away and I heard her call my name.

I raced to the riverbank in time to see her floating swiftly downstream on the block of ice. I untied our little boat and threw it out into the river. I

paddled it out into the current but by now she was half a mile away. The ice shifted under her and she slid into the dark waters. I saw her arm waving above the surface then the river took her down and away from me forever.

I paddled up and down the river for weeks, between our homestead and Dawson, thinking she might have climbed out or that I would find her body. But no one ever saw her again.

But her spirit never abandoned me in all the years since that day on the Yukon River. Every time I looked up at the stars I saw her there amongst them, and every whisper of wind through the spruce boughs brought me her words of comfort. Even now I see her face and hear her voice in my mind. And we will meet again when I too pass down through the dark waters

I abandoned the homestead and became a goldseeker. I passed by it in a boat some years later and climbed up on the riverbank to look around. Poplar trees sprouted in the garden and the roof of the house had caved in at the centre. A faded curtain fluttered in the broken window and the door had been pushed down where it lay flat on the old plank floor. I stepped inside for a moment and stood there, letting the tears roll down my face. It was the first time I had wept since I was a boy. A fresh breeze blew the tattered curtain inward through the broken window and it seemed like she was reaching for me. Then the wind died away and she was gone.

Fauntleroy became the manager of a transportation company in Dawson. I visited him and Clemmy often, and saw their children grow into happy men and women. Jordy wound up owning the Monte Carlo but as the Gold Rush withered and folks moved away to Nome and other places, his businesses dried up. He went back to the southland with about the same number of dollars he had arrived with. Goldfever Jim did strike it rich to some extent. A small vein of gold-bearing quartz streaked through his claim and he was able to sell his diggings for a princely sum. He lost it all in the gambling halls of Dawson and went back to look for more. Manfred snowshoed into Dawson one winter afternoon and proposed to Gert, who had found work in a steam laundry. They married and the last I heard, he takes his shoes off at the door and works from time to time for one of the dredging companies in Dawson. Ben and his woman moved to a black community in western Ontario.

And me, I stayed in the bush all these years, trapping and looking for gold. I sent money and nuggets to my mother and sisters in the East and one year I mailed them a special gold brooch shaped like a horseshoe and maple leaf. So now you know how I got the scar on my cheek and what I was doing down in this watery hole. And Sonny, I hope you'll write all this down into a long story that folks will read. I think I'll go back to sleep now. Goodbye and good luck in the life you have before you. And don't be too frantic in your quest for gold and for love, because if something is meant for you, it won't pass you by.

From the Publisher

or residents of southern Yukon the millenium started with a cosmic bang. On January 18th at 8:46 in the morning, a falling meteor turned darkness into daylight as it streaked across the Yukon sky, then exploded 25 kilometres above the Earth, not far from the Tagish Lake cabin of Elvis Presley.

I wonder if the spectacle may have triggered some memories for Elvis, an artist formerly known as Gilbert Nelles. According to the newspapers, Nelles officially changed his name to Elvis Presley after an extra terrestrial visitor told him that the spirit of Elvis lived on in his body.

For years Tagish Elvis walked around Whitehorse looking very much like the late king of rock and roll. He wore a white, bell-bottomed leisure suit studded with bits of shiny metal. His hair was black and shiny and his sideburns were long. For a while Elvis drove a pink Cadillac, but mostly he hitchhiked from Tagish to Whitehorse, a distance of about 45 miles.

In Whitehorse, Elvis always looked like he was on official business. Usually, he carried a briefcase; sometimes an art portfolio. A friend of mine sent one of Elvis' paintings to her sister in Ontario. The sister was thrilled to have a work of art signed by Elvis Presley. Sometimes Elvis sang for people. I'm told he wasn't bad. Once, in a coffee shop, I overheard Elvis talking to some friends about his glory days in Vegas.

Elvis knew who he was but it irked him when people didn't take him seriously. He launched a series of lawsuits against those who had not shown the proper respect. A complaint against the publisher of Hustler magazine was settled out of court. His legal battles with the local RCMP dragged on at the courthouse and, eventually, were dismissed. For a while, Elvis stopped wearing his rock and roll outfit and started to look more like his former self.

The arrival of the meteor from outer space was a big event for scientists and for Yukoners. Soon after the meteor crashed, a local man found some black rocks on top of the snow and turned them over to NASA. Meteors are pieces left over from the Big Bang, which supposedly created the universe. Scientists think that organic material in the meteorite rocks may hint at how our solar system began.

Several days after the fireball explosion, Elvis Presley filed another lawsuit. As he walked out of the courthouse that January day, his shiny black hair glistened in the sunshine and his white, bell-bottomed trousers flapped in the winter wind. The king lives!

