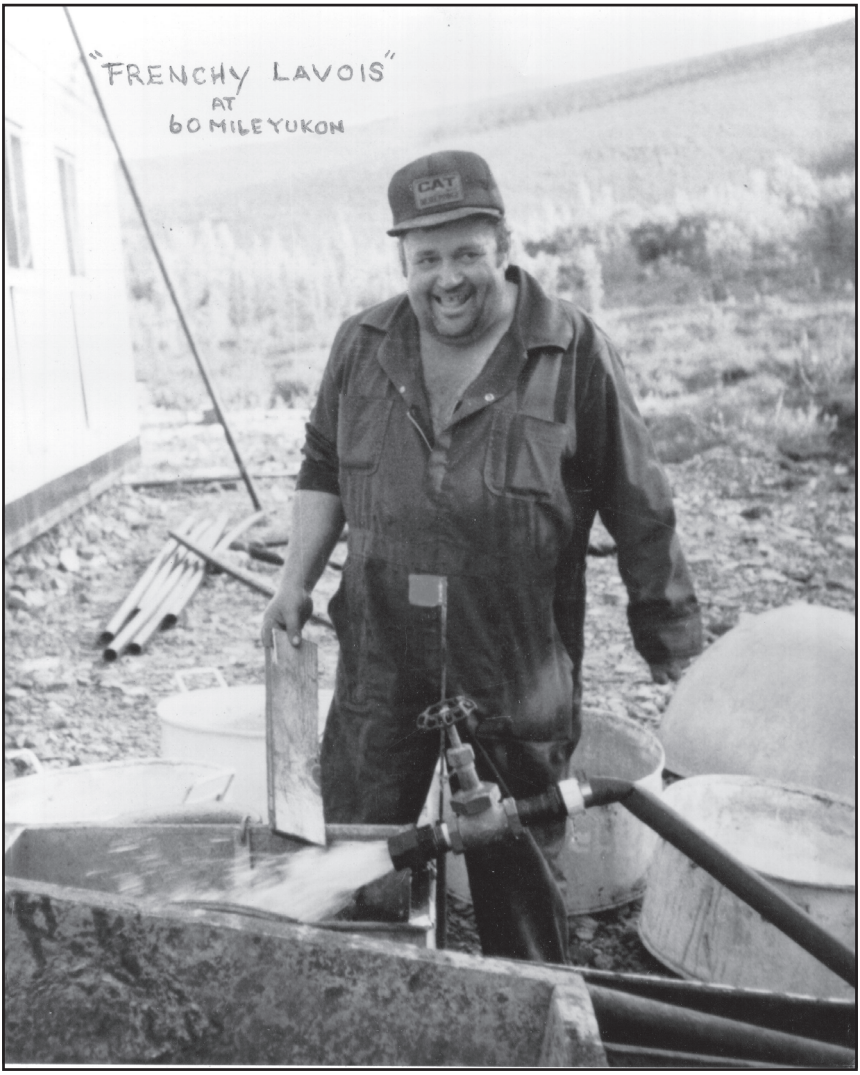
THE YUKONER MAGAZINE

#1

Premier Issue
Price: $3.95

INSIDE: Mattie's story,
the diary of a Mountie,
the tale of a lost gold mine,
a survival epic, photos.



Frenchy (Xavier) Lavois. Foreman 1980-81 at Al Downes' mining camp, 60 mile, YT (gold cleanup time).

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From the Editor's Desk

I want to tell you about the old printing press in the photo, but first, a few points about this new magazine.

You'll notice on the masthead that subscriptions are $50 a year. That figure came from hard experience with Canada Post who have the habit of raising second-class postal rates unpredictably. Even if regular stamps don't go up that often, commercial mail gets hit on a regular basis so we can't predict what our costs will be a year from now. So, this magazine will get mailed out first-class in an envelope.

Even then, you would be taking a chance. Publishing is the toughest business to be in with very small margins and magazines go broke daily with subscribers left holding the bag.

But I would say that this publication has a good chance to succeed in the long run. Mainly because of the old gadget you see on your right, which means we can print in-house and handle all our own production.

I published a story about it in the *Yukon News* last winter:

"A couple of years ago a friend of mine bought an old printing press. He never found the time to use it so, last summer, I traded him an old Dodge truck for it. All the truck needed was a motor, a transmission, tires and a paint job and it would be as good as new, so I know he got the best of me on that deal.

Some friends helped me wrestle the press into the cabin where I set it up on some steel plates so it wouldn't crash through the floor.

When it comes to machinery, I always thought of myself as being smarter than the average bear. This thing would make my fortune: all I had to do was fire it up and start printing books, magazines, wanted posters, whatever.

Cathy Robertson of Yukon Instant Printing (now Copy/Copy) was kind enough to come out and give me a half-hour lesson and then I sent for a video tape on running this type of press.

I mentioned what kind of press I had to Sam Cawley of Willow Printers. His advice was: "Never turn your back on that model of press."

My first job was to print a book written by a friend of mine. At the Canon dealer I bought some paper at $8.00 a ream, got some ink and fountain solution and there I was, in the printing business at last.

I filled the input tray with paper, and slopped some black, gooey, sticky ink into the intake holder, threw the switches for the vacuum and air and then fired up the press.

At lightning speed, the pages rushed through to the other side where they heaped up in a tangled mess. Some pages stuck to the blanket roller and worked their way up through all the ink rollers where they disintegrated into a billion shreds of fibre.

In the meantime, the pages rattled through, turning blacker and blacker all the time.

I shut her down and started my first press wash. When I lifted the ink tray off, long goobers of ink left snaky trails all over my lovely press. Pages were tangled in the belts below the press and I had paper everywhere you could see.

Three hours later I looked like the master mechanic in a tar factory but the press was clean.

I started again and the same thing happened.

So I washed it down then fired it up again and the same thing happened, but not right away.

By the tenth try and five thousand pages later, I actually got one page to print.

"I've mastered you now, you son-of-a-b——!"

So I piled a thousand sheets onto the input tray and kept adjusting water, fountain solution, buckle settings, vacuum, air, and so forth. Some pages came out faded, some were too dark and some had little rips in them here and there.

Sometimes I would forget to set just one little lever and all hell would break loose in the little cabin. This old press can make a mess quicker than any five-year-old in his mother's kitchen, believe you me.

It took several trips to the Canon store for paper but I kept at it until one day I printed ten different pages and they all looked pretty fair to me. A real printer wouldn't agree but in the Yukon, these pages were passable.

"I've got you now, you son-of-a-b——!"

My ego returned after the humbling days and weeks of fighting this machine. The weather had turned cold and dry and I learned some lessons about humidity and humility.

In the middle of a run, the old press started whacking and rattling and thumped itself right up off the steel floor plate. By the time I hit the switch, it happened twice more. I figured the whole works was shot.

What happened was that ten or more pages stuck together with static electricity and went through the rollers all together. A vaporizer from Canadian Tire solved that problem and I actually got a book printed (*Ghost Towns & Trails of the Yukon*). If you happen to come across one of those books, you'll know it didn't come easy."

The ink blobs and crooked pages in this magazine are not intentional. Our goal is to improve the contents and print quality as we go along.

The fence needed mending and the grass needed a cut, but Mattie didn't care... she was a happy bride that sixteenth of June in 1934 in the backyard of her new home.

"Mattie"

By Darrell Hookey

"Those were the happiest days of my life."

The photograph hangs above Mattie Chapman's bed at Macaulay Lodge. It is a picture of her on her wedding day. Dawson City, June 16, 1934.

Her husband, Charles "Chappie" Chapman, had the photograph enlarged and framed 50 years later, as an anniversary present. The wedding dress itself was taken out of storage so the photograph could be accurately colourized. The result proves once again Klondike brides back then were practical: "My wedding dress was blue because you could wear a white wedding dress only once."

But then something else about the photograph catches her eye. She pauses for a moment, eyes narrowed as she sizes up the backyard of the house she was married in...the house she would make a home for her children. "That fence is in dreadful condition," she pronounces finally. "I had never noticed before."

Mostly it is the good times Mattie remembers today. She loved being a mother to Betty and Bill and was proud to be the wife of Chappie. The good times were simple, yet special. She would bake a cake or make up some toast and the four of them would play Whist or Canasta at the card table in the living room.

If they weren't playing cards, Chappie might have been developing pictures in his darkroom and Mattie would be colouring them in. Or, the whole family would listen to radio programs from Fairbanks or Moscow.

The isolation of Dawson City in those days bred the best of friends a person could hope for. Everybody knew everybody and everybody knew everybody's business. If your house was on fire, every man would grab his coat and run to your help. You would be sure to have a place to stay that night and the next morning boxes of clothes, food and even toys would start piling up.

Mattie also remembers the afternoon teas where your finest dress and best hat were the order of the day. If it was your turn to have a tea, you would bake for a week, shine up the sterling silver, bring out the best china and position the lace doilies just so. Yet you wouldn't be nervous on the big day since everyone was a friend. Conversation was good natured, although some gossip would "creep in" sometimes. When the Dawson City News came out next, you could read all about the tea with a list of those in attendance.

Like most people in Dawson City, Mattie came from a long way. She was born Martha Ann Barton, in Northumberland, England, on January 18, 1908, one of seven children. She was the daughter of a coal miner who lived in a row of 10 brick houses. Her father, and later her oldest brother as well, would come straight home from work and walk directly to the wash room in the backyard to wash off the day's coal dust. This routine was played out in the other nine backyards at the very same time as if it was a scene taken directly from the movie "How Green Was My Valley".

Her father, Bill, was a good and fair man who hit his children only, and whenever, a rule was broken. He had converted to Catholicism to marry Mary Starr and took his family to mass every week. "He had to," Mattie says with a sly smile. "The priest was the boss in that town."

The Great War was tough on the entire country. Bill was in the Home Army and blackouts were vigorously enforced as Zeppelins floated over from Germany to drop bombs on their town.

Again, it is the best times she remembers most: "Soldiers from a nearby camp would march in front of our house every morning. I would run out to march in front of them. The May Trees that lined the street would be

Mattie and Chappie visited their home on Fifth Avenue in Dawson City. It has since been torn down to make room for a swimming pool. The home of their old neighbour, Martha Black, still stands.

in bloom and gave off a perfume that was just beautiful. I was only 10 years old and the soldiers would get a bang out of it...But then I would get a walloping that night at home for bothering them. But the next morning I would be right out there again."

Just after the war, when she was 12, her father and brother left for Canada to find work. They quickly got a job in a coal mine in Nanaimo, B.C., and sent for the family. They were met by many friends from England and settled in a working class neighbourhood. Again, there was a wash room in the backyard, but inside they had a stove to cook on and a fireplace for warmth.

Mattie started business college at the age of 13. Upon graduation three years later she moved to Vancouver to be a secretary to a lawyer, Mr. Hurley, who paid her $16 a week. She found room and board for six dollars a week.

Four years later, she travelled back home to ask permission to marry a bank teller who had been courting her. Her parents said she was too young and refused to give her permission. She still considered herself engaged, yet a few years later, she decided to live with her sister in Dawson City. Catherine was a nurse at St. Mary's hospital and the wife of Sergeant Howard Hooper Cronkhite, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (he later became Superintendent in charge of all Yukon detachments).

So, late in the summer of 1932, she left Vancouver. A coast boat took her to Skagway where she boarded the smallest train she had ever seen. It was short and narrow, but very nice. She managed to hang onto a window seat all the way to Whitehorse to enjoy the scenery. It was scary as the train hugged the cliff walls, but the crew kept up a steady chatter to calm the passengers. However, pity was owed to the passenger who asked a "stupid" question and was given a tall tale in response.

With a week to wait for the paddle wheeler to take her the rest of the way to Dawson City, Mattie explored Whitehorse. It didn't take long since the town ended at the clay cliffs. She kept busy, nevertheless, as word spread through town that Sgt. Cronkhite's sister-in-law was in town. Invitations to dinners and teas came in constantly.

"The Keno" arrived and she was whisked onto another adventure up the Yukon River. By this time she was fast friends with her fellow passengers since many had left Vancouver with her. Mostly they were well-heeled tourists who were as green as she was in this new land. Many of them played cards all the way to Dawson City. Unfortunately, Mattie hadn't learned to play Bridge until she arrived in Dawson City and found that it was a very popular pastime.

Stops along the way for freight and fuel gave her more chances to socialize with friends of Sgt. Cronkhite. Back on board, she would retire to her cabin. Although she refers to it today as a cubby hole, she admits it was very luxurious as it had its own toilet and wash basin. She wouldn't see indoor plumbing in Dawson City for a least a few years.

When Mattie wasn't attending a tea or playing baseball on the town league, she would be enjoying the sights around Dawson City with her children, Betty and Bill.

The one unpleasant surprise for her on the trip was the size and number of mosquitoes that were "just like little dogs".

Her sister was waiting for her on the dock as The Keno pulled into Dawson City. She hadn't seen Catherine in five years and they were both very excited.

Dawson City had a reputation of being rough and ready in those days and Sgt. Cronkhite wouldn't allow his sister-in-law to walk alone at night. He also wouldn't allow Mattie to work, so, instead, she helped out a family friend at the Northern Commercial Company's (NCC) ladies wear department.

Meanwhile, the NCC had an accountant and former Mountie working in its Mayo store who was ready for a promotion. Chappie was sent to Dawson City as the new manager. He knew Sgt. Cronkhite from his days as an RCMP constable and came to the house to visit often...very often.

"You know Mattie," her brother-in-law would declare, "I think Chappie is interested in you."

"He can be interested all he wants," Mattie would reply. "I'm going back to Vancouver to be married."

She continued to see him with her family whenever he visited the house. After he bought a car, a 1928 Model A Ford, he would take her for drives and they would be alone. Still, they never kissed or held hands.

One day he popped the question on one of their drives and she was shocked. "You're crazy," she shot back. "You're way up there and I'm way down here." As a former Mountie, Chappie was of course tall while Mattie is a self-described runt.

She told Catherine about the "stupid question" Chappie had asked her and her sister replied simply, "You can't find a better man."

"I liked him," Mattie now recounts. "I think I was beginning to love him and I did like the Yukon, so I wrote a `Dear John' letter (to the bank teller) and I never heard from him again."

They were married in her sister's house, which the newlyweds had just bought for $350 (Sgt. Cronkhite and Catherine had just moved into an

As a reward for all they have done for the Yukon, Chappie and Mattie were given a free trip to the South Pacific. It went along with the honours of being Whitehorse Sourdough Rendezvous Mr. & Mrs. Yukon of 1972. [CP Air photo]

RCMP residence). Since Chappie wasn't Catholic, the priest refused to marry them in the church. But Mattie put her foot down and he agreed on performing the ceremony at the house. "He wasn't there more than five minutes," she remembers with a chuckle.

And so Mattie began life as a married woman, and then as a mother, in the isolated frozen north. As the last paddle wheeler left in early October before the Yukon River froze up, the entire town turned to one another for support... and entertainment.

At least once a month, a dance would be held in the community hall. An ad hoc band, still wearing their street clothes, would play a blend of peppy music and waltzes. So long as you were 18 years of age, you were welcome. Labourers from the dredges just outside of town would bathe and dress up in their finest clothes to attend. The rich folks in town would be there, too, dancing with anyone willing as there were no class distinctions in those days. Mattie points out that even the government people would attend the dances.

There would be the odd fight in the street out front, but in most cases everyone was well behaved. There was no drinking at these events and it broke up around one o'clock in the morning. It was just as well since the dancing was "very vigourous" in those days.

The rowdiest day of the year, however, was August 17, Discovery Day. It was the one day of the year everyone in town would be together. The barracks at each of the dredges just outside of town would be empty for the day as they all came to town to celebrate.

Handshakes and backslapping were all around as friends were reacquainted while the afternoon parade got under way. The original stampeders, or "Old Timers" as they were called, would have their own float. Children in their finest clothes would be on another as service clubs and businesses made up the rest.

The parade would end at the field behind the administration building where carnival-like games and activities would commence. The Old Timers would be sought out and asked to tell a couple of good stories from the Gold Rush. The Old Timers were well known around town every other day of the year, but they were looked up to and, after all, Discovery Day was considered their day.

That night, the good folks of Fifth Avenue would attend a dance and go home to bed. The beer parlours downtown, however, would still be going strong. "They never bothered the women though," Mattie concedes, "and they were otherwise well behaved for drunks."

The other big social event of the year was Easter. In particular, it was the church service where all the women in town attended in brand new dresses. Not many people paid attention to the priest as they eyed each other to see who looked best in the new spring fashions.

But for sheer excitement, nothing compares to the first paddle wheeler of spring. Once the Yukon River was reasonably free of ice, the isolation of

Dawson City would be over for another winter. Just as it rounded the bend and came into sight of the docks, the paddle wheeler would start blowing its whistle. The entire town would stop what they were doing and rush to the river bank. Schools would abruptly end for the day and children could be seen climbing over each other to get out of the doors.

The stores would be full again and the cost of some staples would drop dramatically. Visitors and tourists would once again walk the streets, while some Dawson residents had the chance to head south for a vacation.

During the winter there was the plane that brought in perishables, and a Cat Train (a tractor pulling sleds) from Whitehorse that would bring mail, some passengers and other goods. But the paddle wheeler was, by far, the most efficient link to the Outside.

Despite the isolation, or because of it, Dawson City was a great place to raise a family. Mattie said very few children failed a grade in school because the teachers were well known to the parents so more of an effort was made by all. There were four or five doctors in town, two dentists and a large drug store. Long, cold winter days gave mothers plenty of opportunity to knit wool clothing to keep their families warm. Mittens were made even warmer with a leather outer mitt purchased at NCC.

At the beginning of the Second World War, Chappie joined the local Pacific Coast Militia Rangers and was commissioned as a captain and commanding officer. He would conduct training every week to ensure they could take charge of the town in case of an emergency. The Canadian Army would send up officers to inspect his command and would often end up in Mattie's home having dinner. "That was a lot of work for me, you know," Mattie says. But they did bring fruit for Betty and Bill, which only "millionaires" could afford back then.

Isolation ended in the 1950's with the construction of a highway linking Dawson City with Whitehorse.

When the first of the survey crews came into town to prepare for highway construction, the entire town came out to meet them. When the construction got closer, the dances at the community hall got bigger and lasted longer, to four or five o'clock in the morning. Chappie had to hire more staff to keep up with the extra customers at the NCC store. Meanwhile, Mattie was preparing more meals and washing more dishes as Chappie was called upon to do more entertaining.

The day came when the construction reached Dawson City and the highway was complete. A huge party was held for them to say farewell. Some of the workers stayed behind while others married local girls. But more than that changed. Mattie said Dawson City was never the same after the highway was built.

Friends were lost to them as the number of paddle wheelers dwindled and there were layoffs. Increased traffic meant more strangers and a chance of their escape if they committed any serious crimes. People started locking their doors at night.

Just after the war, Chappie bought a drug store and they ran it themselves. They sold the house on Fifth Avenue and moved into an apartment over the store. Chappie also prepared income tax forms for customers, did accounting services, and some paralegal work.

They later sold the business and Chappie accepted the position of Notary Public/Justice of the Peace/Judge/Coroner for the Yukon and parts of British Columbia and North West Territories. As well, he held many different jobs. He owned a garage in Mayo, worked for United Keno Transport in Whitehorse, and worked for Northern Metalic in Watson Lake.

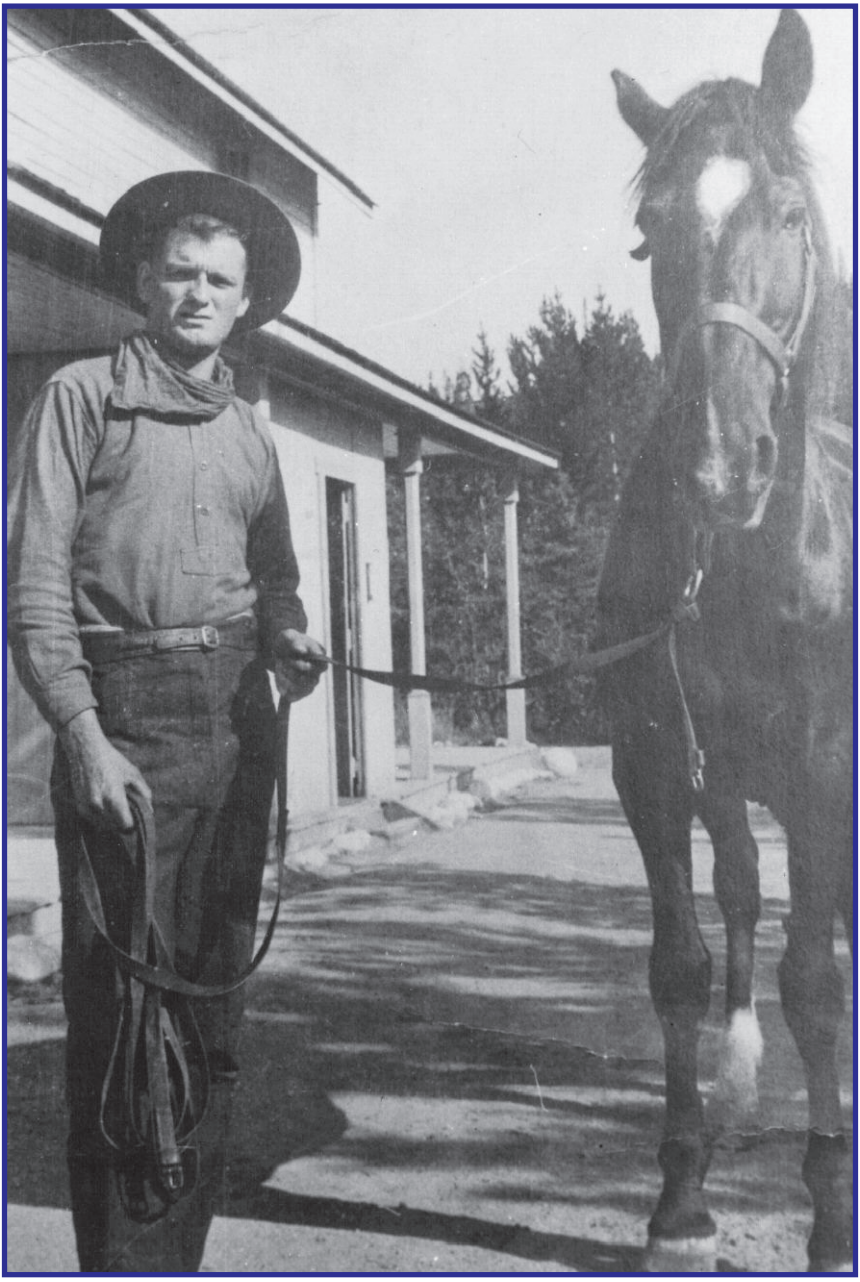
Mattie, meanwhile, took a job in Whitehorse at the Hougen's Photography Store. In Watson Lake, she was hired to supervise the first Tourist Information office. After retirement, she went on to supervise the Watson Lake Library. And, in her spare time, she was the Watson Lake correspondent for CBC Radio.

In 1972, they were named Mr. and Mrs. Yukon during Whitehorse's annual Sourdough Rendezvous. As a present, they were given a trip to the South Pacific and Australia, where they met long lost family members who treated them like royalty.

Seven years after their 50th Anniversary, Chappie died. He is buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Whitehorse, right next to a plot reserved for Mattie. She seems to relish the thought of being with him for all of eternity...even though she is Catholic and he is in a cemetery reserved mainly for Protestants.

" 'Can't I ever get rid of you,' he'll say. And I'll say, 'Nope.' "

Jim Robb sketching at a Siberian Husky farm on the Carcross Road in 1985. [John Hatch photo]



Chappie during training as a member of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police at "A" Division in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. He was 17 years old when this picture was taken (he had told the recruiter he was 18).

MEMOIRS OF SIXTY YEARS NORTH OF SIXTY

By Charles Hathway Chapman

[Editor's Note: Mattie Chapman kindly loaned us her husband's uncompleted manuscript. It is presented here with the original spelling and syntax.]

According to information given me by my Parents, I was born on the 29th day of January, 1902, at a place called Leytonstone , Sussex, England. I have never been able to get a birth certificate and as we came to Canada when I was very young I don't remember anything about England. My first memories are of attending school in Saskatoon, learning to skate on the open air skating rink by the school and of fishing for Gold Eyes on the Saskatchewan River with my Father. I don't remember ever catching any.

In 1912 we moved to Swift Current, Saskatchewan, where I finished my grade 12 and started looking for employment in Swift Current. I had several different jobs such as working in a sash and door factory puttying windows, driving a Bakery Delivery wagon and even joined the Volunteer Fire Department. In this capacity we had to attend at least two practices a week and I was given the task of driving the ladder truck pulled by three horses. At that time it was a great thrill to drive the Red Ladder truck down the streets and operate the alarm bell on the truck. During the summer holidays from school, I often spent the holidays on ranches near Swift Current and learned to handle horses and ride quite well.

In July of 1919, due to the many veterans returning from World War One, jobs for seventeen year old boys were quite scarce. In my search for employment I noticed a poster which stated that the Royal North West Mounted Police were enlisting a thousand recruits. I made application and passed a medical examination and as I had given my age as eighteen, I was accepted, given a train ticket, and ordered to report to ''A"' Division at Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, and so on August 9th., 1919, I signed on and became a member of the Royal North West Mounted Police.

Maple Creek or "A" Division was one of the first Divisions established by the police after the march across the Prairies in 1874. It was formed like the British military posts in many places with the buildings around a square with parade ground and flag pole in the centre. It had played a prominent part in the opening of the west, the Riel Rebellion and the building of the C.P.R. The graveyard nearby had several members who died in the Riel Rebellion and while performing other duties, buried there. It was here that I was given basic cavalry training, riding horses which were be-

ing trained for the one thousand new members who were being taken on strength in Regina..

So I passed the winter of 1919 and the next spring we were told that "A" Division Maple Creek was to be closed and we were all to be transferred to Ottawa, where "A'' Division is today. Quite a number of the members at Maple Creek requested to be left in the West and so I was transferred to Depot Division at Regina, Saskatchewan. At Regina we all had to take more training and had to learn to use the British military type saddle and the western Saddle was discontinued. After a few months in Regina I entered my name as a volunteer to be transferred to the Yukon and again I was accepted and so started my sixty year life in the Yukon.

The trip from Regina to the Yukon was a real experience for an eighteen year old. During my years at home, my Father was a great reader of many books and often read aloud to all of us. He often read from Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Robert Services' Poems and many of the stories of the "98"" Gold Rush but never did I think that I would be following the trail of the Gold Rush Pioneers as a Mounted Police Officer.

After much instruction we were finally given the necessary tickets and expense money and I and four other members of the Force started our journey north.. We travelled by Train to Vancouver and after a one night

Commanding officer of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, Captain Charles "Chappie" Chapman, leads his men on parade down the streets of Dawson City during the Second World War. [Yukon Archives photo, Hare collection]

stay in the Police Barracks there we boarded the Princess Louise Steamer for Skaguay, Alaska. The steamer followed the Inland Passage which is one of the most beautiful trips on the Pacific Coast and four days later we landed at Skaguay, Alaska where the notorious Soapy Smith had held sway during the Gold Rush of 1898.

The next day we boarded the narrow gauge train to take us over the famous White Pass the route of many of the '98 Stampeders. Past Dead Horse Gulch where the bones of many horses were still visible and finally to Whitehorse. It was here that we were to board the Paddle Wheel Steamer Casca for Dawson, the Gold rush capital, and I was looking forward to the trip down the Yukon, across Lake Labarge, and the Five Finger Rapids but this was not to be for some time , as I was summoned to the Whitehorse Subdivision Office and informed that I was to remain at Whitehorse.

At that time the Whitehorse Subdivision was much like the Maple Creek "A"' Division with a large parade square, flagpole in the centre and offices, barracks, guard room and stables surrounding the square. Here I was appointed teamster in charge of the stables and guard in charge of the prisoners. We had four horses at the post and my main duties were to look after the prisoners. Most of the prisoners were convicted on liquor charges, minor assaults and other similar offences and had been sentenced for short terms and to hard labour. The hard labour consisted of about thirty days on His Majesty's wood pile. All the buildings were heated with wood and the wood had to be cut into stove lengths with a crosscut or buck saw and then distributed to the various buildings. We also had to haul water to the quarters as there was no water system and we hauled it in a wooden tank and filled barrels with buckets.

The next spring I was called to the Officer Commanding Office and advised that I was to proceed to Ross River by the Steamer Thistle, to open a detachment there. The Steamer had already blown a half hour whistle and so another member was detailed to assist me to pack and get ready. To make this trip the small steamer had to proceed down the Yukon River, across Lake Labarge to Fort Selkirk where the Pelly and Yukon Rivers join. Fort Selkirk was the site where the explorer Robert Campbell of the Hudsons Bay Company established his third trading post which was eventually destroyed by the Coast Indians. It was also the site of the Post established in the Gold Rush days by the Yukon Field Force.

The trip up the Pelly was very slow and in many places the steamer could only proceed by putting out lines and using the winch. We were also informed at the start of the trip that at every stop we would also have to go ashore and assist in cutting wood for the boilers. It was on one of these stops that I first met Bishop Stringer, the Anglican Bishop of the Yukon. He was on one end of a cross cut saw and I on the other. This was before the days of chain saws or even Swede saws and all we had were heavy cross cut saws and wooden framed buck saws.

About a week after leaving Fort Selkirk we arrived at Ross River, a

small settlement consisting of a Trading Post operated by Taylor & Drury Ltd., and named "Nahanni House.'' There were at least two hundred and fifty people on the bank, mostly natives, and all waiting to get their year's provisions to go back into the woods trapping or prospecting.

Soon after the Steamer left most of the people purchased their year's supplies and left for trapping and hunting grounds. I then set about the work of setting up the detachment. I was able to rent a large log cabin which I was to use for the detachment office and for living quarters. The only equipment I had been given when I left Whitehorse was a Union Jack Flag, some foolscap paper, a Diary and a supply of pencils and ink. In addition I had the issue .303 Lee Enfield Rifle, a Colt revolver .455 calibre and a year's supply of ammunition.

After cleaning up the cabin and hoisting the flag, Law and Order had arrived at Ross River. Shortly after the steamer left, a large scow came down the Pelly with about twenty people aboard. It was piloted by Del Van Gorder, who was in charge of Taylor and Drury's trading post at Pelly Banks, which is located about 70 miles up river, at the junction of the Pelly and Campbell Creek. Pelly Banks was also named by Robert Campbell during his explorations into the Yukon and was the second post established by him. This trading post was also burned by the Indians and all that remained of it was a pile of stones which had been the fireplace and chimney.

After a few days rest, Van Gorder loaded the supplies for the year, amounting to about five tons and started up the Pelly. The scow was pulled by about fifteen of the native people with Van Gorder steering with a large sweep in the rear. The families of the native people walked along the bank, generally ahead of the scow and I went along as a passenger, walking ahead of the scow. I had brought along a fishing line and some flies and was able to catch many greyling, which I would leave on a stick beside the river and they would be picked up when the rest of the party caught up and we always had fish for the evening meal.

About thirty miles up the Pelly, we came to Hoole Canyon. This canyon is a very spectacular place. The fast rushing water passing through white limestone walls is impossible to get a boat through. There are graves along the bank of men who had lost their lives in attempting to run the canyon.

Here all the years supplies got unloaded and back packed up a steep hill about a hundred and fifty feet above the river, then about a mile through the woods and down a similar very steep hill. This portage had been in use from the earliest time and was well marked by the many loads that had been carried over it. The big scow was pulled out of the river and placed high on the bank where it would be safe and available tor the next year. After completing the portage the goods were added into another scow and the journey continued up the Pelly to Pelly Banks.

After a few days I returned to Ross River with some native people and

started making preparations for winter trips. I purchased four dogs and a native made toboggan, cut enough wood for the winter in readiness to be hauled in with the dogs as soon as there was enough snow. I had to do my own cooking, and the only fresh meat available was game that I was able to shoot, including rabbits, grouse, moose and caribou, which were quite plentiful, and greyling from the river. The dogs also had to be fed often on rabbits or from dried moose meat which was sometimes available from the Indians.

In October the Pelly started to freeze over and I decided to make a trip down the river about fifty miles to visit a man, who was generally known as old man Rose. He had a cabin at the mouth of Rose Creek close to where the big mine of Faro is today. I started very early and travelled on the shore ice as there had not been any snow. This was the first of many patrols I made and I learned a lot. It turned very cold and yet the River was still open in many places. I made good time and thought I was close to my destination but I was on the wrong side of the river and could not cross after it got dark and decided to make camp, but in the darkness I could not locate any dry wood and had great difficulty in getting a fire going and very nearly froze. I left the axe too close to the fire, burned the handle and put in a very unpleasant night.

The next morning, at daylight, I could see the smoke from the cabin and the river was frozen over, so I packed up without cooking and was well received by Mr. Rose and was very glad to get into the warm cabin. I learned to make camp early and even though I made many more winter trips I never suffered like I did that night.

We were provided with very poor equipment. Our bedding consisted of a wolf skin robe, bulky and heavy, no stove or tent and we spent every night in the open beside a fire. After the trip down the river I started on a trip to Pelly banks, which I made in two days camping over night on the Hoole Portage. Returned after two days to Ross River. During this trip I am sure it turned 60 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, but as I had no thermometer I just kept going.

During the winter I made several other trips, visiting trappers and prospectors in the area. One trip from Ross River to Francis Lake and then up to Pelly Lakes and visited nearly every one in the district. On this trip I slept out in the wolf skin robe for over a month except at Pelly Banks and at Pelly Lakes. My instructions when leaving Whitehorse were to be on the alert for alcohol being supplied to the Indians but in all the visits there was no alcohol or evidence of the use of any.

When I returned to Ross River I found some letters that had been brought over from Teslin by Corpl. McClery. He had made the long trip by dog team, camping out every night and over a route that is now followed by the Canol Road. About a week later Const Erickson and a guide arrived from Carmacks, bringing the only mail I received during all the time I was at Ross River. We started on a patrol I had planned for a long time up the

Ross over towards the MacMillan River to visit some prospectors but we could find no trace of them and returned to Ross after camping out in very severe weather for another ten days.

And so the winter passed, leaving me with four very tired dogs and a badly worn toboggan. As soon as the ice went out people started to gather in Ross to sell their furs and await the arrival of the annual Steamer. The steamer never arrived, the water in the Pelly got so low that the boat was stuck at the mouth of the MacMillan River. In the meantime I had the opportunity to make another trip by boat to Pelly Banks and Pelly Lakes, again going over the Poole Portage.

During this trip I met many people returning to Ross River for annual trading and supplies. We arrived in a cabin at Pelly Lakes found everything to be well and as some of the party were going to stay there, the Indians decided to make a moose skin boat to return to Ross. The boat was made of willows for keel and ribs and two moose skins stretched over this frame and sealed with pitch and tallow and in this boat we returned to Ross River. The Steamer still had not arrived and supplies were very low. All that was left was some very dried up bacon, rice, dried potatoes and what game could be shot. Del Vangorder was there from Pelly Banks waiting for the steamer for his year's supplies and I went with him and was lucky enough to get a moose, after two days travelling. This was distributed to every one in camp and soon was used up.

In September a canoe arrived from down river with Corpl. C.B.Tidd with orders to relieve me and I was to return to Whitehorse. Corpl. Tidd's canoe was fully loaded but he asked me as he landed for something good to eat as he bad been on short rations. My reply was "If there is anything good to eat in this camp, it is in that canoe." However the canoe contained several cameras, tripods, rifles, musical instruments and other personal articles but no food. He informed us that the supplies would be coming up by gasoline launch.

So ended my term at Ross River. In order to get to Whitehorse the only method of transportation I had was the mooseskin boat I still had. I patched it up and started down river. The mooseskin boat was so light it was difficult to navigate, and the wind seemed to blow up stream the whole time.

An Anglican missionary student had also come with Corpl Tidd and he decided to return with me. I took over a week to make the trip to Fort Selkirk but we did pass several parties freighting by gas launch up the river towards Ross. A short visit was paid to the Van Bibber family and another to the Farm near the mouth of the Pelly. My passenger, the Anglican student, always had his sleeves rolled up and his arms were badly sunburned and peeling by the time we arrived at Fort Selkirk.

Here we pulled our mooseskin boat up on the bank and carried our gear up to the Taylor & Drury Store. A few minutes later we returned to the boat but there was nothing left but the ribs. The hungry Indian dogs had eaten every piece of skin and even the thongs the boat was tied to-

gether with. Shortly after, the paddle wheel steamer Casca arrived and I made my way to Whitehorse.

I spent the remainder of the summer and fall at Whitehorse and then just after Christmas I was detailed to accompany Corpl Blatta with another team of five dogs to travel to Champagne Landing and then up the Dezeadeash River and Lake to Dalton Post, Klukshu Landing and to proceed as near as possible to the Alaska border. There were reports of goods being smuggled across the border, especially liquor.

This was the hardest trip I had ever undertaken. We started off on the old wagon trail to Champagne then up the Dezeadeash River and across the lake of the same name. The snow was very deep, there was no sign of a trail most of the way, and we had to use snow shoes to break trail and help the dogs with what is known as a gee pole.

This consists of a pole angling from the front of the toboggans with a rope passing between our legs with the dogs out in front and a rope over our shoulder to assist in pulling the load of dog food, wolf skin robes, our food and cooking utensils. In this manner we quite often only made about ten or twelve miles a day. This trip took two months during which time we slept outdoors the whole time without the benefit of tent or stove and with a diet of rice, porridge, beans cooked and frozen on a piece of canvas before starting, so that they could be easily separated, hard tack biscuits and bacon. Also tea and sugar. Occasionally a rabbit could be snared at night to supplement ours and the dogs diets.

We did meet some natives and prospectors near Dalton Post but found no trace of anything being brought over the border. This was my last patrol with the police which by this time had changed the name to Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

I finished out my term of service in Whitehorse, again acting as teamster and guard and then went to Regina and took my discharge for time expired on August 9, 1924.

I spent some time with the rest of our family who were now in Vancouver and then returned to the Yukon where I worked with a prospecting outfit for some time. I then joined up with the Northern Commercial Co. Ltd., which was an Alaskan firm that had many fur trading branches in the Yukon. But that is another story which will be part two of these memoirs.

Memoirs of 60 Years north of 60. Part 2.

Shortly after being discharged from the R.C.M.Police in Regina, I returned to Vancouver where my parents and four sisters were living at the time and spent several months there visiting and looking for employment. I did find work for a very short time as a clerk in the Patricia Hotel, on Hastings Street East in Vancouver. Working in a Hotel Office was not for my liking

after having spent so many years in the open. My friend, Kenny Fyfe, who I had known in Whitehorse where he had worked as a teller in the Bank of Commerce, had been transferred to the Bank in Vancouver.

We decided on a hunting trip to Campbell River and Buttle Lake on Vancouver Island and it was while on this trip that we decided to return North to the Yukon.We had to borrow enough money from Charley Fyfe, Kenny's brother, to pay our fare back to Whitehorse. Kenny soon got work as a purser on the River Boats and I worked for a short time on the White Pass Dock checking freight which had arrived by the White Pass narrow gauge railroad and was being loaded on to the Paddle Wheel Steamers which were operating on the Yukon River between Whitehorse, and some went on down the River to Nenana .

Later that year I was offered work with Tommy Kerruish, who was operating a prospecting operation and doing some diamond drilling. Our first location was at the Kopper King Mine just outside of Whitehorse and we worked there for most of the winter.

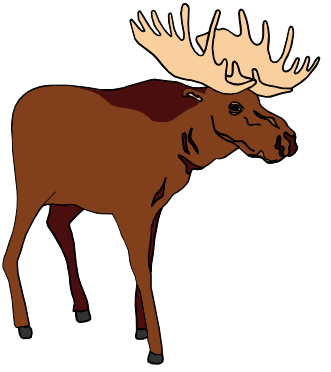
One day we were working at the bottom of a shaft about 70 feet deep. We were drilling and blasting in very hard rock and a young man who was employed as a miner had drilled through the hard rock into a softer layer. That night after he had blasted the round he went down the shaft to see if the softer material was Copper Ore. He should not have gone down the shaft so soon as the powder fumes had not yet dissipated because of poor ventilation.

As he did not return to the bunk house for a considerable time, Slim Keopke and I went up to the shaft and found him lying at the bottom of the shaft overcome by the powder gas. Keopke started the compressor and I went down the shaft in the ore bucket, pushed the unconscious miner into the bucket and then went up the shaft standing on the rim of the bucket. At the surface, artificial respiration was started and after a short while he came to but was coughing up some blood. So I hitched up the horse and cutter and nearly killed the horse driving into Whitehorse. This was about the end of this mining and we moved to the Pueblo Mine and started diamond drilling.

End of memoirs

A Foggy Moose Hunt

By Sam Holloway



Last fall I had a strange experience while moose-hunting by boat down the Teslin River. I had camped on the riverbank for the night and found fresh moose tracks leading up a mountain on the east side of the river.

I followed those tracks, up and up and up till I got past the tree-line and saw a huge moose out in the open. Bang, bang, down it went and then I realized my mistake: how was I going to get the meat down to my boat?

It turned dark up there on the mountain and I could feel big snowflakes hitting my face like cold kisses. Then a thick fog rolled up the sidehill from the river below.

So there I was in the dark, fogged in and vibrating from the cold. Rather than freeze to death waiting for daylight, here's what I did: I sliced the belly open and rolled the guts out of that old moose; then I crawled inside for the night. Nice and warm. Moist, too.

I was dozing off into a comfortable sleep when I felt something tugging at the moose. I opened the belly flap just a bit and peeked outside. A pack of a dozen or more wolves surrounded me, looking like they were about to eat the moose and me with it. But then I realized: we were moving! Those wolves had that moose on the drag!

From inside the moose's belly, I caught hold of the tailbone with one hand and the Adam's apple with the other and found out I could steer that thing. You know, like using the rudder on your boat.

With the wolves dragging it at full gallop, I steered that moose right down to my boat. Then I jumped out and shot one of the wolves and the rest scattered in all directions.

I floated downriver till I got to Carmacks where I had left my truck. In the Carmacks Hotel I sold the wolf-hide to a German tourist. Then I tossed the meat into my old Dodgy and drove home.

Windy Farr of Dawson had a similar experience some years ago so I guess it can happen to anybody. If you find yourself steering a moose, don't forget how to grab the tailbone and neckbone from the inside, and you'll be home with the meat in no time at all.

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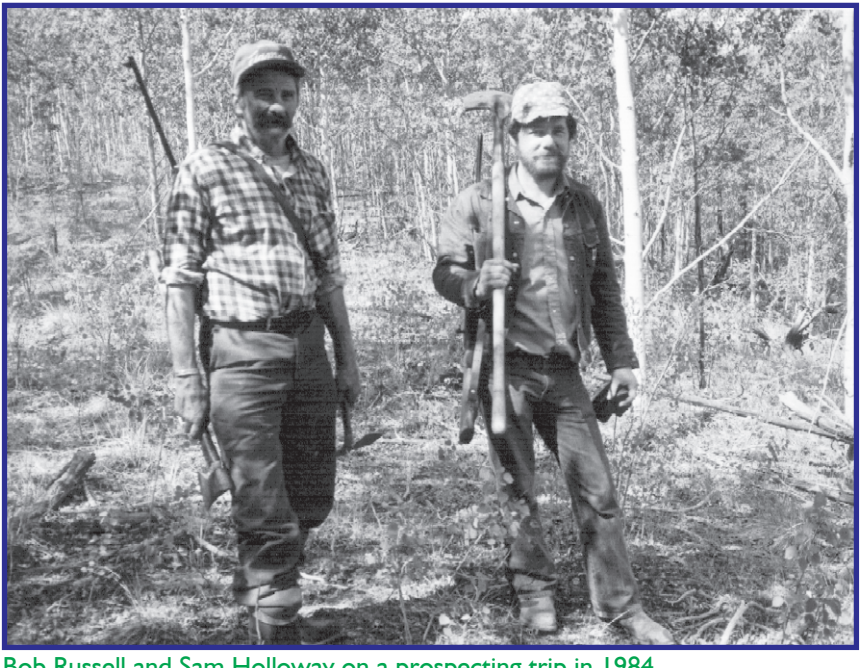
Trapper's Gold

By Sam Holloway

An old trapper in Dawson City told the story of a little creek he found in the 1930s. He was tramping the bush for something to do in the summer when he dug into the gravels of the creek and found some rice-sized nuggets. The following summer he dug down to bedrock and panned out three ounces. He had no equipment nor any real desire for gold so he covered up his diggings and never went back there.

He showed some of this gold to Trapper Bob Russell and Bob often told me the story. We decided we'd go looking for that creek. The oldtimer said it ran into a swamp and didn't flow into the river like all the other creeks—and that was why nobody ever found it. Also, he left a pick leaning against a tree, with the blade pointing toward the spot where he found the gold.

I persuaded two more fellows—Jim White and Don Young—to go along,



Bob Russell and Sam Holloway on a prospecting trip in 1984.

figuring we might have to spread out to find the tiny valley. It was supposed to be up the McQuesten Valley about five or six miles from the highway, on the south side of the McQuesten River.

With Bob leading the way, we headed into a big swamp and hacked our way through. A grizzly bear crashed through the brush right beside us and little Don wanted to head for home. But we kept on 'til we cleared the swamp, a distance of about a mile and half, and turned this way and that way 'til we heard the gurgle of a tiny stream.

We walked along beside it with eight pair of eyes looking for the old pick by the tree. And darned if we didn't find it. I don't know who saw it first but just the handle was sticking out of the moss. We peeled back the moss and the blade was still there after fifty years, pointing toward the oldtimer's diggings.

We found a slight depression in the ground alongside the creek and started to dig. After six inches we hit permafrost so we made a huge fire and burned our way down through the muck, inch by inch, and then the hole filled up with water. But we did find some gravel and the first pan revealed some tiny nuggets. Then we all lay down to rest.

We decided to return to Dawson for more grub, a good tent, and some better tools and a pump. Leaving the picks and shovels behind, we tramped back to the highway and drove to town. That night in Diamond Tooth Gertie's, one of us got drunk (not me) and told the story to a table of Dawsonites.

Bob looking down at the old diggings.

By the end of the next day that whole valley had been staked for placer and hardrock claims. One mining company sent in their crew by helicopter.

A few days later I walked in there with the intention of covering up our diggings. But I couldn't find it. I camped overnight and tried for another day but I'm darned if I could orient myself well enough to locate that little creek.

But nobody else ever found it either and the claims have all lapsed that were staked in there. So that gold should still be there. On the other hand, somebody could be mining it as you read this.

So if anybody decides to claim that spot, I hope you'll share the proceeds with Bob Russell, who now lives in Stewart Crossing. Better yet, he would most likely guide you in there even though he's getting up in years. He was the one who carried the story for so many years and it was Bob who led us to the right place to dig. Don Young has since passed away and I don't know where Prospector Jim is now.

Why don't I go? I got over gold fever and would rather stay home and run my old printing press.

Since writing the previous story, I have learned that my old prospecting pal has passed away, apparently from a freak accident a month ago.

Many is the campfire we made in some lonesome valley on our trips to find just the right creek to mine for gold. I think we enjoyed each other's company and the wilderness and it really didn't matter if we found gold or not.

Bob Russell was born in a cabin at Fortymile about sixty-five or seventy years ago. He never had the chance to go to school and so he took up trapping and mining as a way of life. I believe he was the finest bushman ever to walk the Yukon. Towns were hard for Bob and in another time, he would have been a most respected citizen of the North, simply because of his tremendous stamina and knowledge of the Yukon wilderness.

Page 35 has a photo I took of Bob and his daughter behind their house in Dawson City, probably in 1985. We were about to head up the Stewart River on a bar mining trip.

One time Bob and I overstaked a claim belonging to Art Fry of Dawson and I was pretty worried. Bob was the only man in the area who didn't fear Art Fry. Long ago they had a scrap that left them both with broken noses. Anyhow, we fixed our mistake and that was that.

So, I will miss you, Bob, and I'll have to look for that lost gold mine and pretend you are along—that's the only way I'll locate it again.

Memories of Trapper Bob

By Carol Bratvold

Editor's Note:
After the previous article appeared in the *Yukon News*, I received this wonderful letter:

Dear Sam;

Friday's *Yukon News* doesn't arrive out here in Tagish until Monday, so I've just finished reading your article that appeared in the May 24th edition. By now, I suspect that others have told you that Bob Russell passed away earlier this month. We attended his funeral in Dawson on Saturday, May 11th.

The enclosed is the only real eulogy offered about Bob. It was read out during the service and not much was added. The minister did try to say a few words about how his children had grown up and had played with Bob and Judy's children and that he had gone hunting with Bob once. Still, there was so much missing...

Perhaps things were left unsaid because if you really wanted to talk about Bob, you'd have to mention some of his more famous antics, like the time he drove over himself with his own pickup or the time he drove up a tree. I saw that one myself, so know of its authenticity. Maybe nobody wanted to say anything that would offend his family, who understandably, were very distraught over his passing, but in order to do justice to Bob's memory, you'd have to at least acknowledge the more colourful side of his character. In fact, it was that very tenacity and roughness that was part of his charm, if I can get away with calling it that. Of course, there were times when the angels themselves would shudder at Bob's shenanigans, so the rest of us who are considerably less than angels, might have felt like throttling him on occasion. But somehow, you just knew that Bob's toughness had been developed over years of trying to survive in an equally tough landscape. How many of us, on a cold winter day, could drag ourselves miles out of the bush after suffering a broken hip? Bob did; in fact, that's how he lost his toes.

Long before I met Bob, I'd heard stories about him from my father-in-law, Herman Bratvold, and my husband, Larry. Herman and Bob ran fish wheels on the river in Dawson and often hunted together. Larry and Bob also ice-fished on LeBarge and hunted together in the 70's when we were living in Dawson. They told me of Bob's exploits as a hunter. How he would climb right inside a freshly-gutted caribou in order to get closer to the herd

and how he would crawl on his belly through the bush in order to shoot a bear. As soon as he spotted or smelled a bear, he was determined to shoot it. He had developed a definite dislike for bears after they tore up the meat cache on his trap line. They also told me about Bob's pet raven, who would hop along the back of the couch and would forage for critters on the heads of unsuspecting guests. The raven met his doom when one such guest, upon receiving a rather energetic peck on the noggin, reached back and wrung the bird's neck.

We were always made to feel welcome at Bob and Judy's place. They may not have had much back then, but they always shared what they did have even if it was just a few good laughs during a game of Monopoly, which Bob loved to play, as long as he didn't lose.

One time, we borrowed Bob's truck to go hunting up the Dempster. We were either ignorant of the state of Bob's trucks or else we were desperate. I just don't recall which now, but I do recall that the truck broke down about 60 miles out (the road only went about 70 miles then) and we hadn't seen anyone ahead of us on the road that morning. We had shot two caribou, packed them back to the pickup, gulped down some coffee, and climbed into the truck to leave. Nothing. The motor wouldn't even turn over. Fortunately, someone did come along and they stopped to give us a boost to get us going. After a few such incidents during our travels with Bob, we learned that his vehicles were held together with nothing more than haywire and curses.

Bob Russell and his daughter behind their home in Dawson, 1985. [S.H. photo]

We'll always treasure our memories of times with Bob and his family. I hope you and others who knew him will also remember him befittingly, for this man from Fortymile was one of our Territory's colourful gems. None of us seem to realize it at the time, but when we're crashing through the bush with each other, looking for the, "gold in them thar hills," as you say in your article, quite often the real gold is deposited in the adventures that we share together with people like Bob.

Yours truly,
Carol Bratvold
Tagish, Yukon

ZERO

By Anton Money

The six dogs pulling the fur-laden toboggan cleared the timber and swept out onto the frozen Toad River in Northern British Columbia. The weaving string of dogs straightened out, their bushy tails wagging over their backs, as they hit the home stretch. Pete Colson, the trapper, following on his small snowshoes, broke into a trot as the jerkline (a twenty-foot line fastened to the bow of the toboggan) tightened in his heavy mitt and trailed in the snow behind him.

As the weak sun of late December sank below the high peaks, the piercing cold dropped to forty-five below zero.

"Seven miles to go," Pete thought aloud. He visioned the comfort and warmth of the home cabin which he had built five years before. It was a cozy cabin, built of spruce logs, close to a small creek which flowed into the Toad River. The cabin stood in a heavy stand of timber, so that while it was only a few hundred yards from the river, it was protected from the winds and cold of the river ice. The new Alaska Highway had been constructed and now passed within three miles of his cabin, but with no access road to it he felt as isolated as if he was quite alone in the wilderness.

He led a tough and hard life alone and trapping for furs. From his cabin the trapline made a hundred-mile loop following the Toad River to its junction with the mighty Liard River, then circling back through the timber and higher ground, across frozen muskeg and swamp, to come out again onto the Toad River seven miles below his cabin. He had the whole of that vast chunk of wilderness to himself. The trails he had cut out and blazed were the only trails in the area except for the many game trails. Moose and caribou abounded everywhere and afforded him an ample supply of meat for himself and his six sled dogs.

Along the trail, at intervals about a day's travel apart, he had built overnight shelters. Mostly they consisted simply of a lean-to made of brushy spruce limbs, built in a well-sheltered stand of timber to be out of the wind. Two of the overnight stops were well-built small log cabins with a good "cache" built nearby. This cache was a miniature cabin built twelve or fifteen feet above the ground on a log platform supported by four posts. It was too high, even when the snow was four feet deep, for animals to leap onto the platform. Each post was wrapped with a length of metal stovepipe near the top to prevent rodents climbing to the platform. In each cache he kept a handful of emergency supplies. Usually a pound of tea, some rice, sugar, salt, matches, a few extra traps perhaps, and a quarter of moose

meat or caribou. If a severe blizzard came up, or he injured himself, or he broke a snowshoe, such temporary camps could mean a lot, possibly save his life. Where large creeks entered the river, flowing down from the high mountains on either side, he had cut trails along their banks to timberline. Here in the high country, he trapped colonies of beautiful, lustrous-furred marten and fisher. On the lower slopes he caught lynx and fox, coyote and wolverine, and along the river many more furs, including mink and otter, and in spring the beaver and muskrat.

It meant mushing his team of six huskies along his trapline and not seeing another human, not even an Indian neighbour for months on end. But he was not lonely. His hard life had built a tough and muscular body, while the clean living, exhilarating cold, pine-scented air, and pure water had developed in him a superabundance of good health beyond the understanding of city dwellers. He found delight and pride in his understanding of Nature. In his trapping he knew almost every family of beasts, big or small, along his trapline. He harvested them as if he owned a huge fur farm, always leaving enough "breeders" to assure continuity. He understood the necessary balance of nature and worked to keep it so, while he found a happy companionship with all living things. The beauty of the high mountains, the quiet of the wilderness, and the whispering of the trees around his campfire at night; all these things seeped into him unconsciously, so that his inner being was at peace with the world.

Normally he made the long circular trip in about twelve days or two weeks, but circumstances varied, and he might be delayed by an unusually good catch of furs or a heavy snowfall which covered his set traps, necessitating digging them out and re-setting and baiting them afresh. Once he had been forced to lie up in his little cabin near the Liard River for a whole week while temperatures remained lower than 60 below zero. In such temperatures dogs working hard pulling a sled will breathe deeply and freeze their lungs. His years of experience had made him completely self-reliant and extraordinarily capable.

I was building a hunting lodge and stopping place on the Alaska Highway, less than two hundred miles south of the Yukon border in the northern end of the Rockies. The trail to Pete's cabin turned off the highway twenty-five miles south, so we were close neighbours. I had spent thirty years in the far north country mining for gold in isolated areas, using my dog team as transportation, before remarrying and starting The Village Inn, as we named our lodge.

Pete had arrived at our lodge one day soon after we had started construction, and he had become our handyman during the summer months the last three years. He left us in early fall each year to return to his hundred-mile long trapline. He was a powerfully built man of about forty years and had lived in that wilderness area most of his life. We enjoyed his easygoing ways and joviality, as well as the tremendous amount of work he

could accomplish helping us in our building.

When Pete had left us in the fall, Jerry, my wife, had invited him to spend Christmas week with us as he had done the year before.

Now, as Pete's dogs pulled to one side of the familiar river under a high-cut bank, he began planning his Christmas fun. He would first stretch his catch of furs on their stretching boards, he thought, then mush the twenty-five miles to The Village Inn to relax over Christmas, now only three days away. It would be good to get off the trail awhile and hear some voice other than his own. They rounded a bend in the river and came out on a wide open stretch. He sang lustily to the dogs, as was his habit when nearing home. The dogs responded by picking up greater speed and fairly leaping over the ice.

The wind, sweeping down from the high peaks, struck the river and funnelled between the timbered slopes either side, whipping his parka against his body. Snow dust in huge swirls spiralled off the surface of the river, enveloping man and dogs. They were tired, very tired, and although the smoothness of the river ice made it easier going than in the timber, the biting wind cut at their faces, tearing at the load and fighting against their final sweep to the home cabin.

A driving blizzard, following an early freeze-up last fall, had drifted the snow over air holes in the river ice, leaving them indiscernible. A big logjam sticking up through the ice appeared ahead. To pull around the deep drift trailing from it, Pete shouted at the leader, "Gee Blackie, gee over...," but with terrifying suddenness, the snow gave way beneath his feet. Plunging down for nearly his full six feet, losing his balance as he fell, he sprawled in two feet of icy, rushing water. The snow over the air hole had been enough to support the dogs and the eight-foot run of the toboggan, but the weight of the man's two hundred pounds had been too much. The river rushed over his legs and up his arms as the current tore at him, trying to sweep him under the ice.

Awkwardly, he struggled to his feet. As his head came above the edge of the ice, he saw the dogs pulling steadily upstream. He had lost his hold on the jerkline as he fell, and the dogs, feeling no pull, had kept their steady pace upriver. He screamed into the wind, "Whoa Blackie. Blackie, for God's sake, whoa!" Panic seized him as he saw the dogs pull around a far bend.

Desperate now, and realizing his extreme danger, he scrambled out of the water, dragging his slush-covered snowshoes onto the ice. He started to run, but the snowshoes, made clumsy by fast freezing slush, threw him off-balance, and he fell heavily. His soaking wet drill parka and pants stiffened like boards as they froze in the cutting wind. Lurching to his feet, the water poured from his gauntlet moose skin mitts, and the bitter cold of 45 below pierced like living coals of fire.

Years of living the hard life had taught him many things, and he knew that he must move fast or die! Could he, without an axe, get a blazing fire

going quickly enough to prevent the deadly chill creeping into his body - before the paralyzing numbness of the penetrating cold set in? He knew of men who had fallen through the ice and been swept under by the fast flowing river. He knew of others found frozen solid who had not made it to their cabins. These were the risks a man had to take; these were the things he learned to guard against from years of experience. He tried to twist his mocassined feet out of the snowshoes, but the ties were already frozen solid. Throwing off his ice covered mitts, he grabbed the sheath knife at his belt and, barehanded, slashed the icy ties. Leaving his worthless mitts and snowshoes on the river ice, he started for the protection of the trees on the shore, away from the biting wind.

Stumbling through the last of the snowdrifts along the river bank, the cold already numbing his feet and hands, he floundered to the shelter of a big spruce to build a fire. He grabbed at the small, dried limbs near its base for kindling, but his numb fingers would not grasp the tiny twigs. All feeling had already left them. Quickly, he smashed down whole dry boughs with his arms and laid-them at the base of the tree, crushing them to kindling with his foot, then stacking them into a bundle as best he could. Groping in his side pocket for the matchbox, he scooped until the box lay in his unfeeling palm. Mercifully, the box was still dry. He jabbed the box against his left thumb, sliding it open. His frozen fingers could not grip, the matches, so he tried an old-timer's trick. With his teeth he gripped half-a-dozen matches. Then, squatting down, he got the box between the palms of both hands and pulled the box edge across the matches held in his teeth. They flared, but as he pushed his face into the pile of kindling, his indrawn breath made little tongues of flame leap up his nostrils, and he coughed, choking on the fumes. The flame went out. Momentary panic flared in him, but he felt the haunting arms of death reaching out, and he quieted. If he failed to get a fire started he knew that he could never make the five miles to the home cabin. In forty-five below, the cold steals quickly into the marrow of a man's bones, muscles stiffen and become useless. There is no pain, just numbness, but it is persistent and spreads rapidly throughout the body. A great drowsiness creeps into the brain, destroying the will to fight, and the mind becomes obsessed with hallucinations and the great desire to sleep.

Very slowly now, he made every move with meticulous care. He scooped up the nearly empty box and blew the dry snow from it. He bit into the ends of the remaining matches. Again, he knelt beside the pile of kindling. Very carefully, he dragged the box across the match ends. Again they flared, burning his nose, his lips, but he paid no heed as he pushed the flame against the tiny twigs. With deathlike patience and determination he held his breath until a tiny flame licked out in the kindling. It spread to the twigs above, then began to fade. Quickly, he bent close and blew on it until it flared brightly. From long habit he reached out to push another piece into place. His lifeless hand jabbed clumsily, dislodging a larger stick which

fell onto the flames, snuffing them out. He was stunned. He stared in abject horror at the little black smudge on the snow where the flame had been. The flame of life within him seemed to die as he stared hopelessly.

At last he stood and turned away. A deep quaking shook him. "Five miles," he said aloud, "five miles—I've got to make it."

He staggered back to the trail on the river made by the dogs as they headed for home. His arms hung useless and stiff. His numbing legs moved somehow along the trail, half walking, half dragging. He had almost no control over them. Every few yards, it seemed, he sank to his knees in the snow, but he fought on. The trail got a little firmer where the wind had swept the ice almost bare of snow, and for a short time he made several hundred yards without falling. Again drifts crossed the river, and he stumbled and fell, got up and went on, only soon to fall again. As time passed, drowsiness almost overcame him, and it took him longer to get up each time he felt the soft bed of the snow. The temptation to lie there seemed beyond his power to overcome, but slowly he willed himself to his feet. It was like walking on wooden stumps, pushing one lifeless leg into the snow mechanically, then dragging the other after him as he leaned forward to force the next step.

Every gasp of the frigid air seared his parched throat. Darkness fell suddenly as he plowed ahead the next mile, stumbling, cursing, only half knowing what he was doing.

Again he stumbled, this time over a half-hidden log. His face went into the soft snow, as if snuggling into a pillow, and he lay there licking snow like a dog, not feeling the wind or the terrible cold. His mind was becoming crazed as the cold penetrated ever deeper. His frost-rimmed eyes only half focused the outline of the trees along the shore. For a moment he thought he saw the log walls of his cabin, and he wondered vaguely why it was there and not hidden by trees. Then, slowly, it penetrated on his weakening brain that it was a huge rock near the edge of the ice, and the snow had drifted against it, leaving a vertical line of darkness, like the cabin wall.

Looking upriver, his body near total exhaustion and his brain now half-crazed, he saw the moon perched on the edge of a mountain slope, laughing at him. In the howling wind he thought he could hear the sound of its laughter, cold and cruel, like the scream of a mountain lion at bay. The sound whirled past him, then faded away downstream, whipped by the wind into eternity. Thoughts of his childhood flashed across his mind. As a man in a trance he was carried back through the years and with extraordinary clarity he could see his mother hoeing the garden patch in the early summer sunshine on their old homestead. The scene changed like the patterns of a kaleidoscope, and clearly he recalled a childhood Christmas where he was opening gifts with their bright tinsel wrapping. The picture faded, and he was reaching out to touch the long golden hair of his childhood sweetheart. Somehow he couldn't reach it; his hand was gone, and a terrifying loneliness swept over him. Only half-conscious now, he

looked upriver again. The moon had moved and was clearly scoffing at him as he watched the jeering face reflect the vastness of the wilderness for a thousand miles beyond.

Slowly, he staggered to his feet, the cold working ever deeper into his lungs, his bones. He reeled as he looked once again at the wavering, rising moon. He was moving very slowly now. All sense of time and distance had long left him. A drift pile appeared in front of him, but he had no power to avoid it. He stumbled into the logs, slithering down into the snow. The wind, like some living, tormented thing from Hell, screeched in the nearby treetops and whistled between the logs at his head. Without knowing how or why, he was moving again, staggering blindly, aimlessly across the ice. He knew no direction, no sense of pain or fear. All reasoning, all feeling had left him. He tripped again and went down. Slowly, he raised up on his bare hands, trying to force his legs under him, but he could not. He had made the last effort to rise. Silently, he slid onto the ice, his face falling across his outstretched arm.

The wind began piling the powdery snow against the motionless form.

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Jerry and I had everything ready for Christmas at The Village Inn, and we were looking forward to Pete's visit.

"Why don't you drive down to Pete's turn-off," Jerry suggested, "and snowshoe down to his cabin. He may be just getting ready to come here, and you could save him the twenty-five mile trip along the highway with his dogteam."

"I could do that yet today," I replied. "If Pete isn't home I'll leave a note to tell him I'll be down tomorrow evening to pick him up."

The road had a thin covering of hard packed snow, and I made the trip easily in the forty-below cold. Pulling over to the edge of the highway at Pete's mailbox, I covered the hood of the car with heavy robes, then snowshoed down Pete's trail the three miles to his cabin.

The snow was unbroken around the cabin since the storm eight days before, so Pete was due to come in. I lifted the latch and went into the little cabin. Finding a Coleman lantern, I lit it and touched a match to the ready-laid wood in the stove. I chopped open the frozen waterhole in the nearby creek and filled the coffee pot, thinking to dally awhile in case Pete should return that night.

Hardly was the pot on the stove when I heard the tinkling of sleighbells. I went out onto the porch, holding the lantern high. The eager, yelping dogs crossed the creek, making straight for the cabin, where they stopped in the glare of the light and flopped on their bellies.

No man followed them, which seemed strange. I went to Blackie, the leader, who remembered me, then examined the load. On top of the small bundle of furs was Pete's eiderdown sleeping bag, the whole covered with a canvas, while his rifle and axe were secured firmly under the lashings on top of the load. But where was Pete? A sudden fear gripped me. Something

was wrong here, something mighty wrong!

The moon was just rising as I listened intently for any telltale sound above the whistling of the wind in the treetops, but I heard nothing. I knew I must act and quickly. Going to the dogs, I shouted at them; then with a "Ha Blackie, ha 'round," the dogs leaped to their feet, and the faithful leader swung back alongside the toboggan. As the shaft dog pulled past, I jerked the line at the bow, and the toboggan swung easily behind the dogs. "Mush Blackie. Mush you Red," I shouted and thumped the rope end against the load. The dogs caught the urgency in my voice, and they swept out onto the river, over the trail they had just made coming in.

The moon shone clear in that terrible cold, glittering on the treacherous river ice. There were no tracks, except those of the dogs, which told me that Pete must be somewhere downriver. The wind died a little as the dogs ate up the miles. I had to shout at them and slap the rope end against the load frequently to keep the tired animals pulling away from home. We must have gone three miles when I saw the half-covered tracks leading into a drift-pile. I almost missed the huddled figure nearly buried under drifting snow.

Throwing the toboggan on its side to prevent the dogs from pulling away, I bent down to him. He appeared dead! Tearing open his stiff parka I listened. A faint heartbeat came through to my ear. Quickly, I unlashed the sleeping bag and laid it alongside the toboggan. Taking my belt knife I cut the frozen clothing mercilessly from Pete's body, like skinning a moose. I rolled the heavy body onto the sleeping bag and zipped it up. Somehow I found the strength to heave the unconscious form onto the load and lash it down.

The dogs understood. In spite of their tiredness, they put on a show of speed, and in less than half an hour we were back at the cabin. The fire, lit an hour before, had warmed the cabin, and I dragged Pete onto the bunk. For two hours I worked and sweated, bathing Pete's whole body with cold wet towels, massaging his legs, his arms, his chest. At last Pete opened his eyes. With consciousness came excruciating pain, the agony of frozen flesh thawing out. He groaned once in awhile and cried out as I worked life into the deadened limbs. With hot coffee Pete revived further, and I was able to get dry, warm clothes on him.

In spite of the pain he must have been enduring, Pete insisted on walking, with one arm over my shoulder, to climb back into the sleeping bag on the toboggan. The dogs had rested enough now and took the trail to the highway willingly. I staked out the dogs to trees and got Pete bundled in eiderdown and blanket in the back seat of the car. Almost immediately he fell asleep. The hundred odd miles to the hospital at Fort Nelson were past before Pete became fully awake again.

I waited patiently for the doctor's verdict. Would Pete lose his legs or arms, or just some fingers maybe?

Later a nurse brought me some coffee, saying that my friend would be all right.

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And so it came about that a year later, just before the bells of Christmas rang out throughout the civilized world, you might have seen a string of dogs, with big Blackie in the lead, break out of the timber and sweep down onto the river ice, their bushy tails waving furiously over their backs as they hit the home stretch. A man jog-trotted behind, but his gait was peculiar.

It throws a man out of proper balance to have no left hand and only part of a left foot.

Anton Money dragging a boat up the Hess River in about 1930. He lived many years in the Yukon and operated a highway lodge near Ft. St. John, B.C. during the early 1950s. He died two years ago in California, well over the age of 90.

This concludes the first issue of *The Yukoner Magazine*. In spite of our modern ways, the old Yukon spirit is still here to test us, as the incredible cold spell of last winter taught us. Some folks driving the new, plastic, computerized cars found themselves in as much difficulty as the character in Anton Money's tale of survival.

Already, we have more than enough stories to fill the next issue, but if anyone has a personal experience to relate or a character they want to write about, please send the story to us and it will find its way into these pages eventually. If possible, please enclose photos. **S.H.**