
THE
YUKONER
MAGAZINE
$4.95
• The Yukon's Most Famous Survival
• Klondike Nurse
• Sam McGee
• Johnny Friend of Watson Lake
• Kicked by a Dead Moose
ISSUE No.20

WHITEHORSE MOTORS

Ford

SALUTES

Originally from Prince George, B.C., Stu Macalister came to the Yukon at age 15 to work for Dalzeil Outfitters of Watson Lake. Since then he has trapped and logged all over the territory. His present headquarters are on a trapline near Old Crow, not far from the Arctic Circle.

This photo shows one of his summer homes, which he built out of canvas and wood near Marsh Lake.

ISSN NO. 1206-6974

Canadian Publications
Mail Registration
No. 08098
Postage paid at
Whitehorse, Yukon

Issue #20, January, 2002

www.yukoner.com

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Cover: Rena Fleming of Whitehorse, at the Gold Rush Inn restaurant, January, 2002. [S.H. photo]

Published four times annually by GreenInk Publishing
Whitehorse, Yukon.
Postage paid at Whitehorse, Yukon
Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 40019654
PAP Registration No. 08098
Website: www.yukoner.com e-mail: yukonermagazine@gmail.com
Publisher: Dianne Green Editor: Sam Holloway

From the Editor

In the last issue, I tried to go modern, with lots of white space and drop shadows and what have you. I'm sure a local graphic designer by the name of Mike Rice must have been very proud of me. However, I dropped all that and went back to the old format. The reason: all that fancy design work gave us less room for stories and photos. So here we go again, with every space used up, and no chance for any magazine design awards. Besides, the typeface we use is too big and dark and too easy to read. However, we'll stick with it, and this issue ought to come out fairly dark, because I found a new kind of ink for the old press that goes on very, very thick. Be sure to wash your fingers after reading it all.

This summer or next, your publisher and I, along with some friends, intend to float from here to Dawson City on a barge. It will be built right here in front of the print shop, and will be unsinkable.

I intend to make a wooden grid out of 2X12s, cover the bottom with plywood and sheet metal, then fill all the squares with liquid styrofoam. Then the bottom will have three White Pass railway rails bolted on, to act as a keel and to keep the bottom from getting smucked in.

Why all the precautions? Because I had a barge that fell apart on the Stewart River. It split across the front and I lost all my gold mining equipment, not to mention a quantity of black sand and gold. Got out with only my jeans and a pocket knife. It took about three years to pay off all the debts from that operation. That red barge became a chicken house on a farm outside Mayo, and it's still there as far as I know.

Now you can see why this new barge is going to be very well built. I can only see one problem: it might be so heavy that when we try to pull into Dawson in that 14-mile-an-hour current, it might go right on by and we'll wind up in Eagle, Alaska.

I will keep you posted on the progress of this adventure, starting with the construction. We might need help with naming it, and perhaps if I run a photo, some retired river person might send in a few tips on how to make it better.

As you know, we draw someone's name for a gold nugget from the list of renewals received between issues. This time the winner was Erson Castator of Bolton, Ontario.

Here is an actual-size photof Mr. Castator's nugget. Don't worry, you will receive plenty of notice when your subscription is due.

So long for now,
Sam

The Mail Run

Hello Dianne,

Have just finished (from cover to cover) my recently arrived October issue of the Yukoner. As a writer, I was fortunate enough to visit Whitehorse and Dawson City 40 plus years ago. My main reason for the visit was to visit the areas my maternal grandfather trod in his search for gold many years ago. Your magazine revives many memories including one of a small nugget I found in black sand but don't remember the area. I'll be 81 in November and I find that at this age one's memory is the first of three faculties I have lost. Don't remember the other two! Enclosed is my latest attempt at humour, which sells for $15.

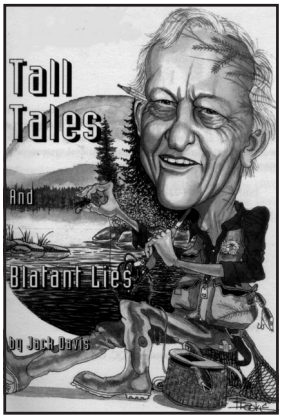
(For a copy of Jack's book our readers can write to the address below)

Jack Davis
270 Braidwood Ave
Peterborough, Ontario K9J 1V4

Dear Sam,

Enclosed is a renewal for two years of The *Yukoner Magazine*. It's a great little book, we read it from cover to cover and wish it were longer or came more often. Perhaps a little of good things is enough. I would like to correspond with someone in that area on a personal level. Do you know of a lady who may be interested in a pen pal? They all seem to work so hard just to exist I wonder does anyone have time for such outside interests? Keep up your good work.

Vera Wilkins
202-260 Winewood Ave East
Gravenhurst, Ontario P1P 1N4



Tall Tales And Blatant Lies, by Jack Davis

Dear Dianne Green,

I am in receipt of issues 18 and 19. I have read them both and enjoyed them very much. I am a boy of the North as my first 15 years were spent at Capreol, Ontario. I remember placer mining sites on the Vermillion River and test holes that I passed on a tote road on my way to the swimming beach on the Vermillion River. I was locomotive foreman for the CNR at Foleyet, Ontario from 1955 to 1959. I did a not of fishing on the lakes and rivers around the town. I also did a lot of hunting on the Jackfish River and thereabouts. I guess the similarity between northern Ontario and the Yukon is the reason I like your magazine so much. Thank you for the nugget that you sent to me. You may rest assured that I will

renew my subscription when the time comes.
Robert Lusk
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Sam & Dianne,

I sure enjoy the stories and articles on the people of the North, being born and raised in the Peace River country of Alberta. I have a keen awareness of the northern way of life. Mother Nature, with her four seasons, has a way of bringing out the true nature of a person. Summer droughts, bugs, winter blizzards and spring floods can instill in one a self-confidence like no other when the elements are met and conquered. Keep up the good work and I hope to see you in June (summer solstice).
Vincent Dupuis
Kelowna, B. C.

Greetings Dianne & Sam,

I have really been enjoying the stories I have been reading in No. 19 *Yukoner Magazine* but I would like to make a few comments on some of them if I may.

First, is there any reason why we are not told what towns those in the stories come from, except that they went up to the Yukon from Saskatchewan and Alberta, such as in the story about Andy Anderson, who apparently went there in 1924 from Alberta? I would have enjoyed it if his town had been named as I know them all so well and have visited them all over the years. I certainly believe the same as he did years ago when he said, "I don't like assistance. You have to honestly state everything you do. Information becomes accessible to other prospectors and mining companies. I couldn't be dishonest about what I write. It doesn't suite me to reveal business. Therefore, I foot my own bills." That is exactly how I feel in the year 2001, so I was glad to read his statement.

Then there is Tilly MacDonald, who was originally a nurse from Saskatchewan and, once again, I certainly know every town and city in that province. I quite admire her for breaking ranks and going north years ago to enjoy what she apparently enjoys doing but wonder what town she actually came from. (EDITORS NOTE: Tilly is from Lloydminster, Saskatchewan .)

I was very surprised that the parents of Robert Service lived on a farm near Vegreville, Alberta about 1911-1912 so phoned a radio announcer on duty today as he comes from Vegreville and he found the story interesting and will see what he can find in the Archives there soon. I heard that Robert Service had been buried near Airdrie, Alberta, just north of Calgary, that really surprised me as I have been wondering since why, but maybe his parents moved there, if that is where he was buried.

THE MAIL RUN

I really enjoyed the story re Dennis Mackie that I found most interesting and I am sure a radio manager here will find it very interesting too as he was right in on the ground floor when radio came to this part of the world and wrote a book on the history of radio lately.

I was rather concerned about the trip that Milan and Sue Heran had up there, and the fact that they actually stayed in a tent in black bear and grizzly country when both types of bears could have demolished their tent and themselves quickly too. Keep happy,

Lois Argue
Edmonton, Alberta

Dear Sir or Madam,

My connection with Whitehorse dates back to 1949 when I worked four months as a training geologist with the Geological Surveys of Canada with J. O. Wheeler as the party chief who was on leave from Columbia University working for his doctorate degree in geology.

On arrival in Whitehorse we had to high-tail to Carcross to catch a pack of ten horses used for packing our grub and equipment for mapping and prospecting for any minerals. We were a crew of six people, three rookie geologists, an 18-year-old cook who was a first year student at U. B. C. in geology and a professional packer, who taught us how to pack a horse with 150 pounds of grub, equipment and rocks that we gathered along geological routes.

Rounding up the horses was a hair-raising experience as these horses were quite wild as they were let go to fend for themselves in the fall until they were collared again in the spring. We made makeshift corrals out of trees and the trick was to drive them in the corral so we could halter them. We could not fool them by leaving some oats in the corral as they had forgotten what oats were for.

When we did corral them we had to halter them however, they were not that tame and they did not hesitate to rush at you and let go their hind legs flying towards you. However, we did corral them and all went well after that.

Our first camp was at Marsh Lake where we were hosted by Johnny Joe and his two daughters who served us goats' meat and entertained us with guitar and songs.

We were not allowed to ride horses and we prospected for minerals walking all the way to Lake La Barge. We scaled all the mountains all the way for a total journey of 1300 miles.

George Skoreyko
Calgary, Alberta

Hi Sam & Dianne,

Maybe you can use this little story in that wonderful little magazine. I once hard it one day when I was out on the trapline and copied it in my diary. Minus 30 today so I'm staying inside, day after tomorrow December 1st I'll be 90 years old and days like today that's how old I feel. Just a good day to write letters though. When I can get to Whitehorse again I'll buy a new typewriter, the old one went to the garbage dump.

I sure miss the trapline but have to admit it's a bit nicer here in Ross River with electricity, oil heat and running water. Much better for Mom and I. I get a lot of letters from all over via *The Yukoner*.

Rabbits crashed last winter and no fur signs here at all so I guess I'm done with trapping. I don't buy green bananas anymore. Been a good life though. We did have hard times back from 1929 to about 1935. Much better now. The natives gave us a real nice party and lots of presents on October 17th, our 70th anniversary. Best of everything to you both.

Tensley Johnston
Box 24
Ross River, YT Y0B 1S0

TO KILL A SHREW – Conversation heard over bush radio in 1980s

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 for all those mice and got them but there was a little shrew I couldn't catch so I decided to shoot it as they are supposed to be very poisonous if they bite you.

Yes, I guess a 22 wouldn't do much damage inside the cabin.

Well, as those shrews are dangerous, I decided to use the old 45-70 and I'm glad I had all that military training.

Why was that?

Well that old gun hadn't been cleaned for several years and for an hour after I shot I couldn't see or hear good.

I understand. Did you get the shrew?

Well I haven't looked good yet. I was looking for some boards to fix the floor but it's hard to walk with the floor so slanted as it is now. Somehow I put a bullet through 3 skillets, the teakettle and the coffeepot and all the cups and plates fell and broke too.

That's too bad but we will get more. Did you do any more damage?

Well, the shot had blown the main floor joist in two that's why the floor slanted and the dog was sleeping under it and I'd blown her tail off.

Well honey that's the way it goes. Anything else?

No. But you know there was a mouse in my sleeping bag and if that shrew had got in there and bit me I might wake up in the morning dead.

Oh, dear, I wouldn't want that to happen. Well, take care, Over and out.

When a small single-engine plane, with two people on board, stopped in Whitehorse to refuel on a cold mid-winter day in 1963, no-one could have forseen the incredible saga which was about to unfold.

Pilot Ralph Flores and his passenger Helen Klaben were returning to the south-western United States from Fairbanks in a single-engine Howard aircraft. They picked up fuel in Whitehorse and took off, bound for their next stop - Fort St. John.

Somewhere near Watson Lake, however, the plane went missing. A massive air search turned up no sign of the plane or its occupants. When the search was called off in mid-February, the temperature was -40 to -50°F. They were given up for dead.

In the bush south of Watson Lake, the little plane lay crumpled. It had clipped some trees as Flores flew low in a heavy snowstorm, looking for the Alaska Highway. Klabens left arm was broken and she had severe cuts and bruises. Flores had a broken jaw, cracked ribs and many cuts.

On the plane they had four cans of sardines, two cans of tuna, some fruit cocktail and some crackers. They had no axe, no rifle and no sleeping bags. Flores built a lean-to out of a small tarpaulin and used seat cushions from the plane as bedding. The outlook was bleak.

About two weeks after crash, Flores constructed some home-made snowshoes, and painfully trekked for four days to a frozen beaver pond where he stamped out a huge SOS in the snow.

Near the end of March, 49 days after the crash, Frank George, on board

a small plane piloted by Chuck Hamilton, looked out the window and spotted the SOS in the clearing. Amazingly, Flores had had the presence of mind to stamp an arrow in the snow pointing in the direction of their make-shift camp.

The next day, Hamilton and Jack McCallum flew a rescue team to the site. They landed on the beaver pond and followed the arrow through the bush a few miles, where they discovered a miracle. Klaben and Flores were alive. Both had

Ralph Flores' plane after it cut a swath through the forest

serious frostbite and injuries. Both had lost a great deal of weight. Yet they were alive. Forty-nine days of numbing cold, lack of food and life-threatening injuries had not broken their spirit or will to live.

They were taken to hospital in Whitehorse where they recovered nicely from their injuries and their ordeal. It was truly one of the most incredible survival stories in the annals of Canadian history.

Ralph Flores and Helen Klaben on their arrival at the Watson Lake hospital.

Ralph Flores being helped off the plane at Whitehorse. Army Beach resident Laverne Randall on the far left. [Whitehorse Star photo].

Helen Klaben at the Whitehorse Hospital. [Whitehorse Star photo]

In the Years Since the Rescue...

By Sam Holloway

The other day (in December, 2001) I went to Bob Cameron's house to look at what he recovered from the Ralph Flores wreckage site. Bob is the Yukon's preeminent aircraft historian and has a large collection of artifacts, photos, slides, and information about the Yukon's aviation history.

He showed me the tire that Flores had cut up. According to the story, Flores was trying to fashion a slingshot out of it. This seems unlikely, but just the fact that he cut a long strip from the thick rubber tire at minus 30 degree temperatures, using a knife or something with a jagged edge, shows he had tremendous strength and determination.

Bob also had the old oil can with traces of red paint in it, the same paint Helen used to write the S O S sign on the wing span. There were also a tool box and a slightly bent control column. These are all that remain in the Yukon of one of the world's most famous survival epics—and it is likely all we will ever have, but I could be wrong about that.

In September of 1998, Ralph Flores' three offspring arrived in the Yukon to visit the crash site and to re-live some of the conditions their father weathered during his 49 days with Helen Klaben in the snow-bound wilderness. The crash site is actually in British Columbia, about 160 kilometers (100 miles) south of Watson Lake, Yukon.

Their father died in September, 1997. He had spent his life working as a mechanic for airlines in the U.S. and only flew aircraft as a hobby. His eldest son, Ralph Junior, was 11 when his father's plane went missing. In later years he helped his dad negotiate story rights for a TV movie made in 1975

Artifacts from the Flores wreckage site: a Craftsman toolbox, a control column, the oil can that Klaben used to paint the SOS, the tire that Flores cut up. At the back is part of the SOS and wood-and-fabric wing span that Bob Cameron took great care to preserve and which he hopes to display at the Transportation Museum.

starring Ed Asner and Sally Struthers. Ralph Jr. has been involved in the film industry ever since.

Frank, the second eldest, became an airline pilot and once faced down a hijacker who wanted to divert the plane to Cuba. Lisa, the youngest, became a financial analyst. When they arrived in Whitehorse in 1998, they contracted Trans-North Air to help them locate the plane. Bob Cameron became their friend and mentor in the project. Chris Guichon, their helicopter pilot, was later killed in a tragic accident on a glacier.

Even using fairly accurate coordinates, finding a 35-year-old crash site would be difficult. They flew back and forth over the area until Chris mentioned they would have to return to Watson Lake—fuel was getting low. With about ten minutes' search time remaining, Lisa, facing backward at the time, spotted the wreckage lying amongst the trees on a mountainside.

She screamed, and at a spot two kilometres from the site, as the helicopter hovered, Bob Cameron jumped down and hacked a circle in the undergrowth so the chopper could land.

In dense brush, they camped overnight and next day hiked to the crash site where they cut out another landing pad. Although it wasn't cold, black flies, mosquitoes and dense brush made their journey one to remember.

They stepped over a tire that Bob Cameron picked up and showed them—the very one their father had cut a piece out of, all those years before. At last they stood beside the plane, and the three siblings said over and over during later interviews that this was a tremendous spiritual experience for them all.

They found two sardine tins and other leftovers from their father's sojourn in that very spot. Frank decided he might rebuild the airplane and

The Flores wreck as first seen by the expedition.

Trans-North flew it out to the highway in three loads and it was trucked to Watson Lake. He promised that if the rebuild project didn't work out, he would send the aircraft back to the Yukon for the Transportation Museum in Whitehorse. The last we heard of the old Howard, it was sitting beside a highway in Missouri, and was finally moved into a garage somewhere in the state.

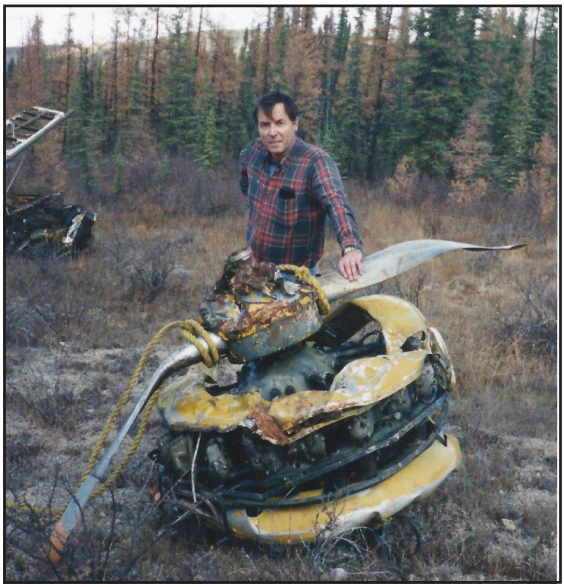
In the three years since they left the Yukon, no one in the Flores family has answered letters, faxes, e-mails or phone calls. The fate of the Howard is unknown at this time.

Helen Klaben

Helen was last seen in the Yukon during July of 1996. She was working for the Sierra Club on a project to restore an old trail near Kathleen Lake in Kluane National Park. At the time she was 54 years old and as vivacious as ever.

Her 49 days with Ralph Flores had changed her life forever, she said. She had gone from total isolation in the wilderness to the mad world of celebrity. In the year following the rescue, she appeared on the cover of LIFE Magazine, and on Weekend Magazine in Canada. She said newspaper reporters were climbing through the window at her hospital room in Whitehorse, and when she got to another hospital in New York, an agent contacted her about publishing a book of her adventure.

She did just that. It was called, *"Hey, I'm Alive,"* published by McGraw-Hill. She used the royalties from the book to put herself through college. Upon graduating, she became an associate editor at Macmillan Publishing.



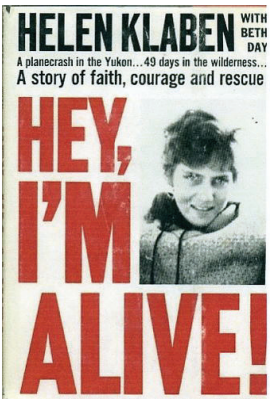
Bob Cameron with the engine from the Howard

She and Ralph Flores were hired as technical advisors on the TV movie made in 1975, at which time she was in the Yukon for a short visit.

In 1967, she married a New York stockbroker, had two sons, and then was divorced. She moved to California in 1971, took up exercising and became very fit. She and Flores remained friends and she attended his 50th wedding anniversary in Springfield, Missouri.

At the time of her famous rescue, reporters commented that "although she was filthy, she

was very pretty." In 1996, she was as pretty and vivacious as ever, minus the filthy part of course. She again commented that, even in the extreme cold, Ralph would not cuddle with her to keep warm. At the time she was 21 and beautiful. It seemed that 33 years later, she was still amazed at the strength of his religious convictions.



Ralph Flores had his flying license revoked after the rescue. The Federal Aviation Agency cited him with 12 violations of the Aeronautical Safety Code. The worst of these infractions was his was taking off in bad weather and not having proper survival gear on board. Twice he descended from 11,000 feet into invisible conditions among mountain terrain, even though he had no training in instrument flying. The final engine failure was caused by his turning the selector switch on to an empty tank. Had this not happened, he might have been able to climb above the mountains again and keep going.

However, the same religious faith that caused him to think he could fly the airplane through a snowstorm over strange country without mishap—was also a big factor in their survival. He kept believing they would be found and so, by cutting down trees with a hammer and chisel, was able to keep them from freezing to death. Helen too had a strong faith in her God.

The fact that both were overweight also played a large part in their staying alive. Helen lost 45 pounds but did not appear too gaunt in the photos taken after their rescue.

Whether you believe in God or believe in Luck, one of these was at work when the plane hit the mountainside without killing them both. But again, another factor was at work here: the Howard aircraft was a particularly strong craft, and old pilots say any other would have disintegrated and crushed itself on impact.

It is indeed up to the gods we believe in to judge when our time on earth is over.

In the early 1980s. I worked for a power company in the Keewatin District of the Canadian Arctic. Keewatin is an Inuit word that means "Land of the Wind." In that treeless expanse of rock and tundra and thousands of pot-hole lakes, a blizzard could appear from any direction in an instant—and all visibility was swallowed by the driving snow.

I became friends with a Pentecostal minister who flew a battered-looking twin-engine Piper Apache aircraft between the far-flung settlements of the district.

Had they made a movie about Bill, they would have starred him in it. He was tall, very handsome, with a magnetic personality. He had a lovely blonde wife and two children at Rankin Inlet who worried about him all the time. When his plane would land at Coral Harbour, where I was stationed at

the time, the entire village rushed to meet him, crying, "Bill is here! Oh, oh, Bill is here!"

Old Father Kayapik (which was his Inuit name, I knew not his real name) would sit alone in the Catholic church he had tended there on that lonely island for 40 years. Bill had enticed away every member of his congregation.

Quite often when Bill flew in, I was at the airport maintaining the diesel generators that lit up the runway lights. I asked him a couple of times if he was going to fix the oil leaks on his plane. It was always streaked with oil that dripped onto the snow as it sat there waiting for him. At least once he landed with only three minutes of fuel left.

We never talked about religious matters, only about engines and snow conditions and so forth. But I did question him about his risk-taking in that old beater of a plane. He showed me the cockpit and a small sign pinned to the dash that read: "Jesus is my Co-pilot."

He had one hundred percent faith in his flying abilities and in his mission among the people of the tundra. One day he left Coral Harbour carrying five members of his church, enroute to Repulse Bay. The weather closed in behind him, it closed in at Repulse Bay, and he had too little fuel to fly them to another settlement. They went down in flat country with hundreds of small, frozen lakes everywhere you might look. Search crews found no survivors when they finally located the wreckage.

Lisa, Frank, and Ralph Flores Jr., Bob Cameron, right. [Chris Guichon photo]

Klondike Nurse

By Eric Jamieson

By the time the poet, Robert Service, had quit Dawson City, Yukon, the gold that he so cleverly described in verse was all but a faded memory. He left a legacy, however, that was rich if not richer than the yellow metal that tarnished many a man's soul. He believed that the land was both infinitely harsh and hauntingly beautiful and that if it held any promise beyond that of its material wealth, it lay somewhere in the realm of romance. And write of romance he did. So successful was he, in fact, that the lure of the north became irresistible to many.

It was probably a little of that which persuaded a young Vancouver nurse, Jean Bredenberg (nee Gray), to board a CPR ferry for Skagway in 1936. She was on her way to Dawson City to accept her first nursing assignment away from St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver where she trained. The depression had cut a swathe through health care, eliminating jobs and reducing wages of those fortunate enough to still be employed.

"There wasn't much nursing then," Jean recalled. "It was still the depression and there wasn't much money around. When I first finished my training I got $30 a month and my room and board and then sometime within the year they gave me five dollars more. Then, the Sisters of Providence asked me if I'd like to go to Comox for $65 plus room and board. I thought to myself, 'I'm going to see if I can get something else.' Well, three weeks later they phoned me again and asked me if I'd like to go to Dawson City. I said, 'I'll take it.' It was for $85 a month."

There was one condition: Jean would have to stay one full year or repay the hundred dollars allocated her for travel costs. It was June when she left Vancouver and she was as excited as any miner had been decades earlier. "It was partly the wage and partly the thrill of adventure," she recalled.

Landing at the historic settlement of Skagway four days later, which less than 40 years earlier had been nothing more than a muddy tent camp from which thousands of miners had embarked for the gold fields, Jean stepped aboard the White Pass and Yukon Railroad for the next stage of her

journey north. The train, powered by a small steam locomotive, laboriously pulled two passenger coaches up into the rocky White Pass.

Early in the journey the engine chuffed past Slippery Rock, a large slab of glaciated granite into which the tracks had been precariously blasted in 1898. This, and the 250-foot tunnel just past mile 15, was testament to the rail engineer's ingenuity. "I remember that the tracks literally clung to the edge of the mountain – one woman was simply terrified – and along the way you could see parts of the original trail where men and horses had struggled years before," Jean remembered.

Just north of the tunnel, but 800 treacherous feet below lay the infamous Dead Horse Gulch where hundreds of exhausted pack horses had expired or were slaughtered at the hands of harried and obviously merciless packers. At White Pass Summit, altitude 2,865 feet, the fourth station on the approximate 111-mile line to Whitehorse, the train steamed through a riot of shattered granite boulders crushed during the last ice age.

Four stations beyond the summit, the train pulled into Bennett Station where Jean detrained for lunch in the cavernous White Pass Dining Room. Lake Bennett, the head of navigable Yukon waters, was at one time a vibrant community where 7,000 makeshift boats had been hastily constructed to move miners and their supplies one step closer to their destiny 500 miles to the north. As Jean looked across the glacial-green lake, it reflected a calm that belied its frenzied past.

After lunch, the rail journey continued and by late afternoon the train arrived at Whitehorse Station. The following day Jean caught the riverboat, *Casca*, to Dawson City. Owned by the British Yukon Navigation Company, the 1,079-ton sternwheeler was the same vessel that had transported Laura Beatrice Berton, mother of the Canadian author, Pierre Berton, to Dawson in 1907. Three-storeyed, white, with a forward stack, bright red paddle wheel and decorative fretwork gracing her pilothouse, she was the flagship of the company.

Leaving Whitehorse, the *Casca* entered Lake Laberge, made famous by Robert Service in his poem, *The Cremation of Sam McGee*. The story goes that Dr. Sugden, who later befriended the young bank clerk turned poet, was summoned by the North West Mounted Police at Tagish Post to look in on a man who lived on Lake Laberge and who was very ill with scurvy. By the time Dr. Sugden arrived at the miner's cabin, the man was dead. It being the middle of the winter, the ground was too frozen to bury him, so he hauled his body to the paddle wheeler, *Olive May*, which was frozen into the ice at the head of the lake, and cremated the miner in the firebox. The rest was immortalized in Service's fertile imagination.

Leaving the lake, the *Casca* entered the Thirty Mile stretch of the Yukon River, a raging, rock-studded cataract where many a vessel had foundered. Once through, she frequently pulled into the bank to take on wood to fuel her insatiable furnace or to embark and disembark passengers. "The wood was precut and stacked at intervals along the river," Jean recalled. "It was magnificent all the way, and then we came to Five Finger

The hospital staff, with Jean on the far left.

Rapids where I didn't know if we were going to find the right passage or not."

Later that year the *Casca* went down in Thirty Mile and a new *Casca*, a 1,300-ton vessel, was launched at Whitehorse to replace her. But the Yukon's paddle wheel days were coming to a close. Not yet an anachronism, but already economically prohibitive, the service these vessels had so efficiently provided was quickly being replaced by more practical aircraft. As well, the population had thinned considerably from the Yukon's heyday – by 1939 there were fewer than 5,000 people in the whole territory. But, as Jean recalled, "all the while I was there the paddle wheelers were working the Yukon River. It was all very exciting at that point because after breakup the riverboats would come in with supplies we had missed all winter, like fresh fruit or vegetables."

Not quite two days later Jean arrived at Dawson. "My first impression was how beautiful it was. The town was right on the river and rising up directly behind it was this mountain we called the Dome that was mostly bare because of a slide. On June 21st or 22nd I climbed it and watched the sun set just before midnight only to rise again a couple of hours later. It was daylight all night – you could sit out and read the paper until two in the morning. But, winter, of course, was just the opposite."

The hospital, where Jean worked, had one doctor, three nurses, a nursing sister and a general man who the doctor taught to take X-rays and give anesthetics. "We nurses lived on the third floor of the hospital and we worked two weeks of nights and a month of days," Jean remembered. "We worked from seven to seven with two hours off in the afternoon. And, when we were on nights we worked from seven until noon and then came back at seven that night and worked all night. When we came off nights we had one day off.

"The hospital had about 25 or 30 beds as I recall, and in the bottom floor there were all the old miners. They would mostly just sleep there and we would look in on them to make sure they were all right. They were elderly people and they just came in for the night or they stayed all winter. The hospital was primitive by today's standards. We all had our own syringes that we had to boil every time we used them. And I remember these great big pills, cod liver oil or something, but I don't recall how anyone ever got them down.

"I remember a couple of cases. One night, when I was on duty, I went to the door and there was a Mountie there with this chap who said he'd lost his toe and, as they entered, the chap pulled the toe out of his pocket to show it to me. And then there was the man who fell into a snow bank and, when they brought him in, he had to have both hands amputated. They were frozen. It was pretty terrible. "I met my husband, Chris, in the hospital in 1939. He'd had an accident on a gold dredge. Most of them were shut down for the season, but he was still working on one of Yukon Consolidated's rigs on Upper Sulphur Creek. It was a freezing night in October and he'd been checking to see if the tailings were freezing on the stacker – if the tailings

froze it could tip the dredge – when somehow he caught his sleeve. He as carried over the stacker and in the process his left arm was ripped off. He landed on the tailing pile in the middle of the dredge pond and was yelling but nobody heard him so he got up and made his way across a plank to shore. Herman, the winch operator, saw him and got him to the first aid shack but when the first aid man saw him he promptly passed out. It took three hours for the doctor to get there and by that time Chris had lost a lot of blood."

Dr. Allan Duncan, the attending physician, described the incident in his book, *Medicine, Madams & Mounties*, as follows: "Geoff Home and I left Dawson as soon as we got the telephone call. It was pitch dark, snowing lightly…When we reached the dredge we found Bredenberg on a repair bench. He was covered in blankets. Blood was everywhere. His severed arm had been placed on a blanket by his side. When we looked in the gaping hole at the shoulder we could see the remains of the shattered head of the arm bone. The large arm artery had retracted well up into the arm pit and the fact that his arm was pulled off, rather than cut, had probably saved his life….

"We took him back to the hospital in the pick-up…We needed blood and got some that matched from an RCMP officer. Later, under ether anaesthesia, we cleaned up the wound and trimmed the flaps of skin. Then I made the mistake that almost cost Chris his life. The wound looked so neat and clean that I put in a few stitches to tidy it up. Not many, but too many. Chris did very well for a few days, but then one morning I smelled the pungent smell of gas gangrene as I came to his bed…. Immediately we moved Chris out of the ward. He seemed to recover at first but in a few days he got worse. We thought we were going to lose him until we remembered our ace in the hole. Some months before we had used a new drug called sulphanilamide to treat gonorrhoea. Our preparation, called Prontosil, worked very well… and Bredenberg survived to live out his normal life."

"He was in the hospital for four-and-a-half months," Jean recalled. "He needed time to heal so he decided to go back to England. His brother, Tony, didn't want to take him so Tony suggested I go. Chris was a big man, but by the time he got out of the hospital he was only 140 pounds, and weak. He had to have his arm dressed and he couldn't do it by himself, so I went with him. That was April 1939. War was declared in September and we came back in November. We were married by then.

"We went right to Dawson and Chris went back to work for Yukon Consolidated, only this time we were out at Granville, about 60 miles from Dawson. We bought a one-room cabin built on skids by an old bachelor. We lived there until '42. The cabin had electricity but no water – we had to walk a few hundred feet to the creek for water, and in the winter I just melted snow.

"It was probably a little like what Chris' parents had experienced when they were there. Chris' dad, Edward, went in '98 with the first rush and he took his wife with him. She had three children out there on the creeks. And

I can remember her telling me that Edith, her eldest, was in a crib with an umbrella over her because the rain was dripping through the roof. Miners would go by and they always stopped in and had a few nuggets for the baby. It must have been tough in the cold of winter, though.

"But, it was the cold, often below – 60F, as well as the isolation, that brought us all together. I used to curl and then I tried snowshoeing and skiing. The whole town was very friendly and we were invited to different homes for dinner and sometimes in the afternoons for cards and tea. Dinner parties were very elegant affairs and most people dressed, women in gowns and men in jackets and ties. And then there was the RCMP ball where the Mounties wore their red serge. We'd all get dolled up for that.

"In '42 we left the Yukon for good and came to Vancouver Island. Chris never wanted to go back. I guess it was because of his arm. When he was looking for a job he went to see Mr. Filberg, the logging contractor, and they spent the whole afternoon together. Mr. Filberg's father had gone to the Yukon from Wrangell in '98 like Chris's dad, so they had that in common. So, after they finished chatting, he said, 'go over to Ladysmith and they'll put you to work,' so Chris was on the next ferry and then I came over a bit later. He worked there until he retired in 1973. One day, after he was retired and I was still working at the hospital in Ladysmith, one of the doctors came in and said 'now I've seen everything; I just saw a one-armed man wheeling a wheelbarrow.' Well, that was Chris. He had a strap attached to one arm of the wheelbarrow that he'd put over his shoulder. It worked fine. He really wasn't handicapped at all."

Jean, widowed in 1983, passed away on May 22, 1998 close to the home that she and her husband shared for 40 years. Although far from the Yukon, her memories of that time were as bright as the glint of gold under the midnight sun. "I've often thought about going back", she once said, but that was not to be. About that, Robert Service said it best in *The Spell of the Yukon*:

"There's a land – oh, it beckons and beckons,
And I want to go back – and I will."

Robert Service never set eyes on the Yukon again either. Perhaps, for both of them, the memories were enough.

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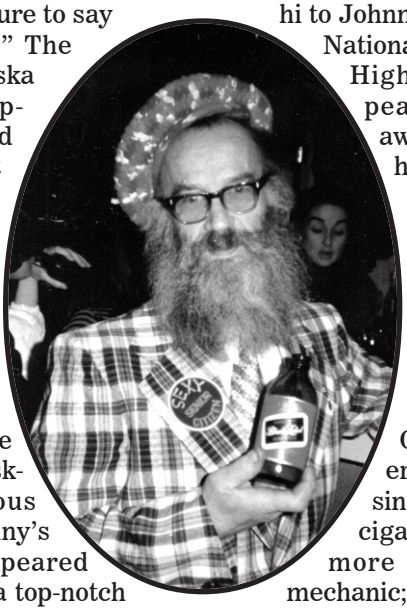
Note:
The photo on page26 is of Jean on her trip up the Inside Passage to Skagway.
The *Casca II*, which she rode to Dawson City, was built in 1911. It was wrecked at Rink Rapids on July 9, 1936. Parts of it were used to build the *Casca III* which ran until 1952. In 1974, it burned at Whitehorse, set on fire by vandals.

Ode to Johnny Friend Of Watson Lake

By John Skelton

For almost 50 years Johnny Friend was probably the most famous character in Watson Lake. To confirm this, I have only to look back on a trip my wife and I made to California in the early 1970s. We had parked our car at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco for several hours and upon returning to the car noticed a paper tucked under the windshield wiper. The note said "Hi Yukoner. I noticed your license plates, hope you are having a good holiday and be sure to say hi to Johnny Friend on your return to the Yukon." The National Geographic did an article on the Alaska Highway in which Johnny's picture appeared. Unfortunately Johnny passed away shortly before the issue came out but he did see a copy of the original article and photo before it was published.



I first met Johnny in 1965 when the Bank of Montreal transferred me to Watson Lake. I was not impressed by his appearance. He had long greasy hair and a full salt-and-pepper beard from which the unlit stub of a White Owl cigar could just be seen. The whiskers around the cigar showed numerous singe marks indicating that little of Johnny's cigars were wasted. Johnny's clothes appeared more like those of a grease monkey than a top-notch mechanic; however, on special occasions Johnny would appear well groomed wearing either a suit, tux or kilt.

Johnny had a well-deserved reputation for being a very generous person and enjoyed helping people out during difficult times, he had a Christmas tradition of delivering large food hampers to Vic and Katie Johnson who over the years cared for a large number of foster children. Johnny was certainly no saint and enjoyed a good party or high stakes poker game. I don't believe he was a very successful poker player as shortly after my arrival l gave him a loan for $1,800 to cover losses he incurred during a weekend poker game with two high rollers from Vancouver.

During the '50s and early '60s there were a number of people who froze to death in this area while in a sitting position and word had it that Johnny used a loader bucket or grader blade applied with much finesse to allow the bodies to fit a normal coffins. I have no real evidence that this was in fact true but find it quite believable.

Johnny was involved in many community activities, and although he did not play fastball, he was an excellent umpire as he called the corners of the plate much to the delight of the respective pitchers. He was also well known in curling circles and during a bonspiel in Teslin one evening noticed some activity in a car parked outside the rink. Johnny glanced in to see a young couple in a frenzied embrace. Opening the car door he hollered, "What's going on in here?" The young driver said, "Nothing sir," whereby Johnny said, "In that case get out and let a man in." That was enough for the driver who drove off along with his horrified girlfriend. Johnny enjoyed telling this story and usually got a good laugh.

Johnny was a beer drinker and would only drink Black Label. He had a strange ritual at night that I discovered on a ball trip to Cassiar. Before retiring he would open a bottle of beer, set it beside the bed, and have it when he woke up the following morning.

Johnny and Hughie Peet arrived in Watson Lake in 1946 shortly after the war ended. Johnny had served in France and the two went to work at the airport. After a brief stint in Destruction Bay their next job was to set up their own power plant in Watson Lake to provide power to the few buildings in town. The two remained partners and in 1952 started Watson Lake Motors in a large log structure that they built and that is still in use today the building having outlived them both. During one of the early years, Hughie sent Johnny to Whitehorse with a wad of cash to pick up a new vehicle. Unfortunately, he arrived too late in the day to take delivery and that evening was involved in a poker game and was cleaned out. Johnny had trouble keeping the garage receipts and his own cash separate as he tended to grab cash out of the till whenever he needed it for business or personal purposes.

The wedding car. [John Skelton photo, October, 1973]

Johnny Friend
[photo by John Skelton]

Finally in desperation Hughie likely with memories of the ill-fated Whitehorse trip in mind, began to carry the till around in his pocket. By the '80s Johnny had lost his share of Watson Lake Motors probably because of his gambling. He continued to work at the garage as a partner, but in name only, and even in later years when ill health slowed him down Hughie kept him on.

During the early '80s a number of prominent citizens received honorary titles attached to lakes in the area. Johnny's title was the Baron of Toobally Lake, a fairly large lake located southeast of Watson Lake. About that time, or shortly thereafter, Johnny had an operation after which he said it would be more fitting that he be named the Baron of Onebally Lake.

My wife and I had an example of Johnny's generosity when he insisted our wedding party drop over to the Watson Lake Hotel prior to attending our reception. We arrived to find magnums of Mums champagne, however, our feelings of gratitude were somewhat diminished later in the evening when we discovered that Johnny and a few cohorts had found, what we thought was our well-hidden car, and removed the rear wheels.

Johnny passed away in 1991 at the age of 71. Our local hockey rink, The Johnny Friend Arena, is named in memory of Johnny, in the hope that this very colourful character will not be forgotten.

Johnny, complete with showercap headgear, cigar, and bottle of Black Label, flanked by Shelagh and Nick Stromberg. [John Skelton photo, October, 1973]

Sam McGee: A Great Canadian

By Les McLaughlin

If ever a Canadian deserved the epithet "great," it is Sam McGee. The same Sam who grumbled incessantly about the cursed cold that got right hold and chilled him clean to the bone. The same Sam who longed for the land where the cotton blooms and blows. The same Sam who was cremated on the marge of Lake Lebarge only to rise from the ashes in solitary splendour and exclaim for all the world to hear: "It's the first time I've been warm!"

Now Sam McGee wasn't from Tennessee. He was from Peterborough. Yep, Ontario. The real McGee lived most of his colourful life travelling throughout Canada and the U.S. looking for yellow metal. Gold! However, gold wasn't easy to find. Most who looked for it found little, or none.

When Sam McGee from Peterborough arrived in the Yukon in 1899, the great gold rush was over. Any ground worth owning in the fabulously rich Klondike valley was taken. Still, the Yukon was the place for people looking for work during the depression ridden years at the turn of the last century. And Sam could work. He decided to stay around Whitehorse, a tiny transportation town of 400 people, about 500 river miles south of Dawson City.

Young Sam set down roots. He built a one room cabin and went about looking for copper ore in the rich mineral belt that runs for endless miles through the hills above Whitehorse. But, as with gold, others had already staked the best copper ground. In 1902, Sam McGee formed a partnership with William Grainger, one of the big copper stakeholders in the region.

Sam was also an accomplished carpenter. At the turn of the century there was a minor stampede to a silver strike on the shores of Kluane Lake, the largest in the Yukon. Sam went along for the ride. He built a roadhouse half way between Silver City and Whitehorse at a place called Canyon City. For this he was called the Roadhouse King.

He was also a bridge builder in the days when wooden trestle bridges were a thing of beauty. Sam was a quiet, unassuming man. Not one to brag, boast or drink too much as others of his era in the wild and wooly Yukon were prone to do. His income wasn't much, but it was enough to keep a balanced account in the Bank of Commerce in Whitehorse.

It was here in this two-story clapboard building on the corner of Second Avenue and Main Street that Sam's life would take a dramatic turn; so dramatic that he would become one of the most famous characters in Canadian history. It all started with the arrival in 1904 of Bob Service, a young bank clerk who was posted to the Whitehorse branch from Vancouver.

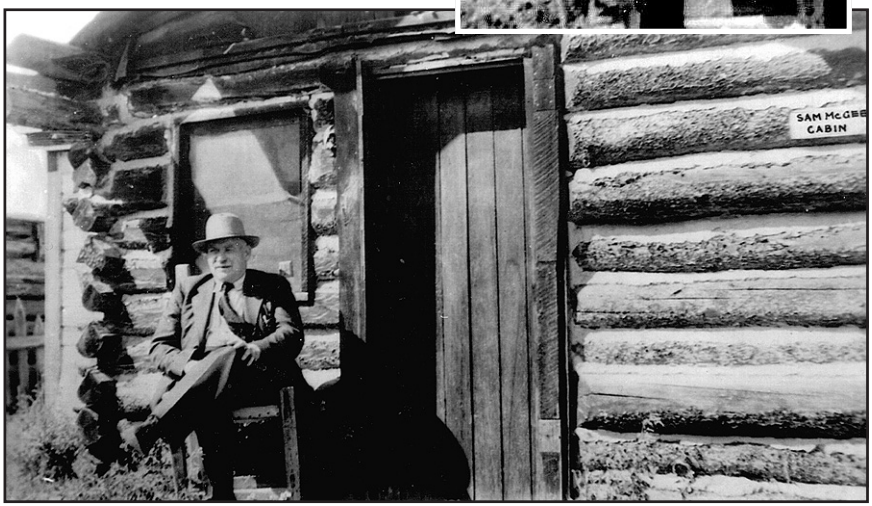
Young Bob was a quiet sort; a bit of a loner actually. He didn't drink or smoke. He preferred long lonely walks through the bush to the rowdy night life in the local saloons where bad whiskey and stale beer were the beverages of choice there being no other choice.

Bob enjoyed his work as a bean counter and pencil pusher in the Bank. However, what he really wanted was to be a writer. When was six years old back in 1880, he wrote his first verse and recited it for his maiden aunts in Scotland.

"God Bless the cakes and bless the ham, Bless the cheese and cold boiled ham, Bless the scones Aunt Jenny makes, and save us all from bellyaches, Amen".

Since his college days in Glasgow in the early 1890s, he had dreamed of writing verse like Kipling and Burns. Young Robert, as they knew him in Scotland, loved to recite their poems. Sometimes he'd sing them while he played his beat up old banjo. In the remote Yukon however, his chances of becoming a writer were as distant as those influential publishing houses in far off Toronto and New York.

Still, life could be worse. Since he emigrated to Canada in 1894, it had often been. Bob knew poverty. Apart for some back breaking jobs on Vancouver Island, Seattle and San Francisco, mostly doing farm labour, he was unemployed. He even rode the rails with the hobos for a time. When he applied for a job in the Bank of Commerce in Vancouver in 1902, he was stoned cold broke.



Sam McGee in front of his cabin at Whitehorse, now located at the MacBride Museum.

With his transfer to Whitehorse, he counted himself among the lucky. The bank job was steady. His room and board was provided and worldly possessions were something the frugal Scot could do without.

And maybe, just maybe, he could soak up enough remnant stories from the days of the Klondike Gold Rush to do a little writing on the side. Whitehorse was a small town. The kind of town where everyone knew your name and your business. Soon Bob's flair for reciting Kipling's Gunga Dun got him invited to various social gatherings as a sort of wandering minstrel.

Elmer White, the editor of the *Whitehorse Star,* was a bit of a nosy chap. He had to be. He wrote a column called The Stroller, a gossipy review that spared no one if they were caught doing something he could make fun of. A big gruff American, White once wrote a letter to his nephew in Florida who had asked for advice on how to become a journalist.

"In the first place Walter, the newspaper profession in a sense is the ruination of all who engage in it as no other calling gives so much insight into human nature. No one my dear nephew who would succeed as a newspaper man, will ever allow sympathy or sentiment to interfere with the publication of news.

If it comes to your attention that your beloved pastor or Sunday school teacher was seen emerging from the back window of the house of a parishioner who is away from town on business at 2 a.m, do not allow his second calling to prevent the publication of the story. If he has no respect for his calling, why should you have?"

On a bitter cold day in the winter of 1905-06, Elmer White was doing a little business in the bank. Bob Service, with his usual accomplished penmanship, was dutiful entering his deposits in the bank's ledger. Then, as he watched Service neatly mark down the numbers, White suggested that while his recitations of Kipling and Burns were good entertainment for the Women's Auxiliary social teas, perhaps he should branch out a bit, write something a little gutsier, something with a flair about the wild frontier of real Yukon life.

That night Bob Service wrote his first Yukon ballad called *The Shooting of Dan McGrew.* When it was finished, he stuffed it away in a drawer in his little room above the bank. The poem wasn't bad thought Bob, but it really didn't have the flair he was seeking. A few weeks later, he was asked to recite at the Women's Auxiliary monthly tea. He considered giving them the tale of Dan McGrew, but then, on rereading the work, decided it was too racy for the ears of the Whitehorse upper class. Gunga Dun would have to do.

The winter weeks rolled by. Stroller White made his bank deposits as did Sam McGee. Bob Service marked the figures in the bank ledger. Then, one evening in 1906, with the endless Yukon winter hanging over the tiny, snowbound town, Bob Service paid a visit to a lady friend whom he admired. To his utter dismay bordering on contempt, a raucous party was in full swing in her clapboard house. It wasn't so much the party that annoyed him, but the fact that he was not invited while others of a lesser moral upbringing were.

His lady friend invited him in. Reluctantly, he entered. The room was filled with cigar smoke and reeked of booze. Nothing offended Bob Service more. He stayed just long enough to listen as a big man from Dawson City, clutching a foul-smelling cigar, told a story.

Bob was thunderstruck. When the fat man finished, Service quickly left the boozy party. As he headed straight to his spotless room on the second floor of the Bank of Commerce, his mind was seething with fanciful images. Feverishly through the night he wrote, stopping only once to check the spelling of a name in the bank ledger.

He knew the name Sam McGee well. Yet he had to be certain of the spelling. Instinctively he knew that he had stumbled upon a treasure of nuggets underneath all the muck and bedrock of frontier Yukon life. This was paydirt. This was his future. As dusk turned to dawn, Bob Service reread his poem. It was done, complete, not a word could be changed.

He put the ballad away in the drawer, walked downstairs, and opened the doors to the Bank. All day, as customers made their deposits and withdrawals, the efficient teller was in a daze. His night had been without sleep. The ballad raced through his mind. A line, the first line in the story, kept repeating itself, over and over.

"There are strange things done in the midnight sun."

It was perfect. But the second verse! What would his friend Sam think of it?

"Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee, where the cotton blooms and blows.

After all, by now Sam was a seasoned Yukon veteran. The cold didn't bother him and he certainly wasn't from Tennessee. Well, as long as the poem was tucked away in the drawer, McGee would never know.

The winter came to a blissful end. The summer sun bathed the Yukon in almost constant light. Tourists arrived on the same tiny train that had brought the young bank clerk to the Yukon two years earlier. Bob Service continued to take his long, lonely walks through the endless bush.

He continued to write little stories as Elmer White, the newspaper editor, had suggested. The fall, with its brilliant colours of orange and yellow, cast a pleasant glow on the surrounding hills. Soon, all too soon, the white land was again locked tight as a drum. Life in the Yukon had come full circle.

Bob Service entertained the ladies with Gunga Dun. Stroller White wrote about the north-end ladies of the night. Sam McGee dug the surrounding hills for copper., then a most peculiar thing occurred. The lady Service had admired suggested that he send his little book of poems to a printer in Toronto and give them out as Christmas gifts. That, thought the frugal Scot, was as bad an idea as he had ever heard.

But then, the vanity in him, the writer's vanity, rose up and said:

"Why not?"

Why not indeed! The bank had just given him a Christmas bonus. It was his right to spend it as he wished. The poems, ten in total including T*he*

Cremation of Sam McGee , joined other parcels and letters on board the White Pass mail train, en route to a printing firm in Toronto. Included was payment of one hundred dollars for printing one hundred books.

Bob Service fully expected to receive his little books in due course and to give them to friends as an appreciation of their business in the bank. He was after all loyal to the Bank that had treated him with respect when he was down and out in Vancouver.

However, the books did not arrive. Instead, in the mail there came, not the books, but a contract. A royalty contract. A ten percent royalty on all the books the printing firm could sell. A stunned Bob Service told Stroller White. He told his lady friend. He told other customers in the bank but was reluctant to tell Sam McGee.

A year later, in 1908, when he was transferred from the Bank of Commerce in Whitehorse to its main Yukon branch in Dawson City, Bob Service, Robert Service, was famous. His little book of verse had sold 5,000 copies. Everyone in Canada now knew Sam McGee.

"Til I came to the Marge of Lake Lebarge and a derelict there lay;
It was jammed in the ice but I saw in a trice it was called the "Alice May."
And I looked at it, and I thought a bit, and I looked at my frozen chum;
Then "Here," says I, with a sudden cry, "is my crematorium."

The publishers clamoured for more. And much, much more would come. A full book of poems called "Songs of a Sourdough," another called "Ballads of a Cheechako," and a third titled "Rhymes of a Rolling Stone." All from the mighty pen of the loyal bank clerk, Robert William Service.

Service could barely keep track of his royalty payments. He would ride the rails no more. When he left the Yukon in 1912, eight years after his unnoticed arrival, he was a world renowned writer as famous as Kipling and Burns. When he died in Lancieux France on September 11th, 1958, at age 84, he was the richest poet in the world.

And what of the people who so influenced the stunning poetic career of this shy bank clerk?

Stroller White left the Yukon in 1916 for southern Alaska and was elected to the Territorial House of Representatives, serving as Speaker for one term. When he died in 1930, he was publisher of *The Strollers Weekly* in Juneau. The lady friend who suggested to Service that he publish his poems remains unknown.

And Sam McGee? In 1909, he was a pallbearer at the funeral of his friend William Grainger, who died trying to rescue two miners who had been overcome by fumes in the shaft of his Copper mine near Whitehorse. That same year, Sam moved to Montana still looking for copper, or gold or any metal that would bring a buck on the open market.

He finally settled in Beiseker, Alberta, a little farming community about 40 miles from Calgary. He returned to the Yukon occasionally. On one visit, he brought an urn of ashes that he said were his. He had retrieved them himself from the boiler of the Alice May, the beached steamer on the Marge of Lake Lebarge where Bob Service said he was cremated.

Did he hate the cursed cold? No said Sam, he loved it. That is why he stayed ten years in the Yukon. Did he ever live in Tennessee where the cotton blooms and blows? No, said Sam. And what did he think of Bob Service?

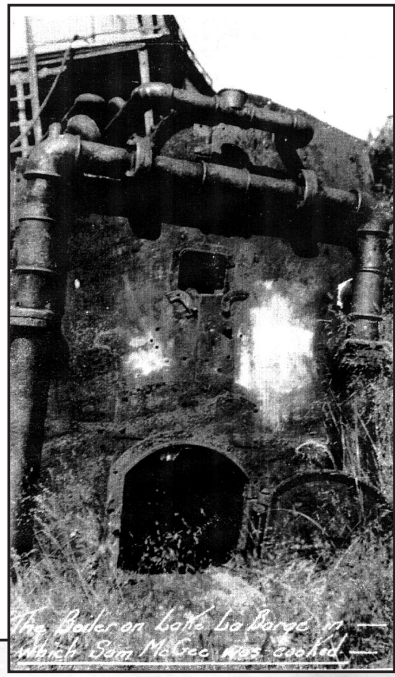
"You could trust Bob Service," said Sam. "He was a good writer. He kept neat ledgers."

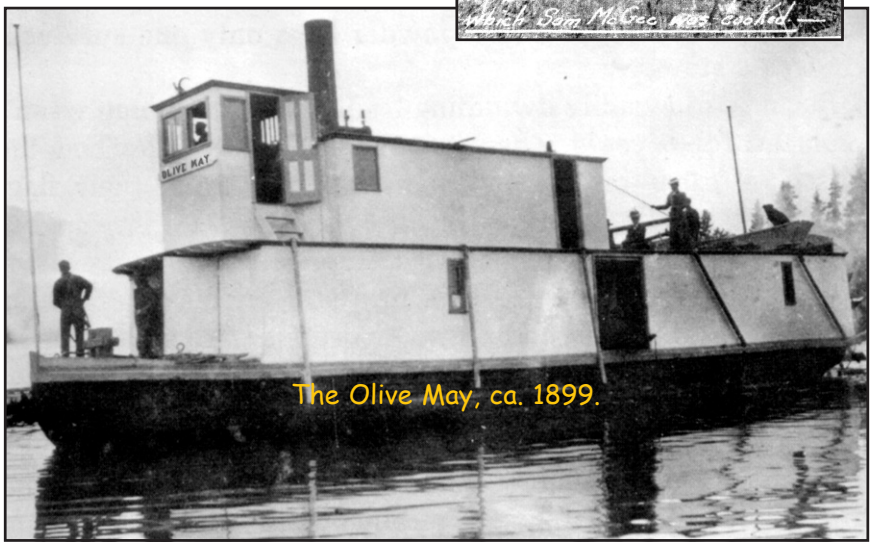
The Olive May, built at Whitehorse, sank on the Thirtymile River near Lake Laberge. The Northwest Mounted Police stationed on Laberge learned that a miner living in a cabin near the wreck was dying of scurvy. They sent a doctor named Sugden to investigate, but alas the miner was already dead.

Unable to dig a grave because the ground was frozen, Dr. Sugden cremated his patient in the firebox of the Olive May. A few years later, at a party in Whitehorse, he told Robert Service the story.

Dr. Sugden drowned at Mayo in 1926, when he fell off a barge while waving goodbye to friends.

The caption on the photo, right, reads:
"The boiler on Lake Laberge where Sam McGee was cooked."





The Olive May, ca. 1899.

Posted to the Yukon

By Elizabeth Symon

An Army Family at Camp Takhini, 1962 – 1964

Like other immigrants to Canada in the Sixties we came by sea. The journey aboard *The Empress of Britain* took eight days, a distance we could fly now in eight hours.

Back on that bleak March day, Jim and I stood on deck with our two small children and watched as England slowly disappeared. We didn't know then that our journey was just starting. Soon we would be crossing the vast Dominion of Canada and heading north to the Yukon. That news from Ottawa would come as a surprise to us.

It was snowing when we docked at Saint John in New Brunswick with our mountain of luggage; steamer trunks, suitcases, hold-alls, sewing machine, guitar, typewriter, bicycles, toys, golf bag and tennis racquets.

I thought of the hundreds of other families who had also landed at Saint John to face an unknown future in Canada. They'd come from Colonial America, fleeing north after the Revolution in 1776, seeking asylum in a land still loyal to the Crown. I could picture them, the men in fancy waistcoats and kneebreeches and buckled shoes, the ladies in elaborate long dresses, clutching the hands of their children. Uprooted from luxurious homes with their European furniture and china and silver the United Em-

Packing for Canada. We lived in Oxford, England, across the road from author J.R. Tolkien.

pire Loyalists would start life anew in rough log cabins in clearings in the forests of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Two centuries later we were following in their footsteps. Our new home, however, was a modern duplex with central heating and modern appliances in the Army camp at Saint John. The Army wives made us welcome and our children and theirs played happily together. We were just beginning to feel settled and enjoying life in the Army camp when we received a posting to Whitehorse in the Yukon. Our journey took us some 4,000 miles across Canada with our two youngsters, a small car and one licensed driver, for I was still attempting to pass a Canadian driving test.

The very distance boggled our minds. We decided to put the car "piggy-back" on the train from Montreal to Edmonton and once there we set off to drive the Alaska Highway, which was then a rough, winding gravel road. At Whitehorse, isolated by some 1,000 miles from the nearest cities of Canada, we realized we would have to adjust once again to new surroundings.

The Yukon old-timers called us *Cheechakos* and told us we would have a lot to learn before we could be *Sourdoughs,* a name dating back to gold rush days and synonymous with survival in the North.

It was strange to go into a Whitehorse supermarket and find snowshoes hanging up for sale beside the mops and brooms and other housewares. We learned there are just two seasons in the Yukon: winter and July. Activities only ceased if the temperature registered more than 40 below. Once when this happened and the radio news bulletin said that schools would be shut due to the intense cold, our children whooped with joy and ran outside to play. Well-wrapped in snowsuits with double layers of socks and mitts and scarves, they were all set to benefit from this unexpected holiday.

One night we were invited out to dinner and needed a baby-sitter. Our neighbour's son, who was saving for a pilot's licence, usually filled that role but this time his younger sister came to sit for us. On our return we found the children flushed and feverish. I had a moment of panic, then I heard the furnace roaring away.

Rest stop on the Alaska Highway, August, 1962. It was very hot.

"Were you cold?" I asked the girl.

"Oh, no," she replied. "I washed my hair and couldn't find your hair dryer so I turned the thermostat way up and leaned over the heat until my hair stopped dripping."

Yes, in the Yukon we were innovative. We had to be for we were an isolated community. In this far northern setting I discovered the value of friendship, of neighbours helping neighbours. Also I learned that I had previously untapped inner resources.

I plucked up courage and applied for my driver's licence. When I took the road test it was 20 below and I had to keep stopping and scraping the car windows to see where I was going. But I passed the test and began to feel a new confidence. I was ready for all the North had to offer.

We made our own fun with winter costume parties, summer kids parades, camping trips and moosemeat barbecues held under the unforgettable glow of the Northern Lights. There were cabbage contests too. With nearly 24 hours of daylight in the summer, those cabbages just kept on growing and growing. And the fishing! The fish we caught were so large we didn't need to exaggerate.

Once we rode the narrow-gauge railway down from Whitehorse to Skagway on the Alaska Panhandle. My husband made the return journey hiking back with some fellow adventurers over the rugged Gold Rush Trail of 1898.

We also made the trip north to the ghost town of Dawson City and visited the log cabin where the poet Robert Service once lived. On the way back we camped on the shore of Lake Laberge where, he tells us, they cremated Sam McGee.

But all too soon we were to see the last of the Northern Lights, the 24-hour summer days, the backdrop of the mountains and the wild beauty of the Yukon snow. Our time in Whitehorse came to an end after two years when we were posted to the Prairies. I had come to love the North. Now we were facing another upheaval, packing our belongings and wondering what awaited us in yet another part of this vast land.

Our flight took us south to Edmonton and we stayed at the Army camp where Jim completed his short service commission with the Canadian Armed Forces. In Edmonton I was overjoyed to meet some old friends from the Army camp in Gagetown, New Brunswick. They seemed like family. I remembered those early days at Gagetown when we were immigrants and the adjustments we had to make to a new country. It was hard. Yes, I was homesick. I missed England but it helped me to realize that so many people in Canada had come from somewhere else. And we didn't have to learn a new language as some did, though often the words we spoke were different. Our car now had a trunk and hood, rather than a boot and bonnet. In England we'd cooked with gas and here we put it in the car instead of petrol.

Just as we had graduated from *Cheechako* to *Sourdough* in the North, we were not called *landed immigrants* any more for we have become Canadian citizens and now call Canada our home.

Kicked By A Dead Moose

...AND OTHER STORIES OF 65 YEARS IN THE BUSH

By George W. Gilbert

My First Canoe Trip

My first trip up the Bowron chain of lakes was in 1934 when I was eight years old. I think it was the Sunday school that organized the picnic at Bowron Lake, but even heathens like myself were invited.

A 'Mr. Johnson' had a three-ton truck with wooden sides on the flat deck. About twenty or thirty kids my age got to stand up in the back for the two-hour drive to Bowron – about twenty miles.

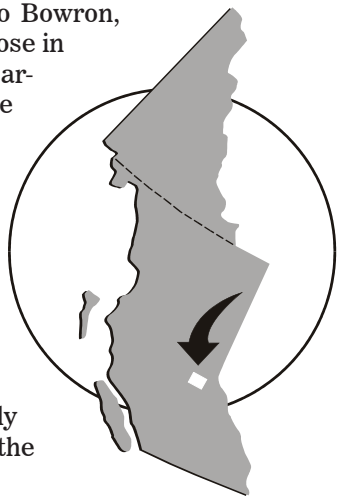
The road then was very narrow, and twice, when we met opposing vehicles, they had to back up until there was a place to pass.

Several parents had preceded us to the lake and we arrived to find that they had brought great quantities of hotdogs, ice cream and pop. Then there were sack races, three-legged races and ball games on the grassy area between Joe Wendel's lodge and the beach.

In the middle of these activities, Mr. George Turner arrived at the beach in his twenty-two or twenty-four foot canoe with a small outboard motor on a side bracket. He offered to take ten boys up to Pat's Point on Spectacle Lake: I was the first to claim a seat. Mr. Turner's teen-aged daughter Margaret came along to 'ride herd' on us boys.

We putted our way up the lake and the upper river where we saw several moose at close quarters. Arriving at Pat's Point beach, we found that the Turners had brought more hotdogs etc. Mr. Turner anchored his canoe off shore and the canoe was so stable that we were able to stand on the gunwales to dive off.

After a few hours there, we returned to Bowron, flushing out more (or probably the same) moose in the river. The picnic was winding up when we arrived and we were not looking forward to the two-hour stand-up journey back to Wells. The girls at the picnic had been transported comfortably in cars; today that would be classed as 'discrimination.'



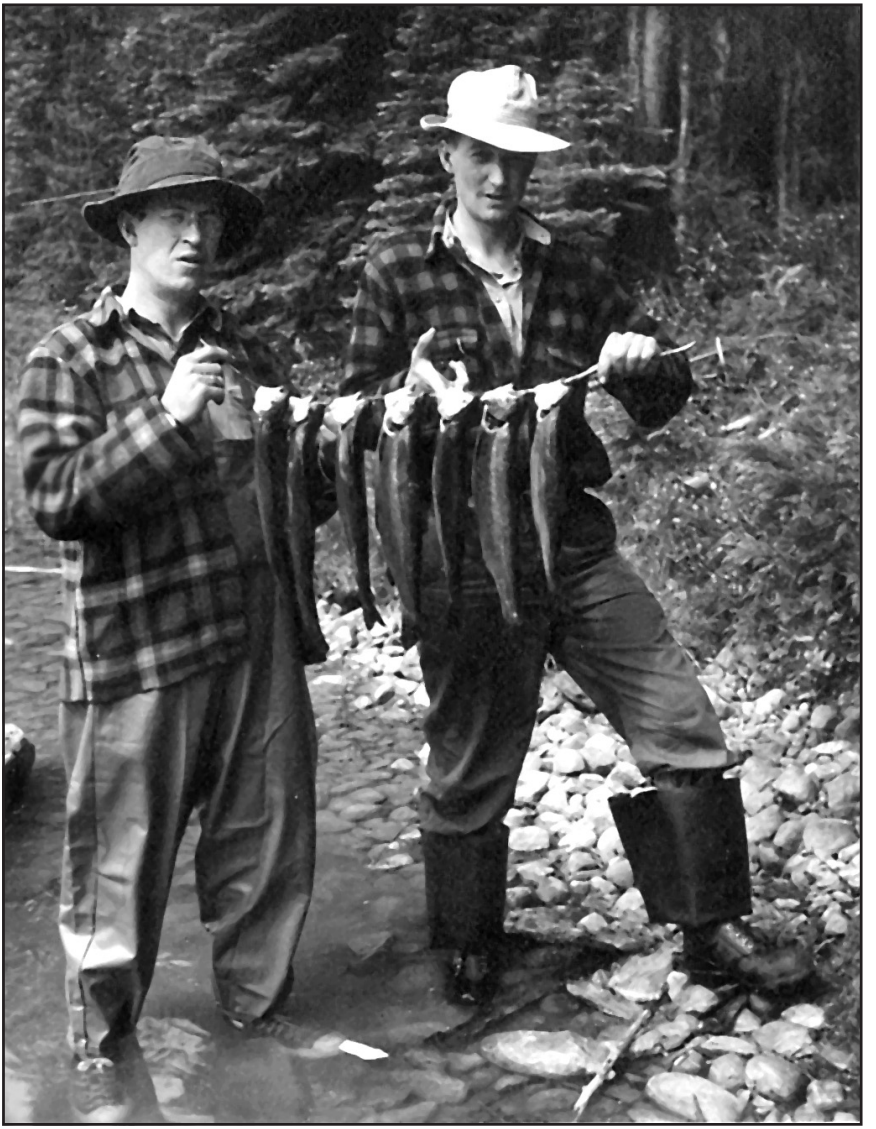
I spent considerable time on the Bowron chain over the next thirty-three years, but will never forget my 'initiation trip.'

'Living off the Land'

We have all heard the stories of the early frontiersmen who would go charging out into the

wilderness with only a rifle and a handful of salt ... a 'grain of salt' sounds more likely.

Before we were into our 'teens', we had access to a set of E.T. Seton's books. These explained such things as how to tell rabbit tracks from moose tracks and how to set snares for the former (but not the latter). Various chapters told how to make arrows, an Indian feather head-dress, a fish trap and so on. We read and 'followed up' on many of these projects. A few chap-



Mike Mahon and Harry King at Hunter Lake. Fish was by far the best "living off the land" food source.

ters dealt with how to 'live off the land' without actually killing anything. We decided to apply some of this information.

Seton was enthusiastic about eating the inner bark of trees: I doubt if he ever actually tried it himself. We gave it a definite 'thumbs down'. Another winner was the pulp at the core of fireweed stalks, which allegedly contained countless calories. We found that the energy expended in splitting and scraping the stalks was probably equivalent to the calories consumed.

Berries and mushrooms were straight-forward; you only ate the ones you recognized. Nettles were excellent, provided that you had leather gloves and a pot to boil them in (the nettles). Actually, the gloves weren't bad either.

Lichens were reputed to be another food source; after all, the caribou ate them. However, the caribou had a distinct advantage, being equipped with two stomachs. After foraging on lichens, we single-stomach varieties discovered that we could defecate through the eye of a needle at twenty paces.

Labrador tea, although not considered a food source, was said to be a sort of 'pick-me-up'. It also has a mild narcotic effect, but we were never able to drink enough to become addicts. Spruce needle tea was supposed to prevent scurvy, but we opted for the scurvy and crossed the tea off our list.

Many of the plants recommended may be abundant in Ontario, but many were not native to the Cariboo. Thus we were never able to enjoy a hearty meal of such items as fiddle-head ferns or bullrush roots.

Incidentally, if the inner bark of alder was not to your taste, you could always use it for making orange dye. But we rarely dyed articles and none of us was especially fond of orange colouring anyway.

Realizing that plant life was going to afford only a starvation diet, we then focussed on the Animal Kingdom. At first we believed that anything that moved was probably edible. This theory proved to be valid, in many cases, only for wild predators. Our greatest food source was fish, followed by small game: grouse, rabbits, birds, squirrels, etc. (Anyone who can eat squirrels is pretty hungry.)

Muskrats and porcupine were very good, but the former usually involved someone getting wet, and the latter required considerable dexterity in preparing the animal for cooking. Since most of our outings were of short duration, we never shot big game. Besides providing too much meat for us, killing a large animal would possibly attract the game warden and we were not licenced to carry firearms.

We read that frog legs were a great delicacy, and frogs came supplied with teeth, but toads had none, so we checked many an amphibian by sticking a finger in its mouth to feel for teeth. Most were toads so we finally discontinued this research, probably to the relief of the toad population.

I shouldn't forget the ants: another gourmet item. If you are fond of broken twigs laced with hydrochloric acid, then ants are your dish. I only tried them once, and I hope that the ants were just as devastated at being eaten as I was in eating them.

My interpretation of 'living off the land' is 'residing on a house boat!'

A Sunday Drive

In 1947, I bought Fred Fleury's 1925 Chev '490' for $100. (The '490' meant 4-cylinder, 90 horsepower.)

The vehicle had been altered to a pickup configuration with a canvas roof over the seat. The machine had two-wheel cable brakes, no starter, no side windows, an adjustable split windshield, wooden-spoke wheels and hand-operated windshield wipers, etc. Also, the radiator had seen better days and had a habit of frequently overheating, with a resulting geyser of hot water ejected through the capless filler hole.

One hot summer day, I was going out to Bowron Lake and my sister Louise (Wee) wanted to go along to visit some friends. I asked Frank Kibbee if he'd like to come along to visit his successor – game warden Ernie Holmes. So the three of us squeezed into the seat, after I had cranked the engine to life, and we set out. At Little Valley Creek, the radiator suddenly blew up. Kibbee shouted, 'Run for your lives!' and disappeared into the bush, with surprising agility for a man in his 80s. Meanwhile, Wee, who was wearing a sunsuit, was yelling and screaming because she was being scalded by hot water coming through the split windshield.

As usual, I had to wait for the engine to cool before re-filling the radiator with creek water, so I went into the bush to search for Frank. It took considerable persuading to get him back into the car.

Arriving at the lake without further incident, I dropped Wee off at her

Ellis Hughes and Marcel Guiguet in my '27 Chev, on our way to Bowron Lake for kokanee fishing. These two were used to the radiator blowing: the same couldn't be said of Frank Kibbee.

friends', then Frank and I drove over to the game warden's place. Kibbee's old log house was still standing then, but was in poor shape – Ernie later burned it. Ernie was up the Bowron River, live-trapping beaver, but was due back after lunch.

Frank had an old Colt .44 single-action revolver and I had a 32-20 Colt, so we did some target shooting. He was a good shot and showed me how to improve accuracy. He'd sit down, leaning against a tree and support his elbows on his knees. This position made a very solid 'firing platform.' We both loaded our own ammunition, but I was surprised to find that Frank was still molding balls for his. I thought that spherical bullets had gone the way of the muzzle-loader. He told me that ball cartridges had many advantages over normal bullets, but he didn't tell me what they were.

Frank started to tell stories of the 'old days,' like he used to do at my parents' house in Wells. To my disappointment however, the stories ended when Ernie showed up.

Ernie invited Frank to stay for a few days, after which time he would be making a trip into Wells. So I collected Wee and we drove back to town, with the radiator blowing only once – at the top of the steep Antler Creek hill. (This always happened, even on cool days.) Mike Mahon always referred to my vehicle as 'Little Yellowstone.'

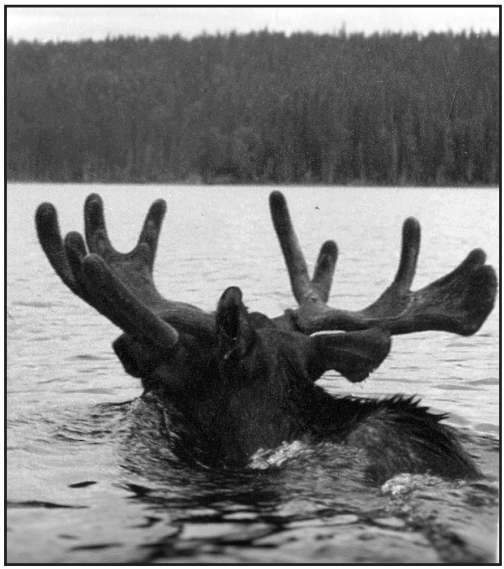
A few years later I updated my transportation when I bought Erik Rask's 1929 Model A Ford.

(Frank's story about his fight with the grizzly in the bear trap has been repeated so many times in various publications, that it would be redundant to include it here.)

Kicked by a Dead Moose

Late one fall, Ellis Hughes and I, in a Jeep borrowed from Kumhila Mining, started out from Wells to go deer hunting at Soda Creek. As the weather was fairly cold and the Jeep had no side windows, I decided to wear moccasins. We both wore winter clothing.

A few miles from Wingdam, we came upon a bull moose running on the road ahead of us. He kept running ahead for several hundred yards, and, probably deciding that he had had enough of that, turned and charged the Jeep.



Moose "in velvet," Bowran Lake. This one was alive and kicking (not dead and kicking).

I jumped out and shot the moose with the 7 mm rifle. Although it was a mortal wound, the moose had just enough life left to stagger over to the edge of the road and fall into a deep, narrow ravine. I told El that I'd go down and gut the moose while he organized the Jeep's winch.

The moose had landed in a very awkward position at the bottom, and I couldn't keep his hind legs spread apart far enough for the evisceration operation, so I removed a lace from one moccasin and tied one of his legs to a small tree. As I worked away with my knife, the lace broke, the leg sprang back, and I received a good clout on the side of my head, knocking me over.

We eventually winched the moose back up to the road and headed back for Wells. We had occasion to use the winch again. Along Jack o' Clubs Lake, there was a short steep hill on the highway, which was covered with glare ice, which defeated our efforts to climb it – even in four wheel drive.

We had to hook onto a tree and winch ourselves up. (The hill no longer exists on the new highway.)

I suppose there are many people who have had their hunting trips cut short by unforeseen circumstances, but I dare say that there are few who have been kicked in the head by a dead moose!

Rum Lake

In the late 1940s, I used to take two weeks or a month off from working at the mine, and paddle up the Bowron Lakes to camp, fish, climb and 'explore.'

Once, at Grizzly (now called Unna) Lake, I camped with Fred Becker, who was returning from his hunting camp at McLary Lake. He told me that there seemed to be a clearing at the northeast of Grizzly and suspected a swamp or a meadow there. He had no time to investigate since he was due back in Wells, but I had. I paddled to the corner of the lake where I found a narrow channel through the reeds leading to a pretty little lake, probably two or three hundred yards in diameter. This lake was missing from McCabe's map – the only map available of 'the chain' at the time.

There were no blazes or signs of a camp anywhere along the shore, so I camped on the north shore close to the beach of fine brown sand. There was a good view of both Needle Point and Pyramid Mountains (Kaza and Ishpa), and I decided to make the place 'my camp.'

Grover Youngs had told me that most of the cedar shakes for his lodge at Bowron had come from the north shore of Sandy Lake, so I paddled up there and scouted the area. There was a large grove of two-foot live cedars growing among many, old fire-killed snags four to six feet in diameter. I intended to return with a saw and cut down one of these snags, haul some cedar bolts back to Rum (as we later called the lake), and split shakes with a froe and mallet. I would build a frame of peeled jackpine poles and sheathe it with shakes. I was telling Mike Mahon of my plans and he offered to give me a hand, or at least would do the cooking.

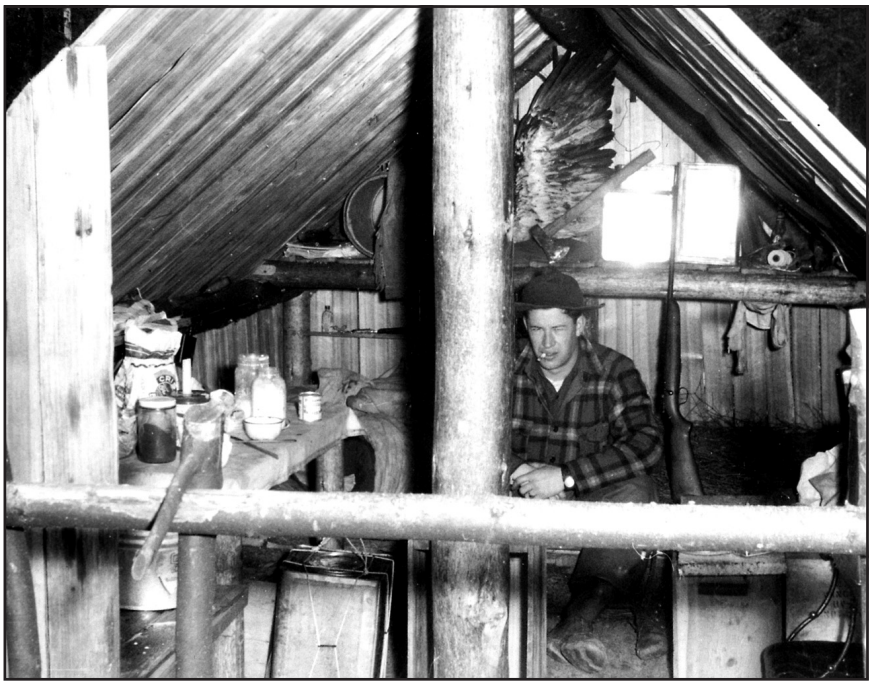
The next year I had my own 18-foot Chestnut canoe with a 2.5 horsepower motor mounted on a side bracket, so we arrived at Sandy Lake armed

with axes and a four-foot saw. We cut a large undercut in a five-foot snag about thirty feet high. After sawing completely through the trunk, we found that the snag would not come down – it would just rock back and forth on the stump. We had to back off and fall a tall spruce on to the snag. Bucking the snag into seven-foot sections, we then split the hollow shell into 'packable' bolts and carried a canoe load to the beach about two hundred yards away.

Back at Rum, I tried splitting shakes and found that the cedar easily split into shakes seven feet long and about four inches wide. While I did this, Mike made supper. When he offered to cook, he asked me if there was any particular food I didn't like: I said 'No.'

The next morning at breakfast, I looked in my bowl and said, 'What the hell is this?' He replied, 'it's curried oatmeal ... you said you liked everything!'

My next trip was 'solo', and I spent the weekend making shakes and the 'cabin' frame. I double-shaked the roof while the six-inch, peeled jackpine poles were still wet – a rather slippery endeavor, but completed before I had to leave for home. Next trip, I made a log frame about seven feet by eight feet; nailed in shakes, covered them with balsam boughs, with a final layer of cut-grass from a swamp along the river. This made a very comfortable bed if you didn't mind mice running around over your sleeping bag all night. On one occasion, a large party of us were taking boats up to Isaac Lake for our Rod & Reel Club, and seven of the twelve man crew slept in the bunk.



Mike Mahon in "The Rum Pasture" at Rum Lake.

We seemed to be friendlier on going to bed than we were the next morning, however.

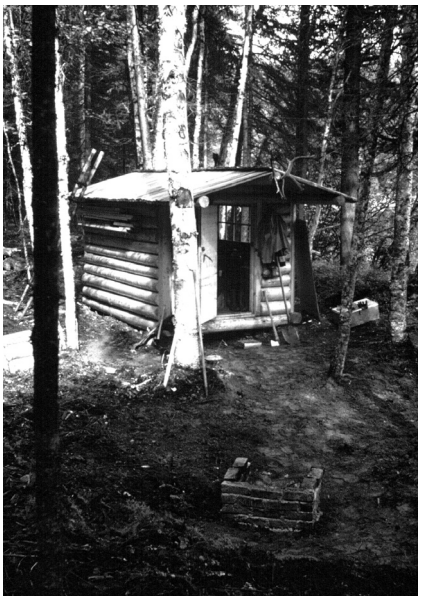
During the next few years, we built another shake shelter alongside the 'Ram Pasture' and equipped it with a stove and even a 'stand up to eat' table and a stove-pipe oven. We also cleared and burned many of the small trees and bushes to give the area a 'park like' appearance. The smokehouse for fish more or less completed the camp.

During all these efforts, I had no shortage of helpers: Mike Mahon and Harry King were 'regulars,' and other free labour was often supplied by Marcel Guiguet, Doug Finlayson, Mac Grady, Fred Becker, Orphir Hamilton and John McKelvie – to name a few.

In those days, a 'long weekend' was one in which we got both Saturday and Sunday off from the mine. We usually left Wells after work on Friday, motored up to Rum, where we often arrived tired and cold – and always in the dark. There was a hollow tree behind camp and I cut a hole in the side where I then cached a shotgun for the bears ... and a bottle of rum for the cold. We regularly stewed up dried apricots at night for our breakfast, and our favorite drink was rum and hot apricot juice. The lake came to be known as "Rum Lake" and is now its official name.

Much later, in 1960, Eileen and I spent much of our honeymoon building an 8' x 10' log cabin about fifty yards west of the old camp. From here we had an unobstructed view of both mountain peaks. (Over the years, the trees east of the old camp had grown and it was no longer possible to see Kaza Mountain – only Ishpa.)

In 1967, we left Wells – where I was manager of the soon-to-be-closed gold mine – and moved to Whitehorse, in the Yukon Territory. Some time later, we received a letter from the Parks Branch in Victoria, telling us we had sixty days to take all our personal gear out of the cabin. (The entire chain of lakes was gazetted in 1961 as Bowron Lake Provincial Park.)



Our Rum Lake cabin, 1960.

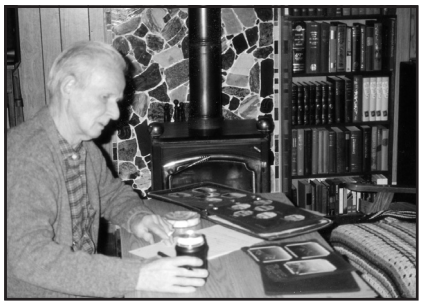
We replied that the cabin was in good shape and well-equipped – it would be ideal as an overnight accommodation for a Park ranger. The minister acknowledged our letter and stated that, if we were ever to go up to Rum Lake, the ranger would leave the cabin for us. We never did.

In 1997, there was no trace of either the cabin or the old camp, but the site is an official 'group camp site.' That same year, as a member

of a ten-person trip around the chain, I met a park ranger at the lower end of Isaac. I got talking to him: he certainly knew where our camp and cabin had been and asked me about the trench, the only sign that there had ever been a camp there. The 'trench' did not 'ring any bells' for me until some time later.

One year I had found an old 'B.C. Heater' stove in Wells and took it up to Rum, along with about fifty feet of stove pipe. I set up the stove close to the beach, and then cut a trench up to where Mike was building a smokehouse frame which he covered with an old filter canvas, discarded from the mill at the mine.

I laid the pipe in the trench and then covered it with sand. This arrangement caused the alder smoke in the stove to be quite cool when it reached the smokehouse, which did a much better job of smoking fish than hot smoke did. We smoked both char fillets and kokanee; however the bears ripped our smokehouse to shreds on a regular basis during our absence.



George W. Gilbert is a retired mining inspector living in Whitehorse. He has written 65 stories of his 65 (so far) years in the wilderness and we hope to publish most of them here.

George G. in "The Rum Pasture." Cookhouse on left.

A DOG-PUNCHER ON THE YUKON

1896-1902

By Arthur Treadwell Walden

Part Six

Continued from the last issue. An introduction to Walden and this story appeared in Issue 15.

CHAPTER VII

WINTER ON SHORT RATIONS

CONDITIONS at Circle City at this time were as follows. There were only eighty men left in the district, and they were all in the town itself, as the mines had to be closed down for the winter. No food had been left at Circle City by the passing river steamers since the year before. It had all been taken upstream to Dawson, where prices were higher, each boat promising that the next boat would leave provisions. So these eighty men were marooned, with no food, and with the season practically closed. There was no danger of actual starvation, as they could make their way back to Fort Yukon, eighty miles down the river. But if they did that they couldn't work their mines the next summer, as it would take them all winter to get their food up to Circle City and the summer to pack it on their backs out to the mines.

The rising of the river gave them some hope that another boat would get up, but whether the boat would leave provisions or not they had no means of knowing. A Miners' Meeting was called, I think the last Miners' Meeting on the Yukon, and it was decided that if another boat came up and stopped' at Circle City, the captain would be asked politely to put eighty outfits of food ashore. If he refused, the eighty miners would compel him to do it. In case the boat didn't stop, it was to be headed off at 'Fish Camp' where the river narrowed down, a move that could easily be done by shooting a shot or two through the pilot house, as the boats made very slow time at this point. The food was to be paid for at Dawson prices.

I think it was the next day that the Portius B. Weir came around the bend and headed straight for shore. It reminded me of some large animal approaching a hunter. There was always the chance that at the last moment she would turn and run downstream. Unsuspecting, she pushed her nose into the bank, and a deck hand made her fast with a cable. The gangplank was swung out and the superintendent of the company walked ashore.

He was immediately surrounded and the case was put to him, very politely. Refusing to comply, he turned and ordered the captain to have the line thrown off. A deck-hand, walking up a couple of hundred feet to the place where the hawser was hitched to a stump, to carry out the order, was very much startled when twelve men confronted him with Winchesters over

their arms. He walked back with his hands stuffed deep into his pockets, his head high in the air, whistling loudly. One of the pilots, approaching the fore part of the boat with an axe to cut the rope, was warned by the same twelve men and went back in a hurry.

Negotiations were then opened, but instead of giving in with good grace the superintendent refused to allow the men any food on the ground that it was all bonded for the British side. The boat was held three days, every minute of which was valuable because the season was already late and, if the ice once began to run in the river, it would be absolutely impossible for her to get anywhere.

It was eventually settled by the miners themselves going into the hold and unloading eighty outfits of food, which were taken into the company's store and immediately paid for in cash. Each man was paid by the storekeeper for the time he had worked in unloading the boat. I think this was the most decorous hold-up I have ever heard of. It must be understood that the steamboat and the store were under the same company.

I saw an amusing incident while the boat was being held up. A newspaper reporter, together with an artist whose name was Max Newberry, had been sent out by a large New York newspaper. These men had made the trip around by the ocean, coming by water all the way from Seattle. They were looking for local color and had seen nothing but Indians and Eskimos so far. But here was local color with a vengeance for the press-man.

The artist, not to be outdone by his brother in arms, set up his easel on the forward deck of the boat and went to work. He had for his picture the twelve men with rifles, who were relieved by another shift every few hours, the Indians on shore, the Eskimo deck-hands, quite a large proportion of miners, the captain and the superintendent. He even put in half of Shirley.

The artist was a clever one, especially at making portraits. When the picture was almost finished, a miner who was watching made the remark that he had got in most of the men's portraits pretty accurately. The miner recognized them and called them by name, much to the edification of the artist. Then he went on to criticize the men's faces, saying, 'Don't you think Jim So-and-So would be better looking if you straightened out that broken nose of his?' or, 'The only reason that So-and-So didn't have any whiskers was because he couldn't grow any,' etc.

These remarks went on in the most earnest way, much to the surprise and amusement of the artist, until he suddenly realized that he had made accurate portraits of the ringleaders, and that if any trouble came of this food-requisitioning escapade, these men could be recognized and arrested. He turned pale when he saw the possible scrape he had got himself into. Men, he had heard, were easily lynched in that country. So he hastily rubbed out all the faces and substituted fresh ones, under the supervision of the old-timer.

That night, still looking for local color, the artist wandered into a saloon, and the men seeing they had a Cheechako in their midst, decided among themselves that they would give him what he was looking for. So one man, who pretended to be rushed up, began to shoot the pictures on the wall. The

bartender ordered him to stop, pulled a gun from under the bar, and shot up in the air. That was the signal for every one to produce a gun and start shooting, and I should have hated to be on the roof that night. Those were black-powder days and the room was full of smoke.

When two or three men tumbled down to the floor, it looked like the real thing. Not being able to get out, as the crowd was concentrated around the door, the artist chap put on a bold front and stood up, instead of crawling under the bar or behind the table. By so doing he won the admiration of all the men, and before he went up on the boat he was one of the most popular men in town.

When the outfits were finally unloaded and the boat allowed to go, our chance was at hand to be taken up to Dawson. But here we ran across another snag. The superintendent refused to take us because we belonged to the rival company; and considering what he had just been through I don't think I blame him. Our party now consisted of five, having been joined by men from Circle City who wanted to go up, so we boldly walked on board and defied him to put us off, knowing pretty well that the white deck-hands would take our part rather than get the enmity of the whole river. We didn't run any risk, as the Eskimo deck-hands and Indians didn't count either way.

Not wanting any more trouble than we already had on our hands, I had sneaked my dog Shirley into the engine-room when no one was looking. When we had been out about twenty-four hours, the superintendent asked me if I had a dog on board, to which I replied that I had. He then said that it was bad enough to be compelled to take passengers up, but he'd be damned if he would take a dog, and told me to chuck him overboard.

There is a saying in this country that a man may not fight for his wife, but he'll always fight for his dog. Anyway, I informed the superintendent in my most polite manner that before he chucked the dog overboard he would have to do the same to me, and before he did that there were four of my companions who would have to go overboard too, and he had better begin because he had quite a job on his hands. With that he flunked and said that if I had to take the dog I should have to pay for his passage. I told him that he could hand his bills in to the Alaska Company because they always paid Shirley's wherever he went.

My seat at the table was at the captain's right. That day at dinner I moved down one peg and put Shirley in my old seat, with a bandanna around his neck as a napkin, and when the superintendent came in I thought he would burst. He didn't say anything, but he looked black.

However, I must say the good heart of the man came out next day when he made friends with Shirley and fed him out of his own plate, though I think that this was partly due to Shirley's ingratiating manner. This little act of the superintendent thawed the ice with all of us, until another complication arose when we overtook the poling boat that had started ahead of us. When the superintendent was informed that they were our friends, he refused to pick them up. However, the Indian pilot of the steamer ran the boat over and picked them up on his own responsibility.

With the exception of stopping to kill a bear, there were no excitements until we reached Dawson, which we did only an hour or so after Captain Hanson arrived. He had made one of the hardest trips on record, traveling literally night and day, to warn the men at Dawson to leave while there was time. It was one of the finest acts I ever saw done in the country. As we came up he was in the middle of an address to the crowd, warning them of the famine and telling them that no boat could possibly come up. He was almost set at naught by our arrival. But this trip bore fruit. A large number of men decided to leave for the lower river, as even our boatload and that of the old *Bella*, which followed closely on our heels, weren't enough to relieve the famine, for both were loaded very lightly.

The minute the old *Bella* arrived it was my time to go to work. Not only hours but minutes counted, as the second run of ice had begun to come down the river, and it was only a matter of time till the boat had to seek a place of safety to hole up in. I hired the largest crew I possibly could work. Freight began to come out rapidly, and the men seemed to realize the importance of hurrying. As darkness came on nothing stopped and the speed seemed to increase.

The night was bitterly cold and the water had frozen over lightly between the boat and the shore. A young man from Chicago, who had never seen anything of rough life, was working with the crew. In his hurry to keep ahead of the running stevedores he made a misstep, dropped about eight feet onto the ice below the gangplank, and went through. A young fellow just behind him threw his load off and jumped in after him, just saving him from being swept under the ice.

Now it had always been my policy to give the men a bonus for especially good work. Although this happened in the early evening, I paid the rescuer for an entire night's work, gave him a bottle of whiskey, and sent him home. Another young fellow who had seen this little by-play, watching his time when no one was looking, picked up a dog, jumped over, and came ashore with the dog in his arms. The fact was that the dog wasn't heavy enough to break through the ice and could have got ashore alone, even if he had fallen in. But when the man appeared before me soaking wet, with the dog (my dog!) in his arms, there was nothing to do but to treat him as I had the other man. Later the boy told me how he had worked me.

Stimulating the men with whiskey was not so bad as it sounds. Every one knew the importance of haste in unloading the boat, and a little stimulant only helped them. The only time it ever went wrong in my experience was when I was unloading my first boat. That day I was trying to work about twenty Eskimo and Indian deck-hands. Not understanding their language or habits, I first got hold of the mate and asked him how to work them. His reply was, 'Sure, boy, never hit one unless you kill him, because he'll knife you later on, or else the whole gang will suddenly disappear. Swear at them all you like, poke them out with long sticks from any corner they may get into, jolly 'em along with a little drink now and then, and when they see you mean business they'll work for you.'

It was a crime to give liquor to an Indian or Eskimo on the lower river, but not up here. All for a good cause I tried this method and it worked splendidly for a little while. I didn't realize, however, how small the capacity of an Eskimo is, having gauged it by that of a white man. The first thing I knew, the entire crowd had gone crazy, dancing, singing, and making all kinds of bird and beast noises. Some of them were really quite wonderful at it. Then one proceeded to jump into the river.

Stopping the entire work and getting together all the white men, we trussed up the Eskimos and Indians by tying a rope around each one, under his arms, with the knot coming between the shoulder blades where he couldn't get at it. Throwing the other end over the beams on the upper deck, we left them with their feet just touching the floor.

I was suggesting to one of the stevedores that we put guy lines on to keep them steady when Captain Hanson, the superintendent, arrived on the scene. It is the only time I have ever seen him show surprise. As far as I was concerned I should rather have seen the devil, as I had been hired only a few hours and wanted to make a good impression. With his hands thrown up, he said, 'Mr. Walden, what in the world is the meaning of this?' and I managed to stammer out, ' I think they must have got hold of some whiskey somewhere.'

We let them down and they lay still. Then they practiced a new method of curing a jag: this was to pour water down each other's ears and up their noses. This was my first attempt to work Eskimos.

Both the Bella and the Portius B. Weir left the following day loaded to the gunwales with refugees for Fort Yukon, where there was plenty of food. Besides these, a multitude of small boats and scows, and every conceivable thing that could float, took their chances in drifting down the river.

I heard later that these hungry men made life miserable for the man who was in charge of the food at Fort Yukon. The refugees were mostly men who had come into the country that summer, had no money, and couldn't pay for their food. At the meeting that Captain Hanson was haranguing when we arrived on the Weir with food, he promised that all the men who went down without money should have free allowance at Fort Yukon. A representative of one of the San Francisco newspapers promised one hundred thousand dollars for their food. But the man in charge at Fort Yukon didn't have any orders to this effect, and tried to get the men to cut wood for it. Whether or not these men helped themselves, I don't know, but I do know that none of them starved to death.

I should like to add another incident here to prove the generosity of the miners. Father Judge, a Jesuit priest who had won the respect and love of every man in the country, built a hospital in Dawson, borrowing the money from the Alaska Commercial Company, which was controlled by Jews. They lent it to him on the security of his bare word. After Captain Hanson's meeting about food was over, and while the crowd was still animated, Father Judge took the stump and informed everybody that the hospital was practically finished, and that any one needing its services would be welcome and

treated as well as possible, whether he had any money or not. He said it had cost him thirty-five thousand dollars (carpenters were twenty dollars a day, and lumber two hundred and fifty dollars a thousand), and that his Church would pay for all this, but that he would like to send back word to them that the men of Dawson appreciated his hospital, and he would like to pass round the hat.

That hat was immediately filled with gold-sacks, or pokes of loose gold, and checks written on the backs of envelopes to the Alaska Commercial Company, which did a kind of banking business for us. After his hat was filled, more hats were called for and were filled, and the Father got not only the amount he needed, but a great deal more besides.

Whenever Father Judge had to make a visit to an outlying district, we drove him across with our dog teams. Although he always wanted to pay us, we never accepted it. I was driving him one day, and, while running along beside my team on the hard trail, I happened to stub my toe. I am afraid my language was more or less questionable, and I apologized to the old man for having forgotten whom I had for a passenger. His reply was this: 'See here! A priest is no different from any other man, and your language to me shouldn't be any different. I know very well you didn't mean any disrespect to the Almighty, and He probably won't lay it up against you: it was just letting off steam. He will probably forgive you if you keep your word, are true to your partner, and don't get drunk any oftener than you have to. Men who do that are the kind of men we want.'

He broke me of swearing for some time. This old man certainly understood us, and every one who came his way got some benefit from him. Later on Alec MacDonald, known as the 'King of the Klondike,' built a chapel for him, under the altar of which the old man was subsequently buried.

One day Captain Hanson told me rather an amusing tale about an adventure that he had one summer in the Aleutian Islands. He was captain of a small tug at the time, with a crew of four or five. It was an old tug and could make only about eight miles an hour. They were cruising around the islands on the company's business when one of the crew yelled out, ' Dead sea otter on the port bow!'

Now the custom in that section was this: If a number of men, while on the water, caught a sea otter, the man who first got his hand on it received half of what the pelt was sold for. A prime pelt was worth from two thousand to twenty-five hundred dollars at that time.

At the cry of 'sea otter' the dory was drawn up and every man on board jumped into it with the exception of Captain Hanson. He was about to jump in when he realized that the engineer in his hurry had forgotten to stop the boat, which would have gone off without them and left them in Behring Sea. So he stayed on board and steered the boat around in a circle, not knowing how to shut it down, and finally picked the dory up with a rope. Nothing was got out of all this, however, as the pelt was too far gone to be any good.

The latter part of the summer of '97 the captain on one of the up-river boats brought along a monkey and a parrot. This caused both consterna-

tion and amusement to the Eskimo deck-hands, who kept the captain informed day and night what the monkey was doing, much to his disgust. The monkey had free run of the boat. I was on board at the time, and to see what the Eskimos thought of the monkey, I asked one of the deck-hands what sort of animal it was. At first he thought I was joshing him, but when I swore up and down that I had never seen one before, and asked him again what it was, after a good deal of thought he replied, 'Little bit all same Injun, little bit all same dog.' The parrot was bought by a man on the trail where all the pack-trains passed, and it wasn't long before he beat the mule-skinners at their own language.

Early this winter a fire broke out one evening in one of the saloons in Dawson, and before it had burnt itself out it had destroyed the heart of the city. All the buildings were of logs, and some of them three stories high. The fire was very hot while it lasted and, as there were no chimneys or foundations, the city being built on perpetually frozen ground, there was absolutely nothing left.

The Alaska Commercial Company saved their building by opening bale after bale of blankets, covering the whole building over, and keeping the blankets saturated with water. The only water supply was that which could be dipped up by pail from the Yukon River.

In the saloons and business houses, the ashes of the place where the cashier sat and weighed out gold dust were panned out, so that practically no gold was lost. But a lot of provisions were burned up, making the scarcity of food a great deal worse. The fire was hardly out before rebuilding of the town began.

There was a pet donkey in town called 'Wise Mike,' who was the survivor of a burro train of the previous summer. At one time he had traveled with a circus and he knew a good many tricks. He had spent his time before the fire traveling from saloon to saloon. He was always welcome, was fed by the different saloon men, and would lie down by the stove like a big dog. It became the custom, when some miner from the creeks arrived in town and had had a few drinks, for the saloon-keeper to ask him if he wouldn't kindly kick 'that damned jackass' out, as he had been there all day. Then the fun began.

At the first kick Wise Mike would rear up in his wrath and attack the man, much to the amusement of the surrounding crowd. As there was no use trying to punch him, it generally wound up in a wrestling match, the donkey standing on his hind legs and striking at the man, squealing, but never attempting to bite, and the man trying to throw him off his pins and lug him out.

A really sober man was never asked to do this, and the sympathy of the surrounding crowd was always with the donkey. I have seen a bystander play foul in the donkey's favor by tripping the man up. After vanquishing his opponent, Wise Mike would either saunter out slowly, just to show he could go out by himself if he wanted to, or he would go back and lie down by the stove and go to sleep again. After the big fire, since Wise Mike had no home, and since food was very scarce, some kind friend shot him.

It was advertised at one of the dance-hall saloons that fall that a young girl would auction herself off to the highest bidder. Of course this was rather a unique event, so there was a large attendance at the saloon. When the auction opened, the girl was dressed in the usual garb of the dance hall, which was the latest Parisian fashion. She was assisted onto the bar and stood there while the auctioneer expounded the terms of the auction, which were, as far as I can remember, that she was to live with the highest bidder as his wife for the winter, doing his housekeeping. He and she were to act in every way as a married couple for the duration of that time. The money was to be deposited with one of the big companies, not to be paid to her till after the expiration of the time allotted. If this proved unsatisfactory to either party, the one breaking it lost the money put up. Courtesy and good treatment were called for on both sides.

The bidding was sharp, as even the men who didn't want her liked the idea of being in it. It gradually got down to a few, and when the bidding showed signs of lagging, the girl was asked to walk up and down the length of the bar. There was nothing indecorous on either side. It was her right not to accept a bid if she didn't like the man. She was eventually knocked down for somewhere round five thousand dollars. How they came out I never heard.

As winter came on there was absolutely no chance of any more food arriving, and, the scarcity being made much worse by the fire, prices rose terrifically. For instance, flour which had been selling at six dollars a sack went up to a hundred, which means at the rate of four hundred dollars a barrel. Candles which had to be used in the mines went up to a dollar apiece. Bacon was a dollar and a half a pound. Beans a dollar a pound.

Kerosene and whiskey were priced at fifty dollars a gallon, but the whiskey was very weak. As one old man expressed it to me, with tears in his eyes, 'I used to be able to get drunk for an ounce, and now it takes over a hundred dollars!'

It was impossible to buy any dog-food for less than a dollar a pound, and dogs themselves ranged from three hundred to five hundred dollars apiece. One man sold a team of five splendid dogs for twenty-five hundred dollars. Many men in the camp who had never had any money in their lives before were now rich. But they had nothing to buy with the money. Gambling was very prevalent, and the play ran fabulously high.

The first half of this winter I spent in freighting up to the mines and back, and in long solitary trips to outlying creeks where men who thought they had made more or less rich discoveries wanted food taken out to them. Some of these trips were from one hundred to two hundred miles long. The prospectors had poled up in the summer to the mouth of some river, and then followed it up, prospecting all the way. Some trips, as the prospector had made them, were like following two sides of a triangle. They could be shortened in winter by cutting across corners. This necessitated traveling over country which at that time no white man had ever seen before, and although they were hard trips, they certainly were interesting.

At first traveling without tent or stove was practiced a good deal. Later the tent and stove crept in as a much easier and more satisfactory method, although on looking back on it, I dare say it was less picturesque. In a country where there was plenty of timber and little or no wind, it was possible to make a camp-fire, which was in some ways more comfortable than the tent and stove, but involved more labor. This extra labor counted a good deal after a hard day's trip, and to offset it the extra weight of tent and stove was only a few pounds.

In making an open camp we selected two trees from four to six feet apart, and started a fire in the middle and just in front of them. A back wall was then built up against the trees by piling logs one on top of the other to the height of a man. This acted as a reflector. The fire was replenished by piling on green logs about eight feet long. After that we laid boughs down in front of the fire for a bed. A windbreak of a sled-sheet or boughs was then constructed beyond the bed. In some camps we used a wall of snow for this purpose. This made an extremely comfortable camp, where food for men and dogs could be cooked at the same time, and where there was plenty of light, besides the cheer that always comes with an open fire.

We lay lengthwise with the fire, and provided ourselves with a pole which had a hook at one end with which to pull down a log or two from the back wall at intervals during the night, to replenish the fire. Thus we did not have to get out of our robes or sleeping-bags; sometimes we were even able to dispense with the robe altogether. The only disadvantage of this system was the tremendous lot of firewood that had to be cut and handled. A stove only required a few armfuls of dry wood, cut short. The open fire used about half a cord of green wood, cut eight feet long.

Those nights certainly had their charm. After a hearty meal one lay on top of one's sleeping-bag, alongside the blazing fire, smoking, with the fire's gleam opening up long lanes through the dark forest. The smoke rose straight up till it cooled, and then; spread out, forming a canopy. A perpetual low boom came from the river, mingled with the sharp crack of the freezing spruce and the hiss and crackle of the fire.

The long-drawn howl of a wolf would come across the river or from the back of the forest. If you had native dogs, though they are afraid of the timber wolf, they would answer until the whole forest vibrated with the wild song. These did not seem noises, but rather like a part of the great Northern silence. One would lie for hours, deep in the wonder of it, till the time came to creep into one's sleeping bag for the night.

One day was much like another, and yet no two were alike. Although the nearest living man might be two weeks' travel away, one was never lonely. The mere matter of being always on the move prevented that. But one was mighty glad to see a man, even if he were only an Indian, and of course the dogs were always company. I think of all lonely spots on earth a deserted camp is the loneliest. It is on trips like these that man begins to understand dog nature.

Later on, when we gave up 'siwashing' and traveled with a tent and

stove, the system was something like this: The trail sled, which contained the camp outfit and rations for several days, was unhitched and hauled back into the timber where the camp was to be made, leaving the other two sleds on the river to be picked up next morning. The tents we used were seven by nine wall tents, made of the lightest duck. Two trees were selected and the tent suspended between them by ropes running through the peak of the tent. Guy ropes were tied to the bushes or whatever was available, as it was impossible to drive stakes into the frozen ground.

The stove was made of two five-gallon commercial oil tins with ends cut off and telescoped together to about twenty inches over all. The ends of the stove were placed on small logs, and the pipe run up through a tin plate in the tent roof.

Kindling for one fire was always carried from the last camp, inside the stove, as it was very important to get the fire lit immediately for fear of freezing the fingers while doing camp work. We never shoveled away the snow, but turned in the bottom of the tent all around. Boughs were laid flat to hold it down. The bed was then prepared and covered the floor space.

Then we unharnessed the dogs, changed our footwear at once, and hung it on the ridge line inside the tent to dry. In camp, we usually wore caribou socks with the hair inside. While supper was cooking, a fire was started outside for the dogs' kettle, which was filled with ice or snow. The dogs were fed last, as it gave them a chance to rest and come to their appetite.

While the bacon was frying we made a flapjack. This was mixed in the sack of flour by making a hollow in the flour, putting in salt and baking powder, pouring water into the hollow, and stirring up a ball of dough, which was then fried in the hot bacon fat. When that came out of the frying-pan, the frozen beans were put in, and as soon as tea was made supper was ready. Tea was a wonderful drink in the North. It was always boiled, and very strong, and we drank cup after cup until bedtime. Liquor was never used on the trail, as the reaction made it impossible to stand the perpetual cold.

To be continued....

One of my favorite winter activities is watching the rosy glow of an Army Beach sunrise from the warmth of my rocking chair. After I let Poochie and Pooper out for their morning romp, I crank up the woodstove, start the coffee, wrap myself in two Scottish mohair blankets and turn on CBC for the news and weather report. When the coffee is ready it's time to let the dogs back in. They go back to sleep and I sit in the dark for another two hours drinking coffee, listening to the radio and waiting for profound thoughts to come forth and shed some light into my dusky world, but they seldom do.

For as long as I can remember I've wanted to have unshakable opinions, deep, original thoughts to shape into riveting sentences and paragraphs and fire off to the Op/Ed pages of newspapers. I'm not sure why. But I do know I lack the steadfast belief in my own interpretation of the events happening around me that editorial writers must have. So I turn to other writers in the hope that they can tell me what to think.

One of my favorites is a woman I used to work with in Los Angeles. In 1981, Barbara Peters Smith was a talented young journalist who worked furtively at an unfinished novel she kept in her desk drawer. She is now a 47-year-old mother of teenagers who writes a weekly column for the *Sarasota Herald Tribune*. We lost contact years ago but I found her on the Internet at www.newscoast.com. Barbara's columns and other stories in the Florida paper gave me a sense of what it was like to be an American following the horrific events of September 11th.

Certainly, this was no time to voice dissent. When Barbara expressed sympathy for those who had died in the war in Afghanistan, a reader was outraged. "Dear Fat Slut" (she is neither) his e-mail note began, "You didn't really believe you could slip past your readers the notion of 'bombed Afghan civilians, slain Pakistani prisoners,' without anyone noticing your blatant disregard for the thousands of murdered civilians in the World Trade center… same old liberal crap out of the same old fat stupid mouth…"

Having opinions that differ from the majority and putting them out there for others to attack cannot make for a comfortable life, I think. My hat's off to you, Barbara. Keep up the good fight in the New Year. As for me, I'll be sitting in my comfortable chair again tomorrow, thankful for the dawning of another winter day.