THE YUKONER MAGAZINE

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ISSUE No.22

- Trapping Stories
- Stroller White
- Tribute to Al Downes
- Rafting the Tat
- Egg-Zageration

Newt Webster landed in Dawson City in 1936, looking for work. He was hired by the local power company and he worked at the North Fork hydro plant on the Klondike River from 1936 until 1967. This plant supplied power to the big dredges in the Klondike Valley.

Then he worked out of the Dawson office for Northern Canada Power for another 12 years before retiring. He knew many veterans of the Klondike Gold Rush and other characters of Dawson. He remembers them as being very fine people in the days when hotels didn't issue keys to their rooms and no one in town locked their doors at night. Newt Webster is a great source of information on the old buildings and residents of Dawson.

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Click on these page numbers to go to that story. Click on page header (Yukoner Magazine) to return to the contents page.

Cover: Sarah Ballard at Dawson City, June, 2002. [S.H. photo]

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From the Editor

Apologies to George Gilbert, Elizabeth Mackie, John Skelton and others for not getting your stories into this issue. The special effort to present the Keno Hill Mines saga has taken up a lot of space.

I had all sorts of projects I wanted to finish around the property this summer. Every time I worked up the ambition, something blocked the effort. Like rain. Then waiting for everything to dry out after the rain. Then it would rain again just as I was about to start the projects. Then, too much wind. Too many bugs. Too hot. Unexpected visitors. Earlier, the ground was too frozen and ice-covered to work and when the weather warmed up, the ice melted, leaving pools of water everywhere. Patiently, I waited through all these setbacks for a nice day. Finally one came along but... it was too nice out to be working so I had to start all over. Maybe next summer will be more successful.

Actually, there were other interruptions. Over the past couple of months I have been working for Frantic Films from Winnipeg. They are re-enacting the Klondike Gold Rush for the History Television Network. This four-part series, called "Klondike: Quest For Gold," will be shown in January, 2003. The rockers I built will be in it for sure, and perhaps I might play a bit part in the final segment. If so, I would be the old geezer who tells the Cheechakos where to find gold in the hills around Dawson City.

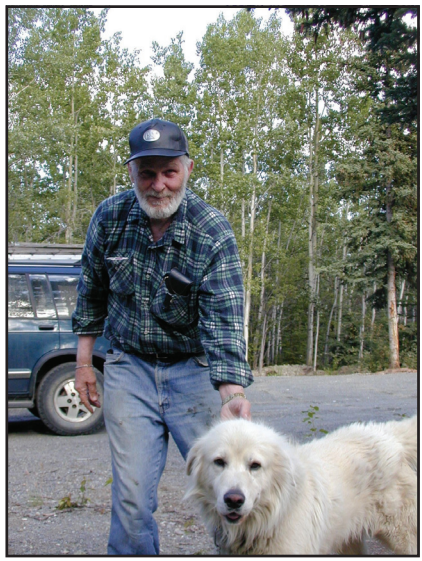
I have made several trips up there as a location scout and the pay has been very good, compared to writing and publishing.

Those of you with old *Yukoner Magazines* going back to Number Two may recall a photo in there of me and Prospector Jim White. At the time I had mistakenly written an obituary on Jim for the newspaper, believing him to be another Jim White who passed away.

I will always regret that misake. Before Jim even heard about it, his funeral had been arranged, and a casket was bought for him. The waitress in his favourite cafe keeled over backwards when he walked in and all his friends were greatly surprised to see him. It took a while to straighten out the mess.

Well, the other day, I stopped in to see Jim the at Haines Junction.

He was as enthusiastic as ever, and of course brought out some ore



Jim White, August, 2002.

samples to look at. I wanted to ask him about a bear he shot in the Dawson Mountain Range some years ago.

It was an adult grizzly, he said, with two cubs, who kept invading a prospecting camp. Jim had eight geology students under his wing at the time.

After several attempts to keep the bears out of camp with flare guns, Jim had to shoot the mother grizzly as she approached the cook tent. It took several shots from a 30:30 to bring her down.

The horrified students were then told that the cubs would also have to be shot because they could not fend for themselves and would starve to death. They telephoned the Yukon Game Department who said if Jim and the students could capture the cubs, they would find a home for them.

Brandishing a helicopter cargo net, the students chased the terrified cubs all over the mountain trying to capture them. Finally, they set up a sort of trap and the bears wound up in the net, with lots of bites and scratches all around.

The Game Department came to fetch the cubs and everybody celebrated. Some weeks later, Jim and the students got a call saying the little critters had a new home where they would be treated like royalty—a zoo in Seattle, Washington.

The winner of the gold nugget in our subscription renewal draw was John Piedmont of Onoway, Alberta. Thanks to everyone who renewed. That's what keeps us going here.

So long for now,

Sam

The Mail Run

Hi Dianne

We have thoroughly enjoyed The Yukoner Magazine. My husband hauls freight from Prince George to Edmonton to Inuvik. I went twice with him last year. My First visit to the Yukon and NWT. With reading your magazine it gave me a real insight into your Whitehorse and area. Spent a few hours in Whitehorse. Loved it. If we were younger we'd be living up there. Thanks again to Sam and you. Great reading from cover to cover.

Janice Forsberg
Prince George, B. C.

Dear Sam and Dianne

I just wanted to let you know how much we enjoy reading the Yukoner. My wife, Margaret, and I read it from cover to cover as soon as it arrives in the mail. As I was raised in the Peace River Country during the twenties and thirties, I can relate to many of your stories. I can remember in the log cabin on the homestead that Dad would be the first one up on the cold winter mornings to stoke the wood heater and light the fire in the cook stove to cook breakfast and take the early morning chill off as often the temperature outside would be thirty to forty below. As he was proceeding with this he would practice his oratory as he used to recite different tales at local community get-togethers. One I remember is the one of Service's quoted in the last issue about Stroller White. I don't know who improvised the extra line Dad used but his version was:

In the land of the pale blue snow
Where it's 99 below and the Polar Bears are dancing on the plain
In the shadow of the pole,
oh my heart, my life, my soul
I will meet you when the ice worms nest again.

Also the story in the article "A Dog Puncher on the Yukon," about a young fellow who went and demanded at gunpoint the money his father so foolishly lost reminded me of an affair in the thirties in the local town. A young fellow was working very hard to make a go of it on the homestead trying to fill his father's shoes after his untimely passing. There only being his widowed mother and himself it was quite a struggle.

Having had a fairly good crop of grain, the young fellow took a load some hundred miles to an elevator at rail head. After cashing his grain cheque he fell afoul of a local character who made his way in life with a deck of cards. The young fellow lost all his money which he needed for supplies and was very distraught. He went to his truck and got a small iron bar, went back and put a beating on the card shark. The man later died. When the case came up in court the judge handed down a suspended sentence. This was well received by the local inhabitants as they felt a medal would have

THE MAIL RUN

been more appropriate than a jail sentence.
Jack and Margaret Hannam
Parksville, B. C.
Dear Dianne and Sam

We really enjoy reading your interesting stories and articles on the Yukon. We enjoyed the building of the White Pass and Yukon Route Railread articles. Last summer we drove the Alaska Highway. Had a ride on the train. This was a wonderful trip.
Donald and Loreen Nixon
Dundalk, Ontario

Dear Editor,

One of your stories on the old adding machine they used reminded me of the one I used in a small town in Ontario in 1943—crank and rickety stand and all.
Mary Vamplew
Wasaga Beach, Ontario
Dear Sam and Dianne,

I was just reading all the letters to the editor in my recent Yukoner magazine and thought I would write a short note of my own. I really enjoy

Dale and Harry Dreschel, from St. Walburg, Saskatchewan, visiting Yukoner Magazine headquarters at Army Beach, July, 2002.

THE MAIL RUN

your magazine and look forward to receiving it. I like to know about the Canada I haven't been able to see. I am very much interested in Canadian history, which is why I subscribed to your magazine in the first place. I still have my little gold nugget I received when I subscribed to your magazine and I am honoured to show it to anyone who wants to see it. Thank you for my gold nugget. My only wish is that some day I can visit your part of Canada.

Best wishes to you both and keep the magazine coming.

Joyce O Briggs Martin
Orillia, Ontario

Hi:

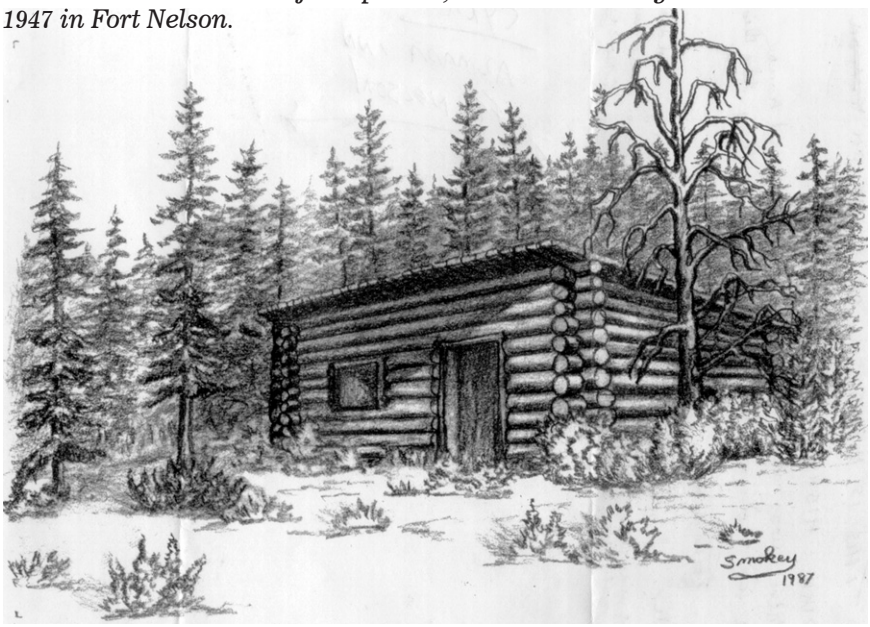
I have been reading the story of Yukon Joe on page 23 of your issue # 21 and am wondering if anyone knows if this is the same guy who painted a lot of pictures along the Hi-Way.

He used to stop with a trapper /gas bar operated by the name of Gus Halverson in Fort Nelson back in 1958 and I was running a Taxi Etc at that time and I picked up a few pictures. One painted on a Gold Panning Pan.

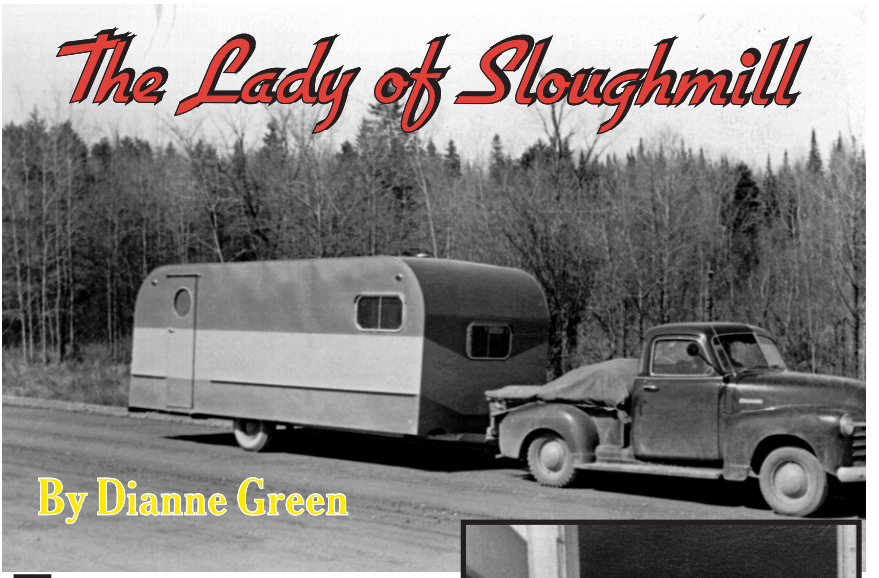
I enjoy the Yukoner which I receive from John Hornel who was at one time Gov't Agent in Fort Nelson and he gets it from S.G. Wilson, New Denver, BC.

Jack Porter
Victoria BC

P.S.: We know all the Wodja's up there, lived beside Wally and Ann back in 1947 in Fort Nelson.



The Lady of Sloughmill



By Dianne Green

In 1970, at an age when many couples are looking forward to retirement, Mickey Lammers along with her partner, Gunnar Nilsson, began a new life in the wilderness. Together the couple carved out a homestead and business in the forest nourished by the turquoise waters of the Yukon River. Sloughmill, or "Gunnar's sawmill" as locals often called it, operated for 30 years providing lumber and building logs during a period of nearly continuous economic expansion in the Whitehorse area. It also provided a comfortable home and an active, satisfying life for its owners.

For Mickey, the new venture was the latest in a series of new beginnings. Maria (Mickey) Stoel was born in Arnhem, Holland, in 1923. During the Depression, when work was scarce in Europe, the family moved to Sumatra, Indonesia where Mickey's father found work with Shell Oil as a finishing carpenter. From ages six to 11 Mickey attended school in Sumatra then returned to

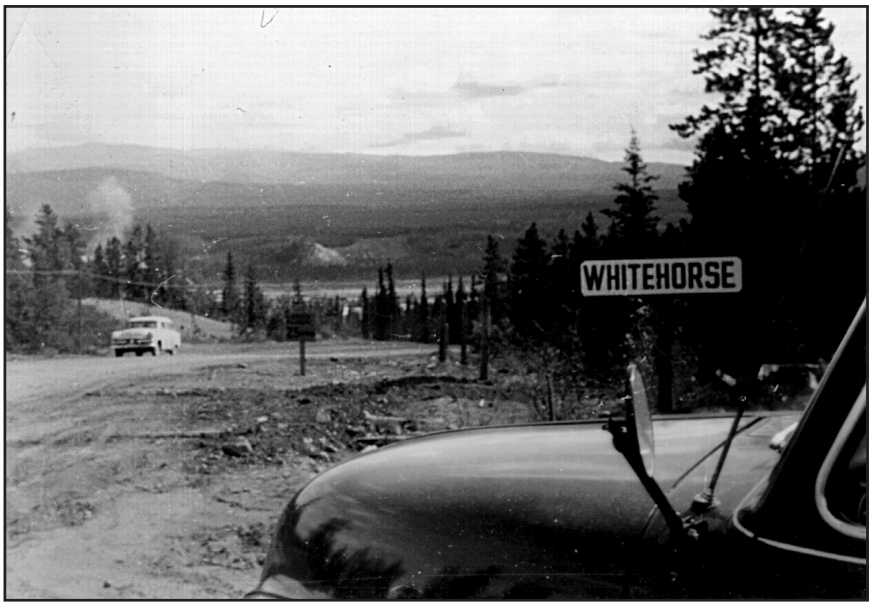
Micky Lammers stepping into her trailer during the long journey up the dusty, muddy, twisting Alaska Highway in 1953.

Holland to finish her education. Her parents remained in Indonesia where later they were imprisoned in separate camps during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia. Mickey was working as a nurse in Arnhem when she got the good news from the Red Cross – her parents were alive and would soon return to Holland. .

In 1948, Mickey came to Canada with her husband, John Lammers, and their son, Hans, who had been born the previous year. Their first home in Canada was a farm in Cardston, Alberta. The young family soon moved to Ontario where John planned to work as a translator. The job didn't pan out but John found other work and a second son, Bill, was born in Ontario. In 1953, the Lammers family decided on a whim to go to the Yukon. They pulled a trailer behind their Chevrolet pickup, arriving in Whitehorse in early May 1953.

John worked at several jobs before signing on with Canadian National Telegraphs in 1954. The family moved up and down the Alaska Highway as John was transferred to repeater stations at Coal River, Brooks Brook, Koidern, Canyon and Whitehorse. During this period Mickey developed an interest in the wild flowers that grew alongside the highway. When she saw an interesting flower she stopped and drew a picture of it. Her drawings later appeared in her book, "Wild flowers of the Yukon," (1979).

In 1960 the couple paid $150 for a lot in Crestview, a new Whitehorse subdivision. "We lived in at tent until half the house was up then moved in. There were only a handful of people living there at the time." One of those people was Gunnar Nilsson, a Swede who had immigrated to Canada in



Arriving at Mile 918 in 1953, looking down the famous Two-Mile Hill (now a four-lane paved roadway) into Whitehorse.

1953. Gunnar had worked on the family farm in Sweden. Later he learned to build bridges in the Swedish Army. By 1963, Gunnar and his partner, Hector Lang, were constructing bridges at dozens of sites around the Yukon.

After their oldest son graduated from high school, Mickey and John Lammers were ready for another adventure. During a boat trip along the Yukon River they found a spot where they thought they would like to build a tourist camp. The camp, later known as "Stepping Stone," was located on a bluff overlooking the Pelly River not far from where it joins the Yukon River. With help from their sons, Bill and Hans, they built living quarters, a separate building for cooking, and three guest cabins. The tourists came and Mickey cooked for them. She remembers the experience as being "just a lot of work." Mickey spent long periods of time alone at the camp as business trips took John away from home. Eventually he moved to Saltspring Island where he lives still.

In the winter of 1969/70, Mickey's new partner, Gunnar Nilsson, located a piece of timbered land about five kilometres south of the Alaska Highway near the Yukon River Bridge. Frank Billy, a first nations man whose family lived in the area, had told Gunnar about the densely wooded area at the north end of Marsh Lake. Located at the edge of a slough, along a section of waterway where the lake narrows and becomes the Yukon River, the area supported rich stands of spruce and balsam poplar. Alder and willow also grew in the rich, moist ground.

"Gunnar had done some sawing while he was building bridges on the Canol Road. He knew he liked it and thought he would like to operate a sawmill," Mickey explains.

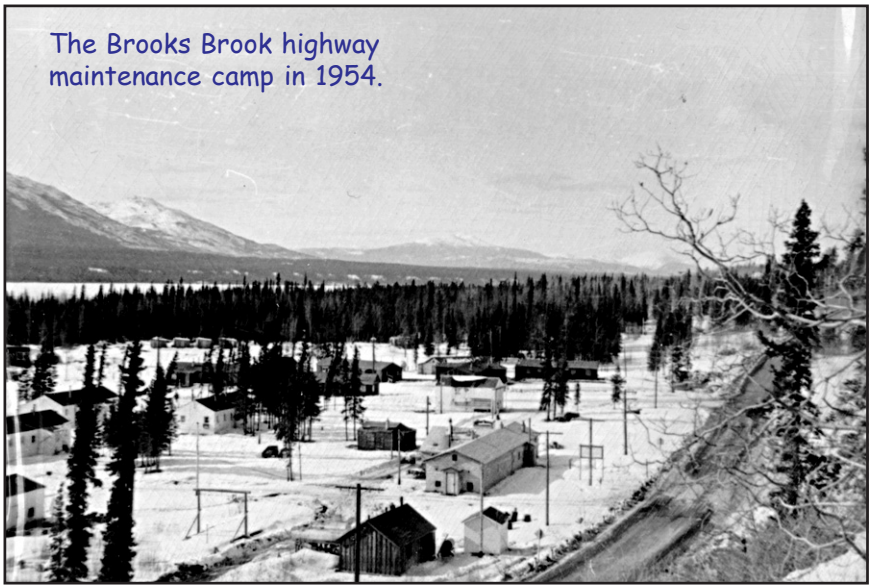
That first year Gunnar, Hector Lang and Mickey's son, Bill, cut their first logs and began clearing land for a mill site. The mill's first squared timbers or "cants" sold to General Enterprises in 1970.

"In those days you just put a saw there and started to work," Mickey says. "We didn't have the land but we had a timber permit. When we went to YTG to get try to purchase the property they didn't know where it was. The land had never been surveyed.

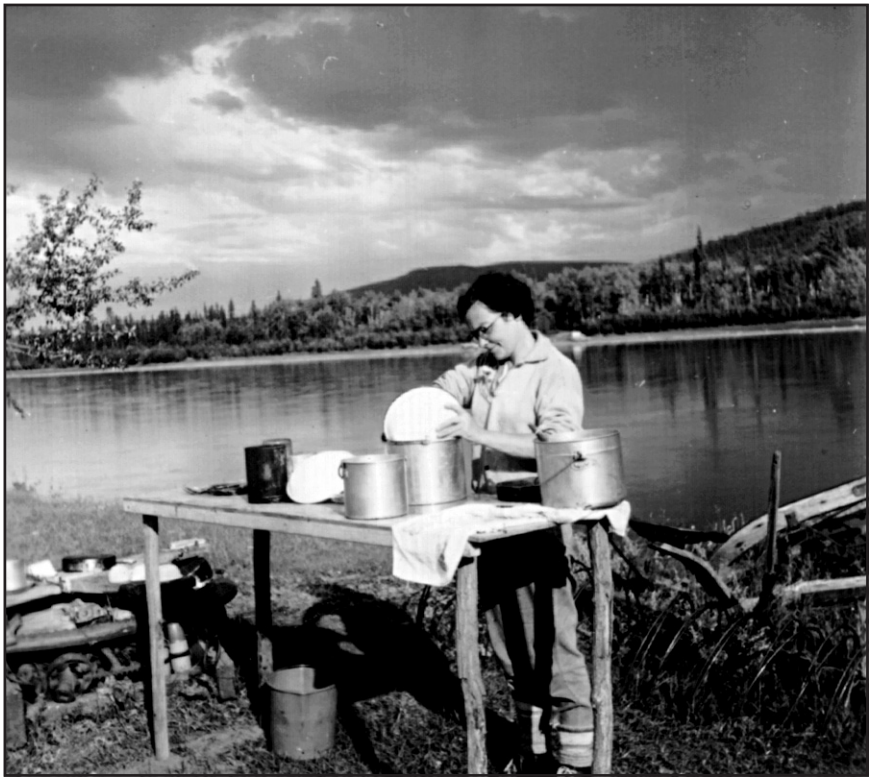
"Even then there were a lot of cabins along the road coming in. People called them 'fishing cabins.' We drove in, then bicycled, and then walked. Gunnar had his Cat (tractor) at the site and one day we arrived and saw that it had been moved. Someone had used it. That's when we decided to live here, in 1973."

At first there was only a shack to sleep in but the couple soon built a small cabin. Before long they discovered that they needed more room. Gunnar, an expert with a saw, cut the cabin in half and extended it by building a new middle section. Later they moved the house to a nearby site to make way for a larger, multi-story house, which they moved into in 1985.

With the purchase of a new Pendu re-saw in 1980, the owners of Sloughmill became the only local producers of dimensional lumber. Now



The Brooks Brook highway maintenance camp in 1954.



Mickey Lammers washing dishes beside the Pelly River, ca 1965.

they could feed a cant into the mill and watch it come out as sawed boards exactly one-inch thick. The operation became even more sophisticated when Gunnar and Mickey purchased planers and began producing several different styles of siding and patterned tongue and groove boards for interior walls.

"There were two other sawmills operating at Marsh Lake then, but those mills did not produce finished lumber. We were the only ones," Mickey remembers.

As the country residential subdivisions around Whitehorse grew, the demand for local lumber and building logs grew as well. The saws and planers of Sloughmill hummed and screeched as Gunnar and Mickey and their helpers filled custom orders for homeowners and supplied lumber to local retailers including Kilrich Industries, Beaver Lumber and Irly Bird.

Mickey worked alongside the men in the sawmill but she also had her own work to do. One of her least favorite jobs was stacking surveying stakes on pallets for delivery to customers.

"It was women's work. Slow and very tedious but someone had to do it," she says.

One of the men's toughest jobs was finding and milling the huge cants used in the construction of the Alpine Bakery in Whitehorse, Mickey recalls.

"They sweated over those things. You need logs 14- to 16-inch logs to make a 12-inch cant. It was heavy work but it got done and it's there."

By the early 1990s, the five-acre mill site had grown too busy for its owners. The mill employed up to five people and Gunnar found he was

Gunnar Nilsson operating the mill in 1980.

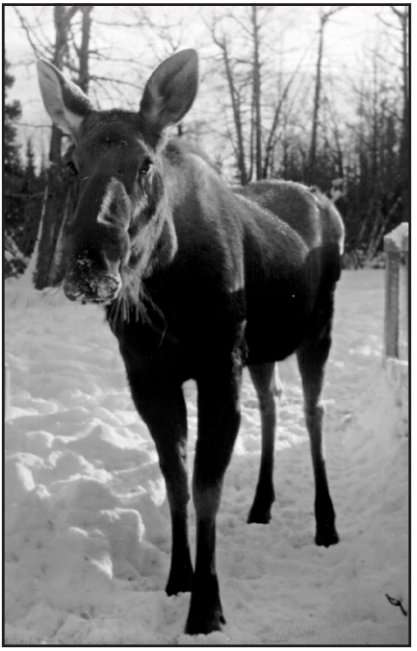
Hector Lang, Mickey Lammers, and Gunnar Nilsson at Sloughmill in 1999. Gunnar and Hector were inducted into the Yukon Transportation Museum Hall of Fame for their work in building bridges all over the Yukon. Both men passed away within a short time of each other. [photo by Gordon McIntyre]

spending too much time supervising employees. He preferred to do much of the work himself. Tired of all the interruptions and commotion, the couple moved the planers to property Mickey owned in the McCrae industrial area, where Bill Lammers took over that part of the business.

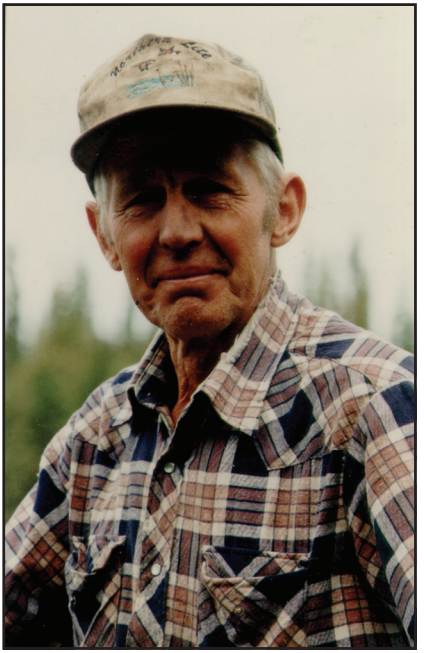
Gunnar stopped doing his own logging—another change. Instead, the Sloughmill owners purchased cants from other sawmills and sawed boards from these. When they weren't producing lumber, Gunnar and Mickey worked on their homestead. They built a second rental cabin near the property entrance, painted the house and garden fence, and stored vegetables from their garden under the floor of a heated chicken house.

In 1999, Gunnar's health began to deteriorate and the owners of Sloughmill closed the business that December. Never one to be idle, Gunnar continued doing lighter chores and tinkered with equipment, something he had always loved to do. Gunnar died in January 2001, one week before his 80th birthday.

Sloughmill looks different now than it did five years ago. The huge piles of sawdust are gone, some equipment has been sold, and there is no lumber stacked in the yard. Nonetheless this is still the home that Mickey prefers. She is not alone at the mill site. Both rental cabins are occupied. Harry Atkins, a longtime friend and former employee, purchased the Pendu resaw and operates it inside one of the large shops on the property. Nearby bush lots have been developed in recent years and neighbours stop by to chat. Mickey's son, Bill, helps out when needed. Her eldest son, Hans, is an airline pilot and lives in Vancouver.



The tame moose in 1980.



Gunnar Nilsson, 1995.

Sloughmill from the air, with Marsh Lake in the background pouring into the very beginning of the Yukon River.

Sloughmill in its heyday, ca 1990.

Fortunately, Mickey's health is good and she is able to do most things herself, including firing up the generators when she needs electricity. Mickey uses a hand pump at the kitchen sink to pump water from the well under the house. She fires up the sauna when she needs a bath and the outhouse is not far from the back door. It is not an easy life for a woman who will be 80 on her next birthday but the lady of Sloughmill intends to enjoy her country home for as long as she is able.

"Our life here never was easy, Mickey says with a smile. "But at least we were doing something."

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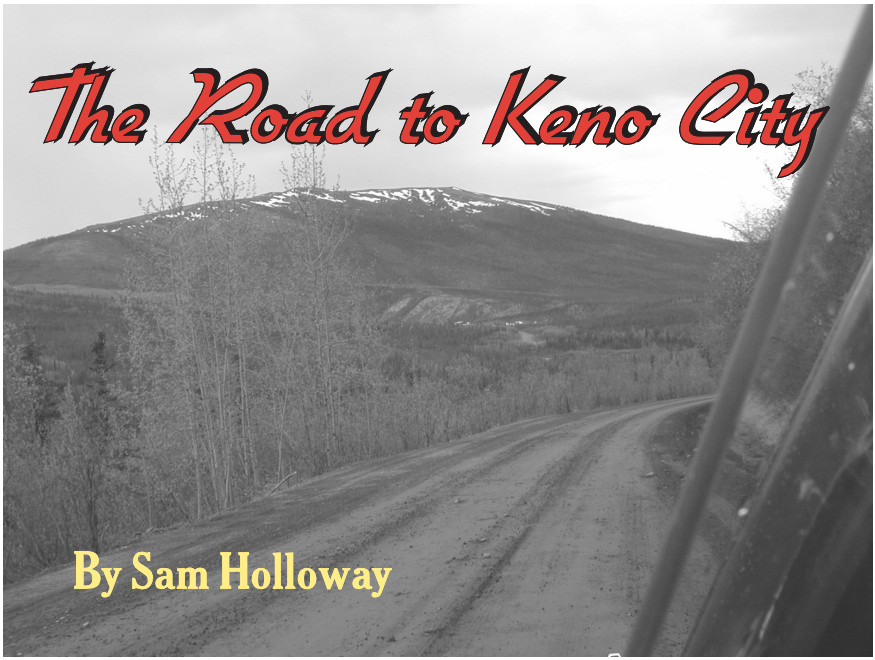
The house and garden, 1993.

Mickey and Gunnar at their house in 1973, before it was cut in half and lengthened.

The Road to Keno City



By Sam Holloway

Last month I took a drive to Mayo and from there I drove 30 miles uphill along the gravel road to the old silver mine at Elsa.

I stopped to examine a survival shack provided by the Lion's Club. The sign had fallen over and I propped it up to take a photo. This little hut had once been equipped with a woodstove, a supply of wood and matches and sometimes a can of gasoline. If you broke down on the road in minus 40 or colder temperatures, it could save your life, especially if you were hungover from a night at the Chateau Mayo and were trying to make the morning shift at the mine.

Survival shack.

The hinges squealed when I pulled open the door. Inside the shack, a rusting stove with its pipes missing stood neglected in the corner. No firewood could be seen but I saw a crumbling *Whitehorse Star* newspaper. No one had used this shack or cared for it in a long time.

Then I arrived at the townsite of Elsa. Only some benches of dry grass blowing in the wind, with bits of broken glass and pipe and wire lying

around, testified to the life that throbbed here in the past. The water tank and pumping system that supplied the vanished town still stood, looking ready to spring back to life at a moment's notice.

Not far up the road from the abandoned townsite, I could see the mine buildings. I drove in amongst them, looking at the tin rusting on the sagging roofs. Here and there a hole gaped in the side of some of the buildings. The main roadway had been partly washed away by alpine streams and the whole place looked like it could fall off the mountain.

A small crew of electricians were yanking wire out of the old testing laboratory, with the intention of installing new equipment. They were working for an American mining promoter who hoped to process the huge tailing pile from the former mill. In the month since I was there, the dream of reviving the old mine has died, collapsing under a mountain of environmental regulations and permits which might never be issued.

But for 50 years this mountain teemed with life, 24 hours a day. Ore trucks and characters of all descriptions drove back and forth from Mayo and Whitehorse, and men from every corner of the globe had worked here. The mineral-rich area had brought a steady prosperity to the whole Yukon during the best and worst of times in the south. Many a Yukoner got his or her start here; lots of children grew up in Elsa in security and isolation from the outside world.

I took a few pictures and drove on to Keno City, about ten miles past the minesite. I saw woodsmoke coming from the chimney of a cabin. Others had big piles of firewood stacked all around, ready for the long winter ahead.

Almost every building in the town seemed well-cared for, in the way that a collector might preserve his or her relics from the past.

At the famous Keno Mining Museum, I saw a man, obviously an ex-miner, taking tickets at the door for a group of tourists. I followed them inside and went over the collection, all lovingly displayed with not a speck of dust to be found anywhere.

The museum had been started in the 1970s by two miners, Drago Kokafov and Terry Levicki. They have both left the area and one Mike Mancini (son of an Elsa miner who had emigrated to Canada from Italy) has kept the project alive for the past dozen years. Mike would be the first to admit he had lots of help, some from the government, but local people know that without his time and interest, the museum might have folded.

Geordie Dobson's hotel and bar hadn't opened yet (see Issue No. 9 for a story on Geordie) so I went over to the Keno City Snack Bar for a chat with Mike Mancini.

It's been said that if Mike had taken all the antiques he hauled to the museum to his house instead, he would be a rich man today. Which he is not, unless you can get rich selling a half-dozen hamburgers a week during the tourist season.

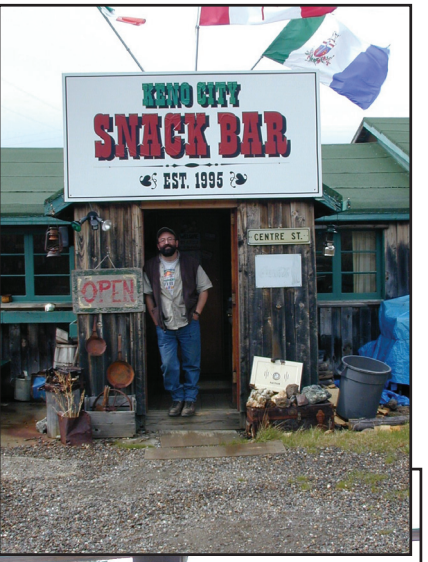
He told me how the town's population has swelled from 20 lost souls to an even 30, with the addition of some artists, mainly from Germany. There is a website promoting Keno City as a tourist destination and you can see museum pamphlets just about anywhere in the Yukon.

We chatted for a while and I ate the best sandwich I ever had in the

Yukon. I left him there, sitting by the window of his cafe, with the idea that he would write a history of Keno City for the next issue of the magazine.

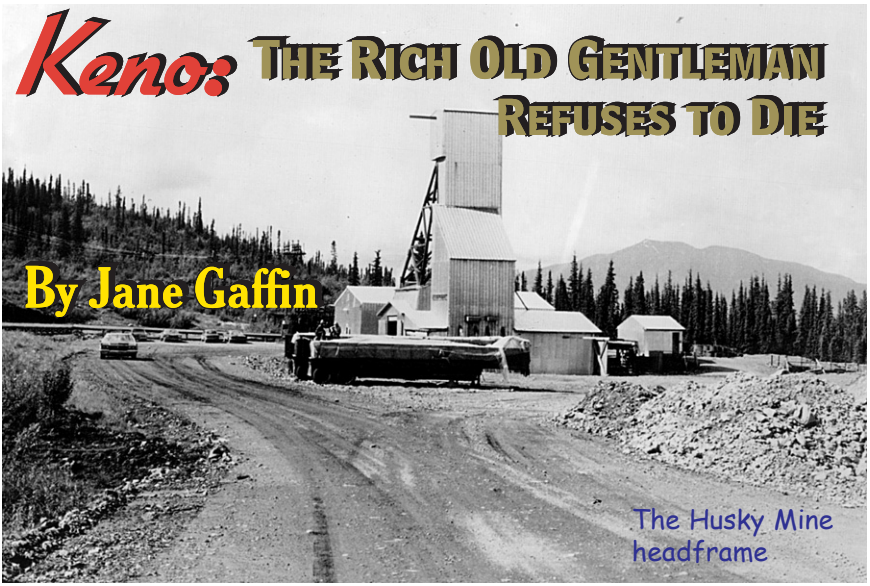
On the road back down to Mayo, watching my breathing so I didn't start hyperventilating from the tremendous change in air pressure, I felt not quite so sad as I had on the upward journey. There is life at the end of this old road, and as the folks in Keno would tell you, "It's not the end of the world, but you can see it from here."

Note:
In good old Yukon tradition, most of the miners at Keno Hill had the most colourful nicknames you ever heard of. Mike Mancini has started collecting some of those names from visitors and local residents. Your editor has gathered a few from people who once worked there. If any reader can recall some names, please send them in. They could end up in the Keno City Mining Museum. ❑



Mike Mancini, proprietor of the Keno City Snack Bar (SH photo).

Keno: The Rich Old Gentleman Refuses to Die



By Jane Gaffin

The Husky Mine headframe

In the summer of 1974, Jim McFaull graduated from the University of British Columbia. Amoco Canada's mineral division sent the exploration geologist into northeastern Yukon to look for zinc. To reach the Bonnet Plume target area the crew went through the town of Mayo on the bank of the Stewart River.

As the Trans North Beaver aircraft motored up the McQuesten River Valley, the pilot pointed out the United Keno Hill Mines operation at Elsa below. McFaull peered out the window in disbelief.

"Who in their right mind would ever want to live there?"

Three years later, the junior geologist joined the 350 residents who lived in the remote mining community and found his first mine. The Galkeno Open Pit vein-type silver deposit was situated on Galena Hill's northeast slope that faces Keno City.

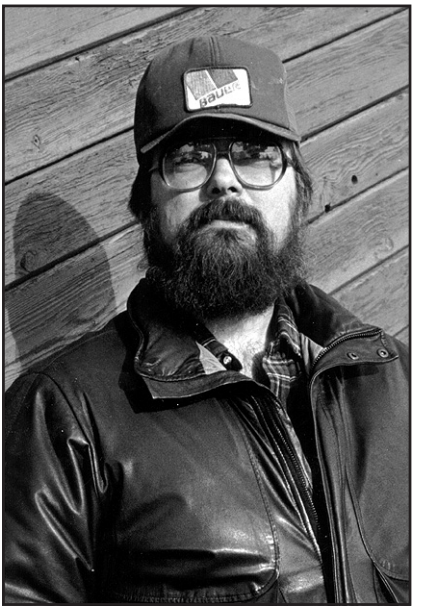
Although the old mining area was a landmine of rich lode deposits, finding them didn't come serendipitously. To unravel the mysteries of the underground and open-pit silver-lead-zinc operations in the Galena Hill/Keno Hill area of central Yukon required ingenuity and patiently poring over geological maps and reports inherited from a tangle of companies and countless actors.

Silver was initially recognized on the Hell's Gate Claim in 1903. Prior to sparking what would become a craze for hardrock mining, Yukon prospectors were intent on washing placer gold from the creeks. In the post-Klondike era, prospectors fanned out to look for gold and silver in veins.

Between Christal Creek and the headwaters of Lightning Creek, a tributary to Duncan Creek, Keno Hill juts up over 6,000 feet to the northeast of a massive green mound called Galena Hill.

Secrets hidden inside the jewel-boxes were ultra-rich silver-lead veins covered in places by several hundred feet of permafrost. The veins trailed upward from the valley, crossed Galena Hill and looped Keno Hill. Between these two landmarks coursed Duncan Creek. The large southwesterly-flowing stream branched and entered Lightning Creek.

A great tongue had welled over the divide 10,000 years ago, leaving only the tops of Keno and Galena hills protruding above the rubble-strewn ice that scattered and buried the treasures in deep overburden.



Jim McFaull (Jane Gaffin photo)

SILVER KING

The first significant silver claim was the Silver King, staked by Harry McWhorter on February 23, 1913. It was a throw-back to the Hell's Gate. Jake Davidson had reported the unspectacular galena showing to friends before relocating to Ontario.

Hard-rock mining hadn't yet caught the imagination of explorers. But McWhorter leased the Silver King to Jack Alverson and Grant Hoffman for a year with the proviso the vein be developed and a cabin built on the bank of the creek they called "Galena" to correspond with Galena Hill.

McWhorter later sold the Silver King outright. All visible ore was extracted while metal prices were high. Then mining ceased in 1918. Government geologists examining the area suggested the Silver King wasn't likely a single occurrence. More shoots should sprout off along the vein while many other hidden veins were probably down there somewhere. The prophecy was upheld with new discoveries on Keno Hill.

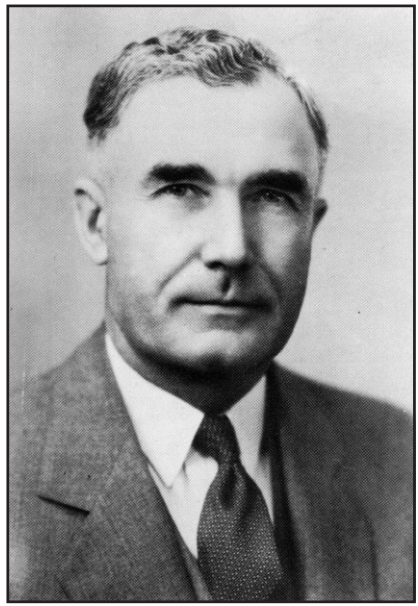
KENO

Louis Beauvette had once staked beside the Silver King and knew silver when he saw it. He saw it while hunting sheep on Keno Hill and staked the Roulette claim on July 10, 1919.

Jack Pickering, a jovial Englishman and partner in a teamster and livery business, took Roulette samples to Alfred Kirk Schellinger (Shelly) in Dawson City where the Guggenheims of New York had sent the 1909 Stanford University mining engineer and geologist to work with Klondike placer gold. The Guggies' Yukon Gold Company dredges creaked around the clock sifting placer gold from the creeks.

Shelly had a curiosity for hardrock geology that had prompted occasional site visits to the Silver King. He assayed the Roulette rock samples, finally pulling small dishes containing jelly-like beads from the furnace. Except for the Silver King, nothing quite this grand had been uncovered in the Yukon. The assays indicated up to 300 ounces per ton of silver.

Shelly notified the local manager of Yukon Gold Company, who contacted the New York-based Guggenheims at the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO). Shelly was to check out the property.



Livingstone Wernecke

On The Hill, Beauvette prospected elsewhere while Shelly ran a line from Beauvette's No. 1 Roulette post. On July 29, 1919, Shelly staked the Keno, another high-risk gambling game which served as the actual impetus to name the landmark Keno Hill. A staking rush quickly squeezed 600 claims around the Keno claim.

Shelley was dispatched as the assistant engineer for Keno Hill Mining, a subsidiary of the Yukon Gold Company. Mining supplies were mobilized from Dawson to Keno camp. Duncan Creek cabins were dismantled for material to construct the living quarters for the Keno townsite.

Meanwhile, Fred Bradley, an engineer and mine-owner, was looking to invest two million dollars earned on the last gold shipment from his flooded Alaska Treadwell mine at Juneau. He invested $10,000 sight-unseen in the Gambler where galena float was first spotted on Keno Hill. His 30-year-old mining engineer, Livingstone Wernecke, went to inspect the property in June of 1921.

The Gambler was inconsequential. Treadwell Yukon's prize was the Ladue claim next door to Keno Hill Mining's Sadie-Friendship portion of the vein. Wernecke purchased a sawmill and brought mining equipment and experienced miners from Treadwell's Juneau operation. His crew increased from 16 to 60.

Wernecke Camp overlooked the panoramic McQuesten Valley and functioned in a happy dither. Wernecke often invited guests from Mayo and Keno City to social gatherings and provided the transportation and food. Then he disappeared to his office to work out geological problems.

The nearby booming frontier town of Keno City added spice to the mining camps. It sported Northern Commercial and Taylor & Drury stores,

ladies apparel and novelty shops, a post office, a brothel, dancehall and several hotels.

Then the mines suffered exhaustion. Neither Treadwell Yukon's Ladue nor Guggenheims' No. 9 vein—the two largest and strongest ore bodies—were holding out. Keno Camp closed. Wernecke negotiated a long-term lease with the Guggs for the Sadie-Friendship portion of the vein to drain last-gasp millable ore for his proposed 100-ton concentrator. Any profits from millable product over the first 2,559 tons would be divided between the two companies.

The mill was completed in January, 1925. Schellinger, still retained by the defunct Keno Hill Mining, was hired by Treadwell Yukon.

ELSA

Everything was purring along. Wernecke went over to Galena Hill to see Charles Brefalt, a twinkly blue-eyed Swede whose newest gem was the Elsa, supposedly named for his sister.

Brefalt had gone through three feet of overburden to a strong, well-mineralized vein, which Wernecke suspected had more ore shoots. Brefalt also staked the adjacent Lucky Strike, worth 3,000 ounces of silver to the ton. In time, he tagged another one as the No Cash because he had to borrow $10 to record it.

Brefalt high-graded the Elsa for a respectable sum. Then he contacted Wernecke who made a deal with the prospector whose overall rewards for the property added up to a quarter million dollars. Elsa was destined to become Treadwell's richest mine. But finding each new ore shoot was extremely costly.

Bad years began to unfold from the Black Thursday stock market crash of 1929. The economic depression was made worse when the United States refused to buy any foreign silver.

Mining would have ceased in the Mayo district except for the Lucky Queen which Hector Morrison had staked below the Guggenheims' operation on February 18, 1920. By the time he had located the vein, interest had shifted from Keno Hill over to Galena Hill.

Wernecke was desperate and negotiated a deal on the Queen. Miners agreed to a dollar-a day pay cut to keep their jobs to the bitter end.

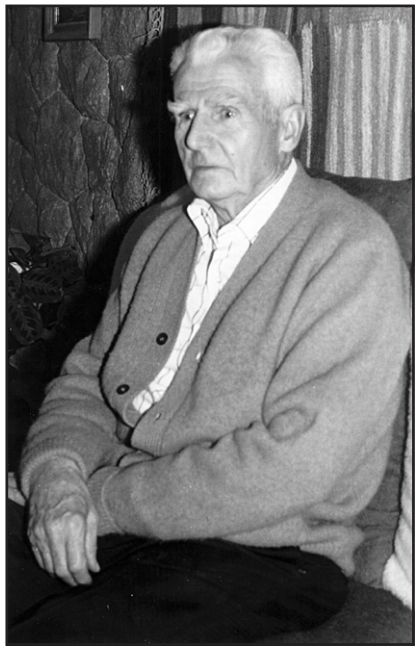
Mining resurged in 1934. Treadwell Yukon exhausted visible ore from the Lucky Queen and Sadie-Ladue, then returned to Galena Hill to focus on the Silver King and Elsa.

Near the Elsa was the Hector, which operated two years until the death of one owner launched the estate into litigation. It prevented the company from negotiating an option. The adjacent Calumet was the answer to the ore plight, anyway.

Mining engineer John Scott, a University of Washington graduate, designed and supervised construction of 14,500 feet of aerial tramline that draped 15 degrees downhill over 42 towers. A third of the way down from

Calumet buckets loaded No Cash ore before clanking into Elsa where the Keno Hill mill was relocated in 1936. Three 10-ton Morelands trucked bags of concentrates to the Mayo waterfront to await the season's first riverboat in May.

As the chilly winds of war blew down the world's collar, silver prices plummeted again. Treadwell Yukon went into a hand-to-mouth existence before sinking into bankruptcy. Profits had been creamed from the Mayo district to reinvest in sundry properties like the Errington near Sudbury, Ontario. Treadwell Yukon's books closed n October 21, 1941.



Dr. William Smitheringale

Fred Bradley died in 1933, leaving Wernecke to bicker with Fred's younger brother, the presidential successor. Phil Bradley was as bored with Mayo mining as were his directors. The problem was compounded by the Depression years when only tungsten was marketable.

The 58-year-old Wernecke and his Englishman pilot, Charles Gropstis, had flown down the coast in a company plane to check out a tungsten property. At Alert Bay, Gropstis spotted two victims clinging to a Waco, upside down in the ocean. Circling to come in for a landing, the float-equipped Bellanca Skyrocket crashed into a fog-shrouded tree. Two days later, a Search and Rescue team located the Waco survivors and the bodies of Gropstis and Wernecke.

After Wernecke's funeral in Berkeley, California, Treadwell Yukon was dismantled; the Errington mine at Sudbury and other properties sold; the last Elsa concentrates marketed; mining camps stripped, except for the mill and tramline; remnants stored in a Vancouver warehouse; and gear sold to the American military for wartime construction of the 1,645-mile Alaska-Canada Highway.

The long-proposed highway was routed through Whitehorse but bypassed the Yukon capital of Dawson City and the Mayo mining district. Nevertheless, a road would translate into cheaper ore-haul rates and higher profits. A subsequent road link from Mayo to Whitehorse would be an additional advantage.

The Alcan was under construction in 1942-43 when Thayer Lindsley negotiated for Treadwell Yukon's leftovers.

Lindsley, a civil engineer and geologist, was heralded as Canada's mining hero. He revived Treadwell Yukon's silver burrows through one of his

multitude of companies called Ventures Ltd.

Once, while consulting for McIntyre Mines, Lindsley had latched onto some of his own ground and did a joint venture with Joseph Errington, a McIntyre director.

In his ambition to break the nickel domination held by others, Lindsley siphoned money and shares from Ventures and other companies to shore up Falconbridge Nickel to take over Giant Yellowknife gold mine in the Northwest Territories and develop Sudbury nickel deposits and buy a Norwegian refinery.

Lindsley's passion was work. And he had a keen sense of world economics and envisioned a good post-war metal market.

For five years Treadwell's derelict mines, mill and tramline had been icing, caving and sagging. Lindsley found a partner in his friend Fred Connell, Canada's metal comptroller. In 1945, they co-sponsored Keno Hill Mining Company. It was financed by Connell's Conwest Exploration and Frobisher Exploration Company Ltd., an offspring of Ventures Ltd.

Reviving the old silver caverns wasn't fun in winter. Wood was scarce and expensive. The supply was soon depleted. As an alternate fuel source, Keno Hill Mining started Yukon. Coal Company to extract coal from the Tantalus Butte Mine at Carmacks, on the bank of the Yukon River.

Noted geologist Dr. William Smitheringale, who earned his doctorate in geology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was hired by renowned mine developer Karl Springer to review Treadwell Yukon's old Galena Hill workings.

Smitheringale recommended the Hector to Conwest Exploration. However, the heirs of a deceased owner were suing each other over the property. The legal snafu was sorted out by Connell, a prospector turned successful businessman. He finally gained full acquisition of mill, tramline, all buildings and 87 claims for Keno Hill Mining.

By 1947, Smitheringale had shifted from consultant to geological advisor for Conwest. He toiled over Wernecke's riddles. Re-mapping the geology on Galena Hill, he grasped a good picture of the faulting and uncovered a tapestry of veins jutting off from known deposits. His geological work ultimately led to reopening the mining operation.

UNITED KENO HILL MINES

By January, 1948, the company was able to stand on its own geological feet. Keno Hill Mining was refinanced and became United Keno Hill Mines just in time for the booming 1950s.

Lead and silver prices sky-rocketed. Once worthless, zinc and cadmium cruised into credit brackets. Keno Hill detonated into a havoc of staking posts, prospectors, promoters, opportunists, syndicates and companies. Money flowed in a casino atmosphere.

United Keno Hill Mines was North America's richest silver mine. It featured updated flotation methods. Minerals were extracted in a modern 250-ton concentrator which replaced the original mill.

The Mayo Road, completed by 1952, was a boon to UKHM. The company invested $250,000 in a fleet of red International truck-trailer units, serviced in the Keno Hill Transport garage in Whitehorse. Each unit could haul 30 tons of concentrates.

The fleet enabled ore to be trucked economically from Elsa and Mayo to railhead in Whitehorse. The concentrates were moved by narrow-gauge rail to Skagway, Alaska, down the coast to Vancouver, and inland to the smelter at Trail, British Columbia.

Prior to the road, extra handling was an extra cost. Ore had to be offloaded at Stewart Crossing from the shallow-draft riverboats coming from Mayo and reloaded onto the larger Whitehorse-bound boats plying the Yukon River. By 1955-56, sternwheelers were drydocked forever.

"There were about 20 trucks to a convoy travelling 12 feet apart, even in ice fog," recalled Harold Van Buskirk, one of the drivers interviewed in 1978 for the book *Cashing In*. "If one guy stopped, everybody else ran into him. It took 12 hours exactly to go from Whitehorse to Mayo. We left at 8 p.m. and arrived at 8 a.m., not 10 minutes before or after."

Herded by a protective wrecker, the trucks lumbered over the federal government's contribution to Yukon mining. The road intersected with the Alaska Highway near Whitehorse and was interrupted by three rivers: the Yukon, Pelly and the Stewart. When seasonal conditions prevented the building of ice bridges before freeze-up or summer ferries before break-up, then trucks rested for six-week intervals.

Alfred Schellinger at Wernecke Camp

In 1960, Conwest Exploration had turned attention to asbestos deposits in northern British Columbia and the Yukon. Conwest sold its control of United Keno Hill Mines to Ventures Ltd. In turn, Ventures was absorbed by Falconbridge Nickel Ltd., which purchased UKHM's controlling interest in 1962.

About that time, healthy 15-percent ore intersections underground had slipped below acceptable levels. A long-range exploration program was needed to cure the slump-

ing ore dilemma and continue feeding a 500-ton daily concentrator.

During the area's long mining history, companies had been fortunate to uncover ore in the old mines which had provided silver, lead, zinc and cadmium to world markets for more than 40 years.

The lodes on Keno Hill and Galena Hill, dating back to the Guggenheims and Treadwell days, were Canada's richest silver deposits.

Yet, since the mid-1920s, no new ore bodies had been discovered. Money had only been spent on property acquisitions, assessment work to keep mineral claims in good standing, and preparation for future mining.

Dutch Van Tassell (Jane Gaffin photo)

In 1963, Robert "Dutch" Van Tassell was hired to head the surface exploration program and find a mine. The Nova Scotian, who had driven from his former job in Elliott Lake, Ontario, guided the blue Volkswagen through Elsa, up Galena Hill and into Calumet, a town of 500 residents.

The many challenges he faced included area geology, troubled junctions of veins, ore exhaustion, cuts that weren't up to snuff, places where ore may shoot off from known veins, temperatures that dipped to minus 82 degrees Fahrenheit and permafrost several hundred feet deep.

In 1964, overburden drilling provided the first indications of the Husky vein system. By 1965, diamond drilling stabbed at good Husky targets but uncovered only uneconomic vein-type material.

KENO TO CLOSE

The axe fell in October, 1966. Within the same week Ottawa announced the appointment of James Smith as Commissioner to fill the Yukon's top bureaucratic position, UKHM told 16,000 Yukoners, who relied directly or indirectly on the mine, that the company intended to close its doors. Ore reserves were declining and profits were almost non-existent. No Cash's lunchroom had caught fire. Four men suffocated trying to outrun the smoke.

Other mines closed. Tonnages declined. Expenditures were pared. All underground explorations stopped. Van Tassell was on a skimpy budget as he tried to find the new ore reserves necessary to keep 600 employees working.

By 1967, his budget was back on track. He returned to the Husky, located between the Silver King and Elsa, which were offset by the Brefalt fault.

SAVED BY THE HUSKY

It was a snappy September morning. The headlights of the red half-ton truck plunged through darkness to Elsa, where Van Tassell turned onto the access road.

The two-man drill crew had just pulled the core barrel of the Longyear 38 diamond drill. Neat rows of smooth marble-swirled cylinders nestled in the elongated wooden trays.

Van Tassell chose a piece of rock core to examine and whooped inarticulately above the engine's roar, ready to drill again. He flung his baseball cap to the ceiling as he yelped: "It's a hot one! It's loaded with ruby silver!"

Four years of searching had culminated in the discovery of the aorta to the vein system. The Husky was the showpiece, eventually producing 60 percent of all the silver coming from United Keno's six operating mines.

Van Tassell had moved to Whitehorse to set up UKHM's exploration office when Jim McFaull joined the company in 1977. After 30 months of Elsa bunkhouse living, he had gone independent, prospecting for freedom and fresh air. He was back working for Van Tassell in the exploration division when the mining industry collapsed entirely in 1982.

Every Yukon mine as well as the railroad closed. McFaull and a lot of other people lost their homes. By early 1983, the Elsa mines reopened. McFaull returned as senior geologist in charge of the exploration department for a three-and-a-half-year stint.

Earlier, he had found the Galkeno Open Pit. He went on to find the new Silver King Underground, Ruby Offset, Hector 3 and 4 Vein Open Pit, Flame and Moth Open Pit, Black Cap Open Pit and the Bellekeno Underground.

Before his 35th birthday, he had set a record by finding a string of seven mines. All went to production. Combined, they produced four million ounces of silver.

Since statistics indicate only one in every 50,000 prospects makes a mine, McFaull's accomplishment was a feat.

Silver prices continued to slip and taxes kept rising. United Keno's president, directors and employees all took a 25-percent reduction in income so the mine could stagger along. When silver took a nasty dip in 1986, wages were tied in with the price fluctuation.

By the summer of 1989, UKHM employees were back on full salary for nine months. But their pay was based on the 1986 scale. At least the company had some good budgets to work with, McFaull explained. "We got a lot of work done and had a fair bit of success due to the flow-through share program."

Then the final jolt came in 1989. Silver dipped below a profitable $8 U.S. per ounce. Another blow was federal finance minister Michael Wilson's cancellation of the flow-through program, a tax-deduction incentive for exploration companies to find and develop mineral properties.

In July, 1990, Falconbridge Ltd., restructured from Falconbridge Nickel and others, sold its UKHM assets to BLM Mines Inc., a unit of Bharti Laamanen Mining Inc. of Sudbury, Ontario.

In 1991, Romith Investments and Toronto promoter Stephen Powell each acquired 50 percent of BLM's issued and outstanding common shares. In 1993, a review of the Elsa area properties, geological reserves and mine plans was undertaken.

Surface and underground drilling programs were conducted, and a feasibility study was completed in October, 1996. United Keno Hill Mines merged with NDU Resources in 1998.

UKHM ran into a financial snag. It was unable to raise sufficient capital. The company eventually applied for creditor protection.

Phil Cash of AMT Canada Inc., a unit tied with Idaho-based Advanced Mineral Technology Inc., acquired rights to the property through the bankruptcy process. Secured creditors were given court-approval to sell UKHM assets to help pay long-overdue invoices. Cash planned to mine in 2002. But plans of mice and men oft go awry.

Low silver prices plus 12 years of too many incompetent proprietors, coupled with high overhead and no working capital, has not been conducive to reopening the old caverns.

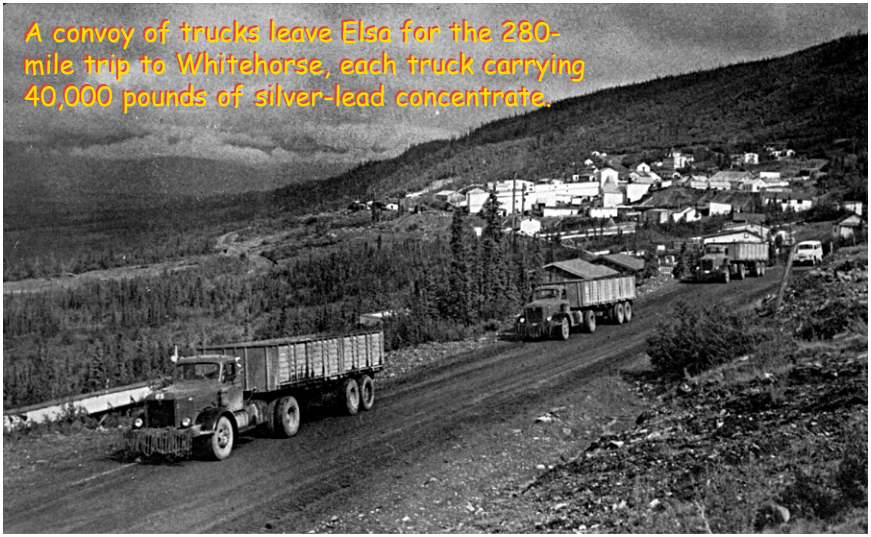
But some day, some way, somebody will extract what is probably 100-million ounces of silver, worth nearly a half billion dollars. That is why the venerable old gentleman is just having a little rest rather than caving in and dying.

The Keno docked at Mayo (from Jack Andison collection)

Transporting Ore from Keno Mines in 1956

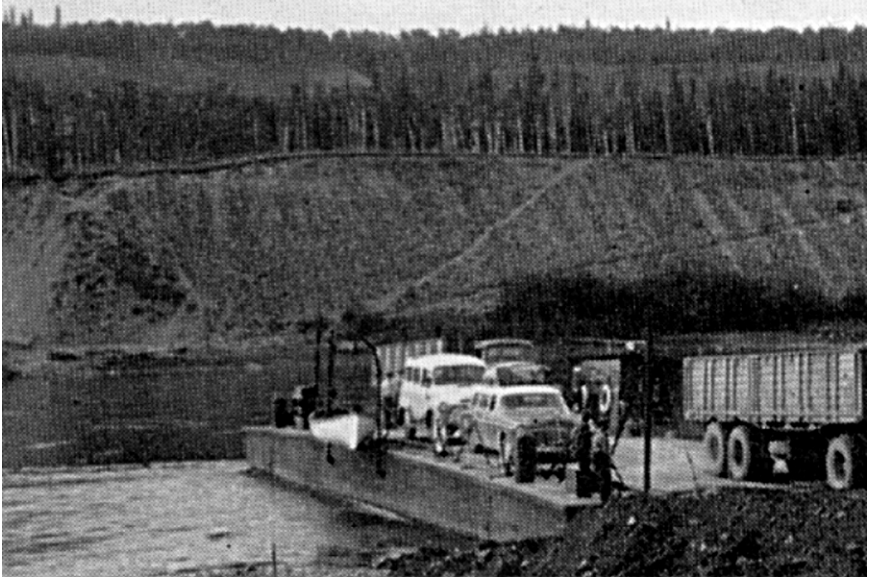
These photos were first published in "Harvester Magazine," Fall, 1956.

Ore from mine cars is dumped into a loading chute where tram line buckets are loaded for the trip down the mountain side to the mill for processing.

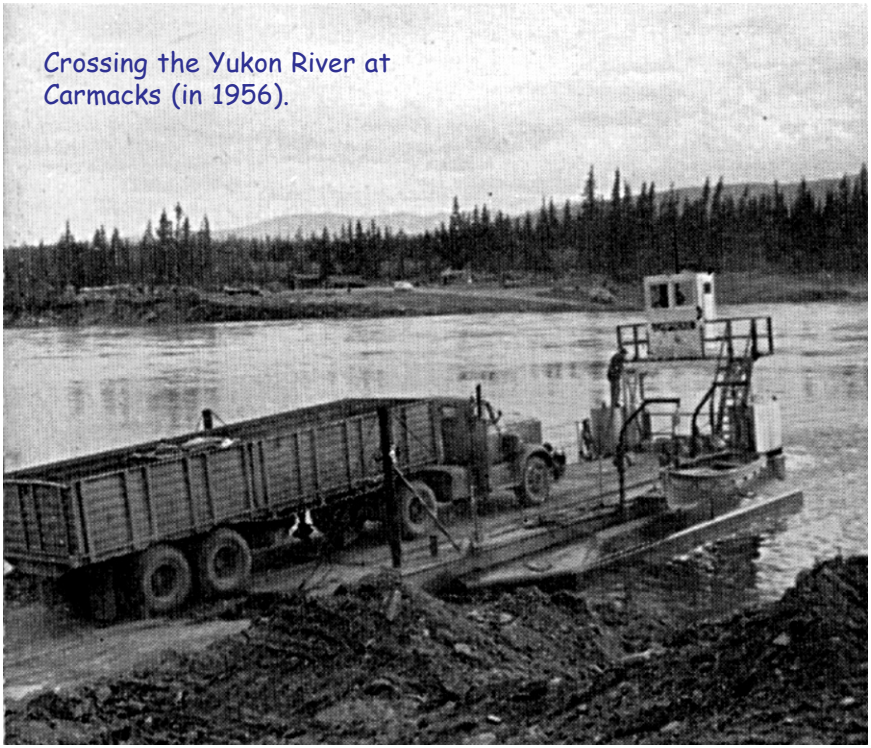


A convoy of trucks leave Elsa for the 280-mile trip to Whitehorse, each truck carrying 40,000 pounds of silver-lead concentrate.

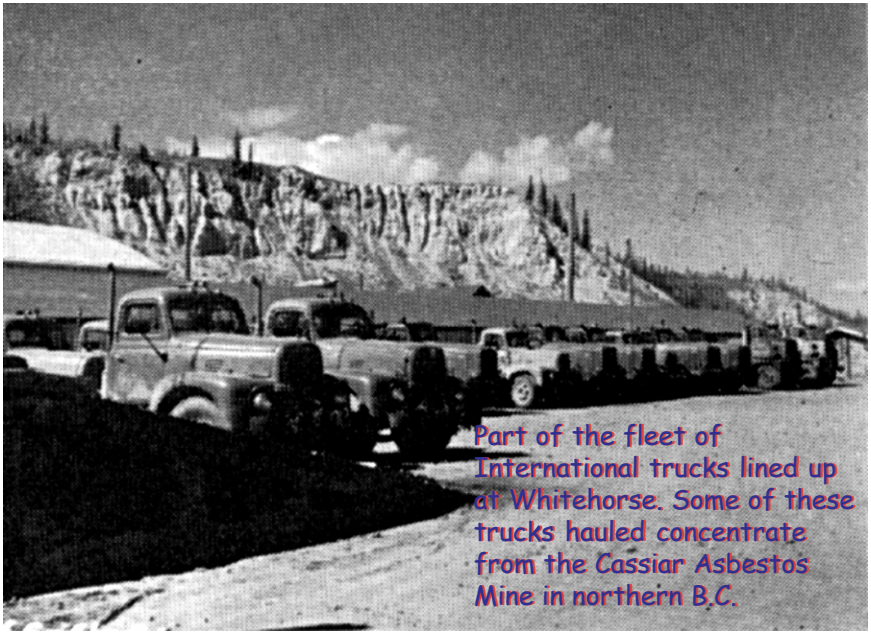
Ore trucks and other vehicles ride the ferry across the Pelly River on the Mayo Highway. They must also take a ferry across the Stewart River and also the Yukon River at Carmacks (in 1956). The ore will be loaded on a White Pass train in Whitehorse for transport to Skagway, Alaska, from which it travels by ship to a smelter in the south.



Empty trucks on the return trip to Keno pick up coal from the Yukon Coal Company's mine at Carmacks. They also bring in wood for mine timbering.



Crossing the Yukon River at Carmacks (in 1956).



Part of the fleet of International trucks lined up at Whitehorse. Some of these trucks hauled concentrate from the Cassiar Asbestos Mine in northern B.C.

High-Grading at United Keno

By Joe Riddell

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

Robert W. Service rhymed many of the odd doings of the Cheechakos and Sourdoughs who followed the Trail of '98 to Dawson City in the Yukon to seek their fortunes in Klondike gold. But equally strange things went on some sixty-five years later in the Land of the Midnight Sun. This time the precious metal involved was silver, and the activity was the high-grading, or theft, of ore from a mine in the Keno Hill area of the Mayo District, about 200 miles east of Dawson.

By 1900, many prospectors, realizing that the best ground in the Dawson-Klondike area was long since staked, had fanned out in all directions from the gold fields in their quests for ore. In the Mayo area, a discovery of silver-lead ore was made in 1906 in the canyon of a creek on the western slope of a hill; both the creek and the hill were named Galena after the mineral found there. Then, in 1919, a richer discovery was made on nearby Keno Hill. Other ore zones were turned up, and early operations consisted of mining, hand-sorting and sacking of the crude ore.

The 100-pound ore sacks were loaded onto either skids or hides and hauled down the hillsides, then transferred to tractor-pulled wagons or sleighs for the 40-mile haul to Mayo Landing on the Stewart River where, in season, the sacks were loaded onto barges for shipping to Whitehorse. Again a transfer, this time to the White Pass and Yukon Railway bound for Skagway, thence by ship to Vancouver or Seattle. Finally by rail to smelters in either central B.C. or Idaho. This long, expensive journey meant that the ore had to have substantially high grades of silver in order to return a profit to those early miners.

Photo above: Keno Hill Engineering Office and Geology Office in 2002 (abandoned). [S.H. photo]

In the early 1920's, the Treadwell-Yukon Company acquired a considerable amount of ground on Keno Hill and built a mill at a site on the west slope named for its General Manager, Livingston Wernecke. While the mill provided concentrates of higher grades, the product was still sacked for shipping.

The ores fed into the Wernecke Mill were often extremely high in silver. Jack Andison worked there; he told me of a time when the ore on the belt from the crusher was "blood red - I thought some squirrels or a whistler had fallen into the crusher, but it was just Ruby Silver." *Just* Ruby Silver? Well, those minerals (Proustite and Pyrargyrite) carry 60 to 65% silver, which translates into assays of 18,000 to 20,000 ounces to the ton, and that's real money in anybody's language. Other silver-bearing minerals included Argentite (87% silver) and Freibergite (up to 30%), while the main lead mineral, Galena, often assayed at several hundred ounces of silver per ton. As well, Native Silver was not uncommon down to depths of 200 or even 300 feet below surface. This free silver mostly resulted from the leaching of some sulphide minerals by surface water seeping through. In these zones the silver content of other sulphide minerals was often increased markedly by the same action causing secondary enrichment.

By 1936, when prospects appeared better on Galena Hill due to the discovery of new high grade ore bodies, the mill was moved to a site near the northwest base of that hill on the Elsa claim. The mill ran until 1942 when operations were suspended due to a variety of conditions, including the wartime shortage of labour and low metal prices, but particularly due to the death in a plane crash of Livingston Wernecke, who had been the driving force of the operations.

In 1946, Fred Connell, head of Conwest Exploration, formed United Keno Hill Mines Limited, which bought up the assets of the Treadwell-Yukon Company. Operations were resumed, expanded over the years, and continued until 1989 when low silver prices forced suspension. Other companies were also active in the area through the 1950's and 60's: Ankeno, Belle Keno, Comstock Keno, Galkeno, Klondike Keno, Mackeno, Yukeno. There were so many various Kenos that one property reversed the word and was named Onek. But in those years, U.K.H.M., usually called *United Keno*, was the dominant mining operation not only in the Mayo District, but in the entire Yukon Territory. For many years United Keno produced up to six million ounces of silver per year - about one third of Canada's annual production. During its heyday, ore was mined simultaneously from as many as six small mines, and over the years - as U.K.H.M. expanded its holdings in the Keno-Galena Hill area to more than 1,000 claims - at least 20 different mines provided feed to the Elsa Mill.

Our interest in this story is the mine right at Elsa. This mine was entered by two adits, one at the 400 Level near the Mill, the Mine Office and Dry (Change House), the other at the 200 Level. (Mine Levels are identified by the vertical distance in feet below the surface outcrop of the ore.) Miners working in the upper part of the mine were driven up to the portal of

the 200 Adit. At shift ends they returned to the Dry by walking down on surface or, during inclement weather, by climbing down the ladderways to the 400 Level.

In 1961 some very high grade ore was being opened up in the zones accessed by the 200 Level Adit of Elsa Mine. Minerals there included Argentite, Freibergite, some Ruby Silver, and Galena with high silver values. But the real prizes were the pockets of Native Silver, usually in wire form with diameters ranging from hair size to some as thick as a miner's finger. Pretty well everybody working in those zones got himself some souvenir specimens of the exotic minerals, as well as some wire Silver - perhaps an ounce or so. But, as might be expected, a couple of the more avaricious miners got more than just souvenirs, and they took pocketsful of wire Silver to the Assay Office in Elsa to be melted down into more compact lumps in the lab furnace used for fire assaying. Needless to say, the Chief Assayer, Charles Deacon, was curious as to the source of this material. The miners told him of the mini-bonanzas around the 200 Level and that anyone could easily drive up to the portal and walk in, since there was no gate there nor even a guard.

Now Charles Deacon was a meticulous fellow, both personally and professionally. And he was most emphatic that his name was never shortened. It was always Charles - never Charlie, or Chuck, or Chas, and he was most certainly never to be called Deak. His exacting nature served him well as an assayer. Most of this work was fire assaying, where the final result was determined by the weight of a small bead of silver representing the quantity of silver per ton in a sample of ore or of concentrate. Charles Deacon's assays were highly precise, and his results were always well within allowable limits when compared with umpire assays of concentrates shipped to smelters.

In the fall of 1962 I had a rather odd conversation. At that time I was Chief Mine Engineer for United Keno and based at Calumet Camp, five uphill miles from Elsa. One day I got a phone call from Charles at the Assay Office.

"Say, Joe," he said, "A while ago I was able to restake a group of claims over on Keno Hill, way past Keno City, and got them registered in my name. While exploring them, I found some sacks of ore. They're pretty old, the burlap is rotten and some of the ore had spilled out. I've run some assays and found pretty high grades. Now I've got a question for you: Do I own that stuff?"

"Well, Charles," I responded, "I'm no lawyer, but since, by definition, any claim covers the mineral rights on that property, so it would follow that all minerals found on your claims would belong to you."

Charles speculated, "I guess those sacks must have fallen off some skids back in the old days."

"That's a good possibility," I agreed and, since he had bought the first snow machine in the district, I suggested, "Sell some to pay off that new Ski-Doo you got last winter."

"Good idea."

And that was that, or so I thought at the time.

In the early summer of 1963 a flatbed semi trailer heavily loaded with compact sacks eased its way down the steep road into Elsa and passed by the U.K.H.M. Main Office. The driver stopped in at the Coffee Shop to check on the directions to Mayo, saying he figured he might have taken a wrong turn somewhere. As he got straightened out over a coffee and sandwich, he remarked that his load was ore - bound via Mayo and Whitehorse to the smelter at Helena, Montana. Where did he get the load? "Oh, it's from some mine over on Keno Hill, owned by a guy named Deacon. Says he works in your Assay Office. He sent out a couple of other loads ahead of me but since you say no other trucks have been through here, I guess they got the right road. Well, thanks for the directions - I'm off. Take care, eh?"

U.K.H.M.'s General Manager had noticed the loaded truck and was curious as to its origin, since there were no other mining operations in the area at the time. He soon learned what the driver had said. The G.M. had two of our exploration geologists make a discrete visit to Deacon's claims. Within days they reported back that there was a great deal of scarring and scraping of the surface and a few very shallow, short trenches, but no indications of any mining as such. About then, somebody mentioned the rumours of our miners doing a bit of high-grading via the 200 Adit.

Meanwhile, the shipment of Deacon's ore was on its way to anonymity via the smelting process. The G.M.'s suspicions, and especially the apparent lack of any serious mining action on Charles Deacon's claims, were enough to warrant police action to intercept the shipment (at the smelter gate in Helena!) and hold it for investigation by the RCMP and the FBI. In early August, Charles Deacon was charged with the theft of lead and silver concentrate plus lead-silver ore from the United Keno Hill Mines property in the Yukon. Later, Anton Gonzalez was charged with a similar offence. By time the preliminary hearing was held at Mayo in late November, both men were facing further charges, including conspiracy, theft of silver precipitates and concentrate with the intent to sell.

During the three-week preliminary hearing 246 exhibits were entered and thirty-one witnesses were called. Two experienced consultants, one a Geologist the other a Metallurgist, were both well qualified as expert witnesses. They got several good, representative samples of Charles Deacon's ore and subjected them to sophisticated tests. The Geologist deter-

mined that the constituents of the sulphide minerals were in proportions identical to those of the same types of minerals found in and around the 200 Level of Elsa Mine. He also noted that none of the material showed any sign of the extensive oxidation that one might expect if that ore had been exposed to weather for decades, as Deacon had claimed. The Metallurgist reinforced the case by using both x-ray and spectroscopic analyses to provide solid proof that the Silver and the other minerals had come from the Elsa Mine's 200 Level ore zones. Furthermore, United Keno had large suites of minerals from Keno Hill; Deacon's ore resembled none of these in the fine, detailed examinations done by the two experts.

The investigation uncovered two other types of materials which could never have come directly from the ground: several tons of silver precipitate from the mill's cyanidation circuit, and hundreds of pounds of silver beads - those end results of the fire assaying process. Charles Deacon could have no ownership of either of these materials. His claim that assayers were always allowed to keep the silver beads was negated by the production of a directive that the Mill Superintendent had issued some months earlier expressly ordering that all silver beads were to be returned to the mill office. At the conclusion of the preliminary hearing, both Deacon and Gonzalez were committed to stand trial. The trial eventually got underway in October 1964, at Whitehorse, with both men jointly charged that they did at or near Elsa, Y.T., between the last day of June 1961, and July 29, 1963 "unlawfully agree and conspire one with the other to commit the indictable offence of selling a substance containing a precious metal, to wit, silver"; "steal ore

The bar and snack bar at Elsa. The snack bar, at the entrance, was where the famous all-night poker games went on, with some miners losing $15,000 in a single night's play. [S.H. photo, 2002]

concentrate, the property of United Keno Hill Mines, of a value exceeding $50"; "steal silver precipitates" and "unlawfully sell silver".

But well before the trial got underway, there was an interesting sidebar to the case.

In April of 1964, Fred Darryl, who was originally charged with Deacon and Gonzalez, pleaded guilty to being concerned in the theft of silver precipitate from United Keno Hill Mines in the previous summer. In view of the "substantial assistance given the investigation officer on the scene," Darryl was given a two-year suspended sentence. The "assistance" included a description of how the operation had been done.

Having learned of the easy access to the 200 Adit, Deacon had two confederates - miners, of course, Darryl and Gonzalez - "borrow" some miners' lamps at the unlocked Dry and go into this upper adit after the night shift had gone home about 3 A.M.. Since the usual practise was for crews to blast at the end of shift, there were fresh ore piles for the high- graders to pick over and they loaded up sacks of the best material. They were careful to not take too much from any one location, and always covered up their tracks by spreading fresh dust. Over the winter they worked only on those clear nights when no fresh snow would be falling so that their footprints and tire tracks mixed in with those that would be there normally. Under the Northern Lights they loaded their sacks onto a pick-up truck for a drive beyond Keno City where the sacks were transferred to Deacon's Ski-Doo and trailer to go on to their temporary resting spot on his claims. The high-graders continued their illicit activities from fall of 1961 though the spring of 1962. They shut down for part of May and all of June and July when practically continuous day light made the work far too risky. Throughout those brief Summer months the Midnight Sun shone on that heap of sacks on Keno Hill holding ore that was alien to that locale. And shone also on the three high-graders sneaking the silver precipitates and beads from the Elsa mill to Deacon's claim.

With the return of darker nights the high-grading resumed for another winter. Then in late spring of 1963, having accumulated some 70 tons, Deacon decided to cash in. He hired trucks and drivers and, after the trucks were loaded, he gave the drivers explicit instructions to return to Mayo via the back road along Duncan Creek, east of Galena Hill, thus avoiding Elsa. The last driver started out all right. However, he got confused, turned off the Duncan Creek Road too soon, and took the Williams Creek Road around the south and west flanks of Galena Hill - a road that took him right into Elsa.

The trial lasted six weeks and on November 17, the jury found Gonzalez guilty of the charge of theft of ore concentrate. He was later sentenced to three years, but appealed the conviction and sentence. Deacon was found not guilty of theft of ore concentrate and silver precipitate. But the jury was "hung" and unable to agree as to whether the two accused men had unlawfully sold silver. A new trial was needed.

On March 8, 1965, *The Whitehorse Star* headlined: "Silver Case Heard

Again." In this trial the jury heard the case concerning the two charges of conspiracy and unlawful sale of silver precipitate. Amongst the evidence presented was the statement that the shipment of silver ore was said to have been "valued at $125,322.77 (US)." The trial lasted nearly a month, with both men being found guilty. Deacon was sentenced to four years imprisonment on each of three counts, to run concurrently. Gonzalez was sentenced to three years, less four months already spent in jail.

And so, a wrong turn by a truck driver led to three men being convicted for the high-grading at United Keno of ore worth more than $500,000 in today's values.

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2. *YUKON TERRITORY* - Geological Survey of Canada, Memoir 284. Selected Field Reports of the G.S.C., 1898 to 1933, Compiled and Annotated by H. S. Bostock, 1957.
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4. Personal experience of the author.

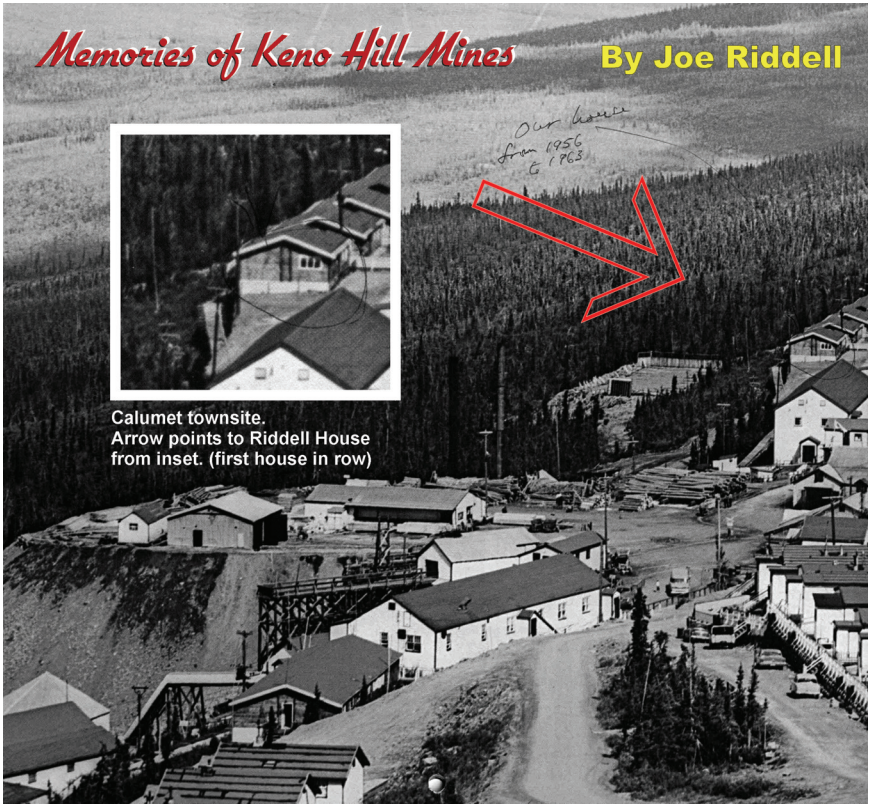
Editor's Note:

Joe Riddell and I agreed that we should change the names of the perpetrators in this story. They have done their time and should not be punished again by having it all dragged out once more. You can find the real names in the *Whitehorse Star* newspapers of the day.

The Elsa Mine and mill and supporting cast of buildings, now in decline. [S.H. photo, 2002]

Memories of Keno Hill Mines

By Joe Riddell



Calumet townsite.
Arrow points to Riddell House
from inset. (first house in row)

THE FIRST TRIP IN... AND THE LAST TRIP OUT

"The Peace River bridge at Fort St. John fell down last night." The Grande Prairie motel operator greeted me the morning of October 17, 1957. "I thought you'd want to know since you told me when you registered that you were bound for the Yukon."

That was discouraging news, to say the least. Here we were, Isabelle, our 12-week-old daughter, Joyce, and me, on our first drive up north. We hadn't even reached the start of the Alaska Highway, and it was looking like we wouldn't, either. As well, I was to be back at Elsa ready for work on Monday, October 21, after my vacation.

Enquiring around town for further information, we heard that the RCMP were halting traffic even before Mile Zero at Dawson Creek. Eventually we did learn of an alternative: a ferry across the Peace at Clayhurst, just inside B.C. We were told we could avoid the roadblock by turning off the highway just past Pouce Coupe, then head north through Rolla. We would see signs directing us toward the ferry. It was well into the afternoon before we left

Grande Prairie. When we got near the river we found some traffic backed up, but eventually got on the ferry and across the Peace. A series of dusty gravel roads got us to Fort St. John well after dark. We figured that we could not afford the time to spend a night there, and we headed up the highway.

The past few weeks had been a great vacation. Isabelle had gone "outside" in June to have the baby near her family's home in Edmonton. I, however, could not leave until mid-September. There was a delegation of about thirty mining people visiting the United Keno Hill Mines operations the second week of that month. They were part of a large group of folks coming to Canada for the Sixth Commonwealth Mining Congress to be held in Montreal, and prior to the meeting delegates were taking tours to see various mining operations across the country. As one of U.K.H.M.'s staff I was needed to help guide the visitors. So our new baby was nearly two months old before I got out to meet her. And delighted I was to see Isabelle again and hold my two girls in my arms.

We bought a six-year-old Plymouth coach (as two-door models were called then), set a car bed on the back seat, and got around to visit friends and flocks of relatives - especially around Edmonton and vicinity, but also in Calgary and Winnipeg. In what was to be a harbinger of all our future trips back to Yukon, we spent as much time as we dared outside, then would rely on a fast dash up the highway to get back home just in time.

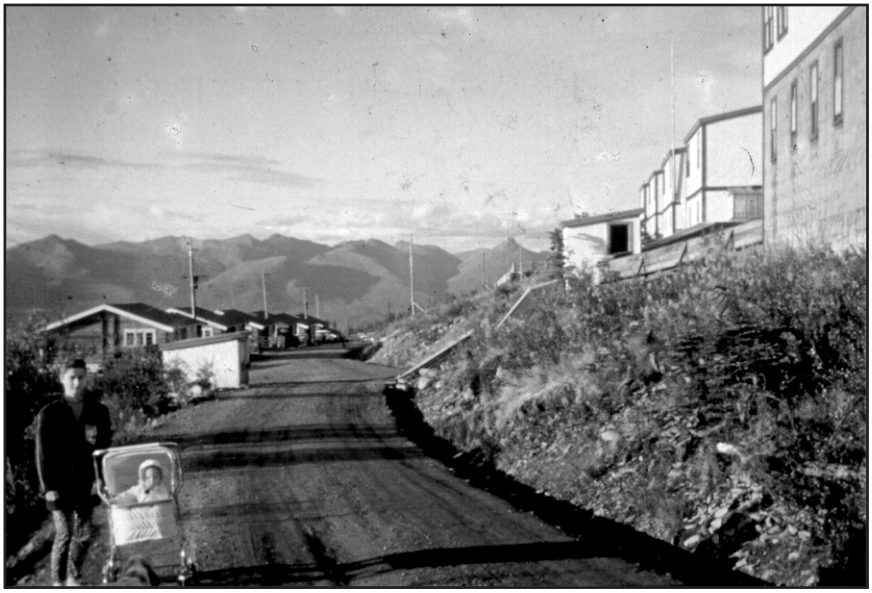
The night drive was going well. The gravel road was relatively smooth with little traffic to stir up the dust. About three hours out of Fort St. John we seemed to be getting into trouble. The car was gradually slowing down, and I had to shift down into second gear to keep going. Was our Plymouth a lemon? I decided to stop and check under the hood - for what I wasn't sure, but it seemed like something to do. I put the gear shift into neutral and was opening my door when the car started rolling backwards. It hit me then that we were going up a fairly steep grade. In the dark, and with my tiredness, I hadn't realized this. Knowing that it was the terrain and not the vehicle that was the problem we drove on. Eventually the road levelled out and we passed a sign advising that we were at the top of Trutch Mountain.

All went well for another couple of hours, although I was watching the gas gauge moving nearer to "E," and no gas stations were open. Sure enough, the Plymouth sputtered to a halt at a point we figured to be about ten miles before Fort Nelson. But our luck was not all bad. Within five minutes another car came along and stopped. It was a couple heading for Alaska in a station wagon. Peter and Marie were their names, and they had with them a pair of Siamese cats - King and Anna. Seeing our situation they offered me - and I quickly accepted - a lift to Fort Nelson. There we found an open gas station where I was able to borrow a jerry can and get it filled. Peter and Marie then were determined to drive me back, to be sure that Isabelle and Joyce would not be stranded any longer than necessary. We certainly appreciated their help, and they would accept nothing more than our grateful thanks before they resumed their journey.

When we got into Fort Nelson, we three were beat. We got a room and rested for about half a day, then continued on without further incident. And I did get back in time for work.

We learned two valuable lessons from that trip. The hospitality of Peter and Marie was really typical of the times and of all northern roads: never pass a person who might be in trouble. Over the following years we did our best to repay that favour. Second, pack along a full jerry can of gas and keep an eye for a gas station whenever the gauge got down near half. This lesson served us well on the dozen or more trips we subsequently took over The Highway. Over the years I ran out of gas only once, but it was not on The Highway. Rather, it was right in front of the Macdonald Hotel in Edmonton at the height of an evening rush hour. Of course, I was able to replenish the gas tank from my jerry can!

After several years in Yukon, we decided to move out in August of 1963, to "explore other opportunities," as the saying goes. An Allied Moving van loaded our gear at Calumet Camp, and we got into our Chevrolet sedan. By this time Joyce was the six-year-old big sister to two more girls: Heather, three years, and Carol, ten months. They all three proved to be good travellers as we took the long way out via Dawson City. Among the many highlights in Dawson was a Ford Model T pickup with a cloth top being driven by a couple from Seattle, Washington. They were having a grand time of it



Part of Calumet Camp, July 1958.
Kathy MacKenzie with Joyce Riddell in carriage. Riddell's panabode is first on left side.

touring Alaska and Yukon. The only concession they had made to the gravel roads was to erect a sheet of Plexiglas in front of their windshield.

We found the winding and hilly Top Of The World Highway west of Dawson to be a particularly spectacular drive. As for wildlife, along the Taylor Highway we did see several donkeys about half way to Tetlin Junction. We took a side trip into Haines; the scenic beauty of the area and the road was worth the drive. On to Whitehorse where we again saw the Seattle folks and their Model T - still trucking! When we were finally outward bound on The Highway we had but one more "must" stop. Past Watson Lake we stopped to take some souvenir shots, still and 8-mm movie, of the "Yukon" sign. As luck would have it, along came our moving van, and we caught it in the moving picture. Life in Edmonton seemed dull after the years in Yukon.

Post Script:

It would be 35 years before we made a return visit to Yukon. In August 1998, we hit our own "Trail of 98" with two of our nine-year-old grandchildren, Meagan and Adrian, in our fifth-wheel trailer. We wanted to show them as much of Yukon and Alaska as we could fit into three and a half weeks, especially Mayo where Adrian's mother was born, and Calumet Camp where we had lived for seven years. And we did hit those places (although all of the buildings had been moved from Calumet, we did find the site of our old house), as well as Skagway, Haines, Chicken, Dawson, Keno City and so on. For Isabelle and me the roads were sheer delights with easy curves and grades, smooth broad asphalt; no more the roar and dust of a thousand miles of gravel. Even the Top Of The World Highway lived up to its name - it is world class. There was, however, one road which had actually deteriorated in 35 years. The Taylor Highway was rough, muddy, ungraded, crooked and an absolute disgrace. No four-legged donkeys in sight this time; just we two-legged ones driving along with the assumption that *Highway* meant a decent road. Our opinion was influenced by the fact that at one point on that road the trailer's rear end bottomed out and the pan under the water tank was ripped off. That took us a couple of hours of rolling around in the mud underneath to get it reattached.

Other than that, it was a marvellous sentimental journey for the four of us. And, as with all great vacations, our time was too short, however we had to get the children back to their respective homes in Edmonton and Winnipeg in time for school. But sometime, before it is too late for us to travel, Isabelle and I will return to beautiful Yukon.

TRUCK CONVOYS

"Traffic jam ahead," remarked Harry as he geared unit 85 down to a stop.

I had been dozing in the passenger seat, but Harry's comment wakened me - and fast.

"What?" I asked. "At Stewart Crossing, in the middle of October, at one a.m.?"

"That's right," said Harry. "There's at least a dozen vehicles stopped. Most of 'em are our trucks."

We were part of a northbound convoy of United Keno Hill Mines Transport Division trucks. Most were loaded with new mining equipment needed for the big underground development program to start that month. The rest had other necessary supplies for the operations, including a two-month supply for the commissary and grocery store. But what was the problem ahead?

This was 1958 and CB radios were not yet invented. In fact, the trucks were not even equipped with two-way radios. We both pulled on our parkas and got out to walk up toward the river. It turned out that the problem was a truck sunk at the ferry landing on the north side of the Stewart River. It happened a couple of hours earlier. A southbound truck, loaded with the usual 20 tons of concentrate, was starting to board the ferry. One of the cables holding the ferry to the shore snapped and the ferry skittered out like a tiddlywink from under the front end of the truck, which plunged into the river. The truck's momentum carried the entire vehicle into the water, and there it sat with all lights still on. The driver had scrambled out, wet and shaky, but uninjured.

Hector mine portal at Calumet Camp, August, 1998.
L-R Meagan Griffiths, Grandpa Joe Riddell, Adrian Chan.

There was a two-way radio in the ferry office, and a request had been sent to Mayo for a bulldozer to be hauled down to build a new ramp on the north shore. While the Cat was on its way, I thought back to what had brought me to this. But first some background on the route.

The highway linking Whitehorse and Mayo was opened in 1952 and had provided an immediate reduction in the cost of shipping out concentrates. Previously the sacked product was hauled by truck to Mayo, then transferred to river barges for furtherance to Whitehorse. With the completion of the highway, UKHM formed its Transport Division, which took on the agency for International Harvester trucks and equipment. In short order a fleet of IH RD-302 and RD-304 trucks was hauling semi-trailers between Elsa and Whitehorse. In the early days the trucks were grouped for travelling and the last vehicle in line was a well-equipped service truck in the event of any breakdowns or other problems with the trucks. These fleets of trucks travelling together for mutual safety were quickly dubbed "convoys." There was one convoy each way, north and south, every day.

But whether by river barge or by highway, traffic between Mayo and Whitehorse was still interrupted twice a year by freeze-up and break-up. Because of the difference in latitude across the three rivers, the overall freeze-up and break-up periods could each extend over lengthy periods, sometimes up to seven weeks. Usually the timing could be guessed at pretty closely, but in the Fall of 1958 an early spell of severe cold had caused the Stewart ferry to be pulled out before the middle of October. This posed a huge problem for the company, with all that new equipment and supplies stuck in Whitehorse. And I had my own problem.

We had bought ourselves a new Chevrolet the past summer. My wife Isabelle, our baby Joyce, and I had intended to head out in mid-November for our one-month annual vacation. To avoid any delays re freeze-up, I had planned to drive the car out to Whitehorse well before the end of October, leave it there, and hitch a ride back to Elsa. Later we three would fly from Mayo, pick up the car and be on our way. Of course, the early pull out of the Stewart ferry scotched those plans. Well, both the company and I had a stroke of good luck. The weather turned warm and the Stewart ferry was put back into service. I immediately drove my car to Whitehorse as planned, then got myself over to Transport Division to hop the next convoy north.

And now the new ferry landing had been made on the north bank and Harry and I were waiting for our turn to get across. We got home to Elsa in time for breakfast.

There are a couple of Post Scripts:

The trip Isabelle, baby Joyce and I took "outside" that year was our only winter trip. We visited family and friends around Edmonton, then thought we might return via B.C., taking in the Grey Cup game in Vancouver on the way. But when we got to Calgary, the road report for the Rogers Pass area was discouraging and we went back to Edmonton, stayed as long as we could, then started the usual mad dash up the Alaska Highway. It was one cold trip, never warmer than -35 F. Past Fort Nelson while going

slowly around a curve we encountered an unusual sight: an oncoming car (a one-year -old Chevrolet) with frost shields on windshield and driver's side window. We stopped for gas about twenty miles further on, and the operator asked us if we had seen the '57 Chev that had gassed up there a bit earlier. It seems the driver had bought the car in Louisiana the previous May, then drove up to Fairbanks where he had a summer job. The job lasted longer than expected and winter was on before he could get away. Since he had bought the car way down south, it had no heater in it, and he would have no use for that option once he was back home. So frost shields would keep his windows clear, and for heat he had a one-burner Coleman stove secured on the floor on the passenger side. He was driving with a window cracked open. Since we never heard later of any wrecked '57 Chevs, I guess he made it out all right.

By the Fall of 1960, bridges had been constructed across the Yukon, Pelly and Stewart Rivers. Uninterrupted year round traffic was now possible, and another romantic bit of the Yukon story was now history. But the bridge across the Yukon River posed a problem when the last stern wheeler, *S.S. Keno*, travelled from Whitehorse to its final berth as a display at Dawson. The bridge deck was so low that *Keno's* wheelhouse and smoke stack had to be made removable to permit passage.

Original Keno Hill sign post, overlooking Faro Gulch, July 1958.

GIVE ME A SIGN

"But Berlin is surely not in that direction!" exclaimed Andrea.

The blonde German tourist was puzzled by the pointer on the sign post atop Keno Hill. The post had a solid appearance: a steel pipe set in concrete must surely be accurate. But none of us there were so sure about that.

Andrea, Fred and another couple, all from Augsburg in Bavaria, were touring Yukon and Alaska in a motorhome rented in Anchorage; they had flown there via the Polar Route from Germany. It was 1998, the centennial year celebrating the Klondike Gold Rush. My wife Isabelle and I, with two of our grandchildren, Meagan and Adrian, both nine, were on our own "Trail of '98," a sentimental journey to visit where the children's mothers had

lived at Calumet Camp. (Meagan's mother, Joyce, is the one-year-old in the 1958 picture of the Keno sign post.) While we all contemplated the twenty-three pointers on the posts, Isabelle and I were thinking back to the origin of this famous post 41 years ago.

I was working for United Keno Hill Mines in 1957. In September that year the Sixth Commonwealth Mining Congress was being convened in Montreal. In attendance were to be not only members of the Mining Institutes of the Commonwealth (Canada, Britain, Australia, South Africa, and so on), but also mining people from a number of countries around the world. Prior to the meetings in the host city, groups of delegates were touring mining areas across Canada. About thirty people were on the northern tour which took in operations at UKHM, as well as at Yellowknife and Uranium City. We had advance notice as to the names and home addresses of the group coming our way, and it was decided to create a special memento for the occasion: a sign post indicating the direction and distance to each of the delegates' home cities - nineteen in all.

Doug MacKenzie, our Chief Surveyor, was commissioned to design the monument. Using the Great Circle method, Doug calculated the requisite information, and supervised the construction of the square post with its pointers. For each of the nineteen cities a wedge had to be cut on a precise angle so that the pointer for that city was indeed indicating the Great Circle direction. Atop the post was a small sign stating *GREAT CIRCLE DISTANCES IN STATUTE MILES*. The first sign pointed due North to THE ARCTIC CIRCLE 180. The nineteen indicated places as diverse as IPOH (Malaya) 7000 miles; FREETOWN (Sierra Leone) 6700; MOUNT ISA (Australia) 7300; KINGSTON (Jamaica) 4200; and, among the others was, of course, BERLIN 4200. The sign post was erected on the north slope of Keno Hill, not far from the summit, on a spectacular site on the lip of the 1000-foot deep Faro Gulch.

I explained this background to our group, and Andrea again remarked that the direction must be wrong. After all, the Polar Route they had flown was on a Great Circle, and their direction had been almost due North. Hence the direction from here in central Yukon to Germany would be nearly due North also. No argument there from me. We all agreed that since the post we were looking at was clearly not the original wooden one, then some errors must have crept in during its rebuilding. This was confirmed later when we visited the Keno City Mining Museum, operated by Mike Mancini. Mike explained that the old 1957 wooden post had been replaced at the same spot a couple of times as the wood rotted. Then it had to be moved to make way for mining a nearby vein. At that time the steel post was fabricated and set in concrete. And a few more cities were added, since there were now twenty-three. But some of the directions were dubious. Furthermore, missing was the sign that used to be right at the top referring to Great Circle distances. I suppose you could say that while the words were nearly all the same, the tune was somewhat different.

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Steele of the Yukon

By Nancy Bennett

...it is no idle boast to say that at no time in history did the police show to better advantage than during the trying years of 1898-9, when I commanded its fine officers and men on the Yukon.

— S.B. Steele

Sam Steele had already distinguished himself as a man of action long before the cryptic telegram posting him to duty in the Yukon came. In fact he seemed born to action. He arrived in the world on January 5, 1849, in Purbook, Simcoe County, Canada West. His father was Captain Elmes Steele, who had served under Lord Nelson during the war against Napoleon. His mother, Anne, had married the elder Steele a year before. She was 17; he was 64.

Together with his five brothers and sisters and his older half brother, John, Sam received his first lessons in politics, law and militia affairs by listening to their father's heated debates at the supper table. Sam was surrounded by books. His father taught him to read and write but it was his cousin, Hugh Clarke, who taught him to ride and shoot as good as any man.

At the age of 17 he had his first taste of battle in the short-lived Fenian Invasion from the States, in which a group of American Irish, bitter over England's occupation of their homeland, decided to kick the English out of Canada. From this auspicious beginning he served in various military positions until the call came for a "few good men" to join the newly formed North West Mounted Police. Sam Steele, age 24, was the third to sign up and his rank was confirmed as that of Sergeant Major.

While taking part in policing the Northwest Rebellion and the building of the railroad, Sam Steele proved that he was a natural leader, a brave soldier, and a "lion" among men. So it was no surprise that the tough job of bringing law and order to the Yukon was entrusted to him. The call came on January 29th, 1898, to embark to his new post. Sam hurriedly made arrangements for his wife, son and two daughters to stay at Fort Macleod. Though his family usually traveled with him to his postings, he had no idea how long he would be expected to stay or what degree of lawlessness festered in the gold rush camps.

Sam's union with his wife, Marie Elizabeth Harwood, was a long and happy one, although Sam had almost been married once before. He was the victim of a practical joke when, as a young man stationed in the Rockies, someone placed an ad in his name for a mail order bride. When a shy girl from the east showed up to answer it, Sam had the awkward task of explaining to her it was a prank his comrades had played on him. Always the gentleman, he arranged for the girl's transportation back home. It is not known how he dealt with his friends for their part in the entanglement!

Sam Steele's first stop was Vancouver where he met Superintendent Bowen Perry. Perry had with him sealed orders from Ottawa and once the two men were together the nature of their assignment became known. They were to establish border posts at the top of the Chilkoot Pass and the White Pass. Perry's job was to ensure that the posts were operational and then report back to Ottawa. Sam's job was to take command of the forces that had been enlisted to help regulate the flow of gold-hungry men and women.

Though Perry had been lucky enough to secure passage from Vancouver, it took over a week before Sam could book a berth. Even then it was not the best of accommodations. Sam complained that his cramped bunk had an odor like "ancient cheese." He found out later that the *Thistle* had actually been a sealing ship before it was pressed into service.

Still he had a cabin to himself not like the 200 or so men who were wedged shoulder-to-shoehorn on the deck. The *Thistle* was aptly named, countered one passenger, for it gave no comfortable place to sit down.

Sam Steele landed in Skagway on February 15th. The office, which served as headquarters, was little more than a shack. While waiting for Zack Wood, who was in charge, Sam decided to take a look around Skagway. It was, in his words, "about the roughest place in the world" and one man seemed to be the roughest. He was Jefferson Randolph Smith, known to his comrades as "Soapy."

"Robbery and murder were daily occurrences," Sam Steele later wrote. "Many people came here with money and the next morning had not enough to get a meal, having been robbed or cheated out of their last cent. Shots are exchanged on the streets in broad daylight and enraged Klondikers pursued the scoundrels of Soapy Smith's gang to get even with them. At night the shouts of 'Murder!' and cries for help mingled with the cracked voices of the singers in the variety halls. Wily 'box rushers' cheated the tenderfeet and unwary travelers, inducing them to stand treat, 25 percent of the cost which went into their own pockets. In the dance hall the girl with the straw-colored hair tripped the light fantastic at a dollar a set, and in the White Pass above the town, the shell game expert plied his trade and, occasionally, some poor fellow was found lifeless on his sled where he sat down to rest, the powder marks on his back and his pockets turned inside out."

The police were not immune to the violence. One Sunday morning Sam Steele and Zack Wood heard a gunfight outside their shack. Bullets passed through the thin walls over where they lay in their beds "but the circumstance was such a common occurrence that we did not even rise from our beds," Steele later recalled.

Perry, who had been sent on ahead to establish the boundary between the U.S. and Canadian side, arrived back in Skagway on February 16th. He had been just in the nick of time, as a group of Americans had organized themselves and had claimed the 60 miles to the nearest NWMP office as "American soil." When a force of mounted police moved in with machine guns, lumber and a six-month supply of provisions, all the Americans could do was complain to deaf ears. In a raging snowstorm the first outposts were built to house the men and process the people who were coming through Canada. Once the cabins were built, the Union Jack was hoisted and waved proudly in the wind. Then the officers set to establishing themselves as a force of law and order. Sam Steele took the trip to the Chilkoot in sub-zero conditions along with Constable Skirving. At one point, with the snow blowing around them, they lost the lifeline and had to turn back to the tramway construction camp. All around him, ill-prepared men and women fought their way up the frozen trail. Some carried little or nothing in supplies, assuming they could "buy what they needed" at the top of the pass. Faced with the imminent starvation of hundreds, Sam Steele immediately put Commissioner Walsh's orders into effect.

No one was to be allowed into the Yukon without sufficient provisions for a year, meaning 1,500 pounds of supplies, all of which had to be carted up the pass. Soon around the NWMP barracks a tent city grew, as gold miners went up and down the pass 40 times or more, carting their supplies. Some thought it tough of Sam Steele and his men to enforce such a ridiculous amount, but this action saved many from a cruel death.

Soon after, Steele caught a severe case of bronchitis, caused by having to wade through icy water while delivering dispatches to Perry. There was no time to mend, as the work had to continue: transporting supplies, building boats for the coming spring break-up and taking care of the inevitable mountain of paperwork. Then there were the border problems.

On the U.S. side, a corrupt judge, who also happened to be the U.S. Commissioner to Skagway, was trying to raise a volunteer force to storm the border. Further problems erupted when a contingent of Black US troops accused the NWMP of "exercising civil and military authority over American territory."

Soapy Smith's victims soon found that if they could make it over the Yukon border, they would be safe in Canadian territory. It was quite possible the Maxim machine guns, poised and ready, kept the cutthroat gang at bay. Or maybe the well-armed Canadian forces who stood between them and their quarry. Either way, Soapy was not happy about the new border either. Nor were the countless climbers who found themselves on the summit being "taxed' for everything not purchased in Canada (including their underwear!) All complaints were met with the quiet courtesy conditioned into Sam Steele's men.

In March during a howling snowstorm, word came that Inspector Strickland, who was in charge of the White Pass post, was gravely ill with bronchitis. Despite having the same condition himself, and being under doc-

tor's orders to get bed rest and stay indoors, Sam Steele staggered out into the storm to relieve Strickland. With him he took Strickland's replacement, Inspector F.L. Cartwright.

It was good that he came. The camp was overflowing with supplies, all of which needed to be checked by the police before the owners were allowed to proceed. Inspector Strickland was in critical condition and he was immediately ordered down the mountain. Many of the men were sick from hauling wood up to 12 miles and digging out tents in the cold conditions. As the storm raged on, the angry, waiting gold seekers raged too.

Once Sam Steele had restored some semblance of order, he left Cartwright in charge and set out to police the area around Lake Bennett.

He set himself up in a cabin on the shore. Here his normal day commenced, rising at 4:00 or 5:00 a.m., paperwork till 9:00, then breakfast, patrolling, settling disputes and fistfights till midnight, and then starting the next day all over again. His officers maintained a sense of good manners and for the most part, the people respected them. Sam Steele was often trusted with the miner's poke, which he banked in his mattress. Once, when a honeymooning couple lost all their possessions when they crashed through the ice, the bride was given a scarlet jacket and a pair of yellow striped riding breeches to wear, compliments of the force. The dead were also taken care of, their belongings returned to the next of kin, or auctioned off so that the cash would help out those families left behind.

Shots fired one night led Steele's men to a rigged gambling game. One of Soapy Smith's men was brought in before Sam Steele and shouted, "You can't lock me up! I'm a U.S. citizen! My God sir, the Secretary of State himself shall hear about this!"

"Well seeing that you're an American citizen," Sam Steele replied, "I'll be lenient. I'll confiscate everything you have and give you half an hour to leave town." Some men would have tried to bribe their way in this situation, but the NWMP didn't take bribes. The man's stunned look as he was shown the door was all the payment Sam needed.

Sam Steele was amazed at the number of boats being built. Every tree for miles had been cut down to make a variety of craft. He made sure his men advised the carpenters to "build it right so it doesn't become y'er coffin."

On May 29th the rotting ice broke. "The wonderful exodus of boats began," wrote Steele. "I went up to the hill behind the office to see the start and at one time counted 800 boats under sail in the 11 miles of Lake Bennett."

Later that day he embarked on a steamer to witness the climax. He knew many were not prepared for the dangers that lay ahead. After a day's delay due to repairs he arrived only to find out that 150 boats had been shattered and five lives lost in the mad rush for the rapids. Many people had anchored their craft and walked around in a daze. Sam called the crowd together and instituted the following rules.

No women or children were to be taken on the boats, but would have to

walk the five miles round. No boat would go through until his man in charge, Corporal Dickson, deemed the boat seaworthy enough to ride the rapids. Only competent pilots would steer the boats and, in the event of a boat having no pilot, one would be appointed from a list of competent men and a charge of five dollars per boat would be in effect. Many were willing to pay, especially when Steele added that non-compliance would net them a 100-dollar fine! Because of his rules not a single life was lost from that day till the end of the Rush.

The Soapy Smith gang was still in operation when the call came to bring to Victoria the money the NWMP had collected in fines and duty. This amount came to over 150,000 dollars. To get it out of Canadian territory they would have to go through the lawless American side. Steele devised a plan that he hoped would work.

It was decided to pretend that Zack Wood was being transferred back to the Northwest. For days, word was put out in the street. Steele made a show of shaking his hand good-bye and Wood left accompanied by two officers to carry his "luggage."

The next boat leaving for Victoria was the *Tartar* and she was five days away. The three men made for the U.S. border and Soapy's territory. Once there, they maintained a low profile. But a warning came that Soapy's men had discovered the ruse. Meanwhile, the boat that would carry them safely to Victoria had arrived at Skagway harbour. They hired a tugboat and rowed out to it with the money. But Smith's gang was onto them. Making for the wharf at Skagway, with an armed ship in pursuit, they jumped onto the deck to be met by none other than Soapy himself and his murderous mob of followers. Suddenly, from the ship *Tartar*, came a squad of armed sailors. They leveled their guns at Soapy and his gang. "Why don't you stop in Skagway for a while Inspector?" asked Soapy. The inspector declined and the three men boarded the boat and delivered the deposit intact to Victoria.

After a time spent setting up a police presence in Atlin, the next port of call for Sam Steele was Dawson City. Dawson was "a city of chaos." Illness ran rampant as filth piled up in the streets. Typhoid fever infected many and killed more than 84 people. The number of brothels and saloons and gambling dens was staggering. The first order of business for Sam Steele was to expand the jail.

In order to clean up the city and save the government money, Sam made use of the jail's residents. The prisoners worked shoveling snow, clearing garbage and adding to Sam Steele's ever growing "wood pile."

"The wood pile was the talk of the town and kept 50 or more toughs of Dawson busy every day. To instill in criminal minds that crime did not pay, Steele often gave time on the wood pile and fines for such crimes as gambling, pick pocketing and fist fighting. All the wood was cut to length to fit inside the standard NWMP stoves. One enterprising prisoner got his revenge by cutting his pieces exactly half an inch too long. The funds Steele collected in fines did not line the policemen's pockets, but rather were used to help hospital patients.

Despite being tough on crime, Steele knew that Dawson's survival de-

pended somewhat on the gambling halls and houses of ill repute. He turned a blind eye to the halls, as long as there were no customer complaints of robbery or cheating. Such matters often resulted in the customer getting his or her money back and the house getting off with a warning.

Though he disliked it, prostitution could not be shut down. To control it, he established red light districts where the women could ply their trade away from the civilized folk of Dawson.

Steele was a religious man. He banned the "hootchy-kootchy" dance which was considered too revealing. He made sure that all establishments closed at midnight Saturday, and stayed closed until 2:00 a.m. Monday. Men who fished, sawed wood or engaged in other "noisy" activities on the Sabbath were sent to the woodpile as punishment. The Lord's Day was to be observed in Dawson, as long as Sam Steele was around.

Samuel B. Steele

Although Steele kept a handle on the gamblers, dance hall girls, confidence men and claim jumpers, there was one element that Steele found he couldn't control: the white-collar crime of back door deals, dirty judges and grafters who conspired to rob legitimate owners of claims by altering dates and records. Though fairly staked, a piece of surveyed land once it became profitable, could be maneuvered away from the often illiterate miners. The practice was so wide spread that it was said only the police were not in on the game. Meanwhile, political powers were at work bringing in a new type of corruption. Only in Dawson could a former horse thief become the Minister of Mines, or a corrupt politician become responsible for all Mounted Police matters.

Steele continued to fight the corruption but it had spread to levels too high to reach. In September, he was transferred out of the Yukon. There was a large public outcry for the man who had brought law and order to the frontier but Steele was ready to quit. He had not seen his family for over a year and a half. It was time to go home.

All of Dawson it seemed turned out to bid good-bye to Sam Steele. On September 26th he made his way to the awaiting boat, amid the hugs and ovations of the hard-fisted citizens who had come to respect him. Big Alex McDonald had prepared a speech to accompany the town's gift of a bag of gold, but in the end he lost his words. Staring into the face of Lieutenant-Colonel Steele, he thrust the bag into his hand "Here Sam, here y'are. Poke for you. Goodbye."

Steele and his men brought law and order to the Yukon and much more. They transported gold to the banks in Seattle. They cared for the sick and buried the dead, and saw that the last pennies of the deceased reached their next of kin. They took responsibility for those left broken and penniless or mad by the rush and often helped them get home safely. They were responsible for the mail, the life's blood of many men who wandered the wilderness trail. Always, they were gentlemen in their actions and their dealings no matter how low the company they encountered.

Sam Steele, the finest example of what was good in a lawman, went on to other adventures, including serving in the Boer War. He died in Putney, a victim of the great flu epidemic of 1919. After a funeral procession equaling that of royalty, Sam Steele was taken to Winnipeg, where he had asked to be buried. His body arrived during the middle of a general strike. There were riots on the street and police being beaten by angry mobs. How could one expect to conduct a funeral?

But the funeral went on the very next day. The streets were hushed while strikers bowed their heads in silence as Sam Steele's coffin passed, accompanied by Mounted Police. An unmanned horse, Sam's boots backwards in the stirrups, walked in silence as police and rioters put aside their differences to honor the man who had set out to tame the Yukon. Even in death Sam Steele commanded and received the respect of his fellow men.

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Anecdotes of a Rounder

By Hank Horn

The Blessed Choppers

The Norseman, with its distinctive roar, flew into Fort Nor-man and landed on the river that looked like mirrored glass, on this picture-perfect summer day. The pilot, Ernie Boffa, was a legend among bush pilots and was known affectionately by most everyone in the Northwest Territories. The young Hudson's Bay clerk, who was scheduled to take a vacation, was no exception in this adulation. He was ecstatic when Ernie told him to hop into the only other seat in the plane next to the pilot. Anyone else who had to be picked up would have to sit on the mailbags in the rear of the plane.

With a deafening roar, the plane headed south but to the kid's pleasure hung just a few feet off the deck all the way to Fort Wrigley where another passenger and some mail were taken on. Back of the bus man! Again they flew off just tight to the water till they reached Fort Simpson where two more passengers, mail, and some light freight were taken on. The kid was thrilled to be able to help Boffa take on fuel from the 45-gallon drums with the wobble pump, common in the North.

Again, they headed south for Fort Providence with the thrilled youngster riding shotgun. Providence, it appeared, would bring some changes and evidence of that showed up as soon as the plane was tied up. Fort Providence, not unlike other villages along the Mackenzie River had a large contingent, of Catholic priests and nuns but with one major difference. Where most of the Catholic clergy in the North spoke Quebec French, those in Fort Providence were right from the old sod—France itself.

It was obvious to all and sundry that one of the nuns was being given the "blue plate" send-off. The group of priests and nuns were talking all at once and not one seemed to be listening. Boffa started to pace back and forth on the dock becoming more and more agitated with the delay. After a thousand miles with that unrelenting roar and a leg still to go he was understandably edgy. He deduced, somehow, that one of the nuns, who were all decked out in their traditional habit, was going back to France for a vacation or sabbatical, whatever. The groups had thrown a huge going-away feast with generous dollops of sacred wine, no doubt.

Eventually the superior nun in charge could see Boffa going blue and, with as much tact as the event required, finally managed to get the Sister to board the plane. And here the kid's role as co-pilot ended. He jumped in with the other passengers, pulled up something soft and settled in for the final leg of the flight, which would be the only time they would get off the

river. Boffa made sure the good Sister was buckled in and, after a long run, the 550 horsepower Pratt & Whitney took them off the river and slowly climbed to clear the hump that separated Fort Providence and Yellowknife, the final stop for that day.

The plane had barely left the river when the kid observed the nun groping about under her seat for the barf tube that was used in those days. The tube was made of very stiff and very strong cardboard with a tight fitting lid. It could carry a substantial amount as well. The sister had barely got the tube to her mouth than she was gesticulating, in obvious distress, that she needed another container. With some nervous scrambling, Boffa finally found another tube and quickly passed it to the nun who seized it and jammed it in her face, tout de suite.

Boffa heaved a little sigh of relief since it was plain for all to see he sure as hell didn't want his plane splattered with partially digested moose meat and homemade wine. Besides, he had a plane to fly, which he did with consummate skill

The weather had been fabulous throughout the entire trip, and when the Great Slave Lake appeared, it was like a mill pond. Boffa brought the plane in so smoothly no one even noticed him chucking the nun's barf tubes into the lake as the plane slowed in its approach to the dock at home base. The minute the plane was tied up to the dock, the passengers grabbed the hand bags and baled out, hustling down the dock, thankful for the opportunity to stretch their legs after being cramped up all day sitting on the baggage. The nun, however, seemed incapable of moving from her seat. Boffa made certain the plane was properly secured and the mail and baggage was taken to the base headquarters building. Suddenly, he spotted the nun and went over to assist her in climbing down to the dock and was rather surprised that she could hardly walk. She seemed completely disoriented and, taking a few tottery steps, she stopped and with a look of total panic in her eyes wheeled around and lurching in Boffa's direction thumped him in the chest with both hands while jabbering away in French. Ernie couldn't understand what the problem was until she pointed to her mouth and then it dawned on him that the Lady of Lourdes had lost her choppers along with the rest of her cookies.

Boffa, knowing how well engineered the barf tubes were, grabbed the nun's hand and told her to hang on to the wing strut of the plane while he launched one of the ever present canoes. He paddled furiously out to the white barf tubes, still laying on the water, a couple hundred yards from the dock. He scooped them up and carefully drained the tubes 'til he had retrieved the sister's dentures. Ernie returned and presented the blessed choppers to their owner who, appearing vastly relieved, finally headed for the terminal, still walking like a drunken sailor.

The moccasin telegraph worked its magic and the following day when the passengers were boarding the Lodestar for the trip to Edmonton, it did not surprise the kid to see the knowing grins on most faces when the nun, sedate and tight-lipped, made her way to her seat. Perhaps it was the lan-

guage barrier but hand signals from the good sister were the order of the day until she was lost to sight at the Edmonton airport.

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The Truculent Bear

It was a motley group wending its way across the jackpine flats and along creek beds through spruce woods: six dogs with packs, and their master, Black Angus McDonald. The trapper, carrying a pack loaded with his pots, pans, and his eiderdown, as well as some mush, dried fruit, fresh bannock, coffee and powdered milk, kept a sharp eye on his charges. He knew that, had he put any of his load in a dog's pack, the dog might take after a rabbit, or squirrel, and show up the next day sans all his goodies. He thought the weather was too nice for the work ahead, preparing the outcabins for the winter's trapping. The squirrels in the spruce trees chattered incessantly, letting the intruders know that they were disturbing their work, laying away the winter's sustenance.

Overhead a flying squirrel was silhouetted against the clear blue sky while wafting effortlessly from one tree top to another. Angus dwelt, for a moment, on how he had caught them, inadvertently, in traps set for mink. How beautiful the fur was, finer than chinchilla, he thought, but how delicate the hide was, almost like tissue paper. The 'phalange' had features much like a bat.

In short order his thoughts returned to the task at hand, for the strange group had finally emerged from the timber and faced the opening of a huge flat, covered, for the most part, with moss and kinnikinik. It was surrounded by low bushes where they had just entered. The breeze was warm and just strong enough to keep the blackflies from becoming too active. Most importantly, at that particular time, it was blowing from the south-east at the trapper's back. The significance of that became all too obvious when Angus saw the huge grizzly coming down the side-hill half a mile away. He knew that bear could not see him or the dogs but with that monstrous head swinging back and forth his nose was better than twenty-twenty eye-sight with a telescope. The bear hit the muskeg flat on the dead run, and though concerned and not wanting the dogs to witness his concern, he stripped off the pack on his number one scrapper, a dog he called Knute. Knute had a lot of Airedale in him, crossed with a Malamute, and was meaner than any bear with a sore ass. He made the other dogs lie down while he checked his 30:06 Remington which was loaded with 220 grain bullets, a bear gun if ever there was one. Knute sensed something big was about to happen and when Angus put the rifle to his shoulder he knew what direction it was coming from.

The first shot rang out and the bullet appeared to hit the bear in the shoulder, spinning him around. It was difficult to tell if the shot turned that bear or whether it was Knute nipping him in the butt because they seemed to happen simultaneously. While Knute kept the angry bear' s attention, in what looked like a life and death ballet, Angus kept firing whenever there

appeared to be a clear opening and little possibility of hitting his dog. During his wait for such a pause the bear, in his rage, made a wild swipe at Knute and though he missed him, his paw, hit a hillock of moss surrounding a young willow growing out of the muskeg. Such was the strength and fury of the grizzly that the willow, with its ball of moss and soil attached, sailed into the air in lazy end-over-end loops, seemingly in slow motion, in what also seemed like hundreds of feet.

Hank Horn in front of the Bay manager's house at Fort Norman.

The great beast, frustrated, tiring, and puzzled by what felt felt like phantom hammer blows coming out of nowhere, started a retreat back across the tundra and up the bank where he had come from with Knute ragging him all the way. Half way up the slope the spent animal toppled over and died.

Black Angus shouldered his rifle and packboard realizing that Knute would be guarding the bear and would refuse to come back on a simple call. He also toted Knute's pack and headed for the kill, the dogs following him eagerly, anxious to find out what all the hubbub was and sensing there might be a feed of fresh meat in it for them. When they finally arrived at the site Knute let them all know that this bear was his Kill and they had better just back off. Angus had to talk to his enforcer like a 'clutch uncle' for twenty minutes before the growling ceased and he was able to put a knife into the dog's prize.

Shortly afterward Angus realized that it had taken nine shots to kill the bear, even though none of

them were in strategic places due to the bear's performance in trying to rid himself of that pesky dog. Sadly he surveyed the brawny titan, ruggedly aggressive, seemingly invincible just a short time ago.

In a rather pensive mood he went about the business of skinning the hide and rearranging the dog's packs so that a couple of them could carry enough meat for their next feeding.

Despite the heavy load he had to pack, they finally made it to the next cabin where he was able to size up the prize. He measured nine foot six from his nose to his stubby tail. The hide was prime and in fine shape fur-wise despite the Indian summer conditions. It did appear though, that in the battle with Knute, the swipe he took to send him to dog heaven cost him a couple of his over-sized claws. Angus was sure the head was trophy size but he had no way of knowing what that was. Again the trapper became melancholy. He had no urge to kill bears indiscriminately [at least not then] and had he not been threatened, this beautiful specimen would still be roaming the woods imperious and free. Cruelly perhaps, but realistically, this bear would have to serve as a rug, a coat, a throw or a hanging. Scant recognition for the lord of the realm. ■

Otter Falls, from a slide taken in 1957 by John Schofeld. A portrait of these falls once graced the Canadian five-dollar bill.

From the Publisher

In the last issue I wrote a little about a process to decide what would happen to some public beach accesses at Army Beach. Soon after, this note from Mike Paolera, a subscriber who now lives in Surrey, B. C., arrived in my electronic mailbox.

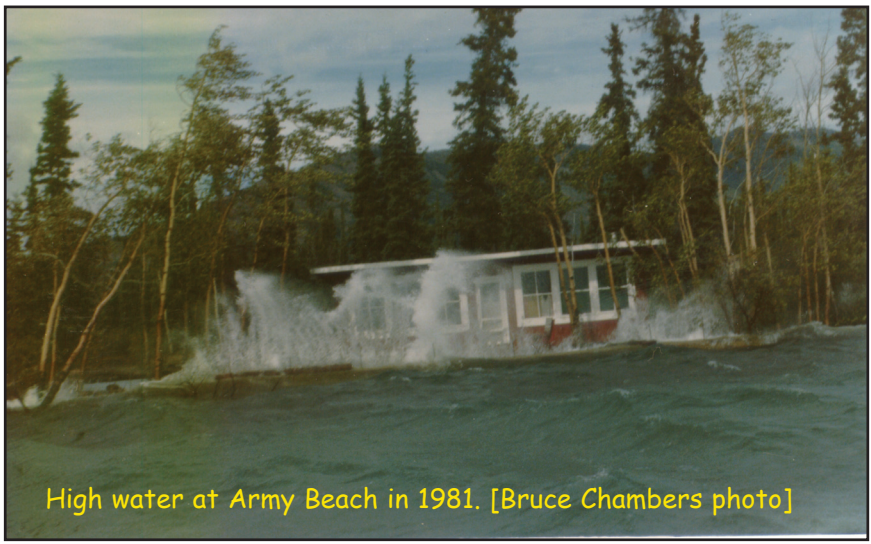
"I was born in Whitehorse and grew up at Marsh lake at my aunt and uncle's cabin in the 1970s. My mom and dad were able to buy our cabin at the Army beach in the late 70s. This was the best place for children to grow up. We left the Yukon in 1984 and despite great protest from my brother, sister and I, Dad sold the cabin one year later.

We all remember the great times we had. The best part was we could go anywhere we wanted. There was no such thing as private property. Everyone took care of everyone and their cabins 24/7. I just received my copy of the Yukoner and it saddened me that it seems this sense of community is gone. My aunt and Uncle still have their place and this summer I wanted to bring my two young boys up there to enjoy the freedom we had. Please think about what you all have before you go shutting down accesses to the beach and give up the community and freedom to walk in peace."

Bravo. I can't recall the word "freedom" ever coming up during our meetings but I agree that is what is at stake here. Maybe people just don't value what they've always had.

After a lot of public consultation, the committee made its recommendations to the Yukon government. Only one of the accesses will be closed; others will be smaller but still plenty wide enough for walking between the road and the beach. I've heard the government supports the proposals, which include developing some marked trails to make it easier for people to get to the beach.

Mike, thanks for your email. I hope you brought your boys here for a holiday this year. Army Beach is still a great place to visit and to live.



High water at Army Beach in 1981. [Bruce Chambers photo]