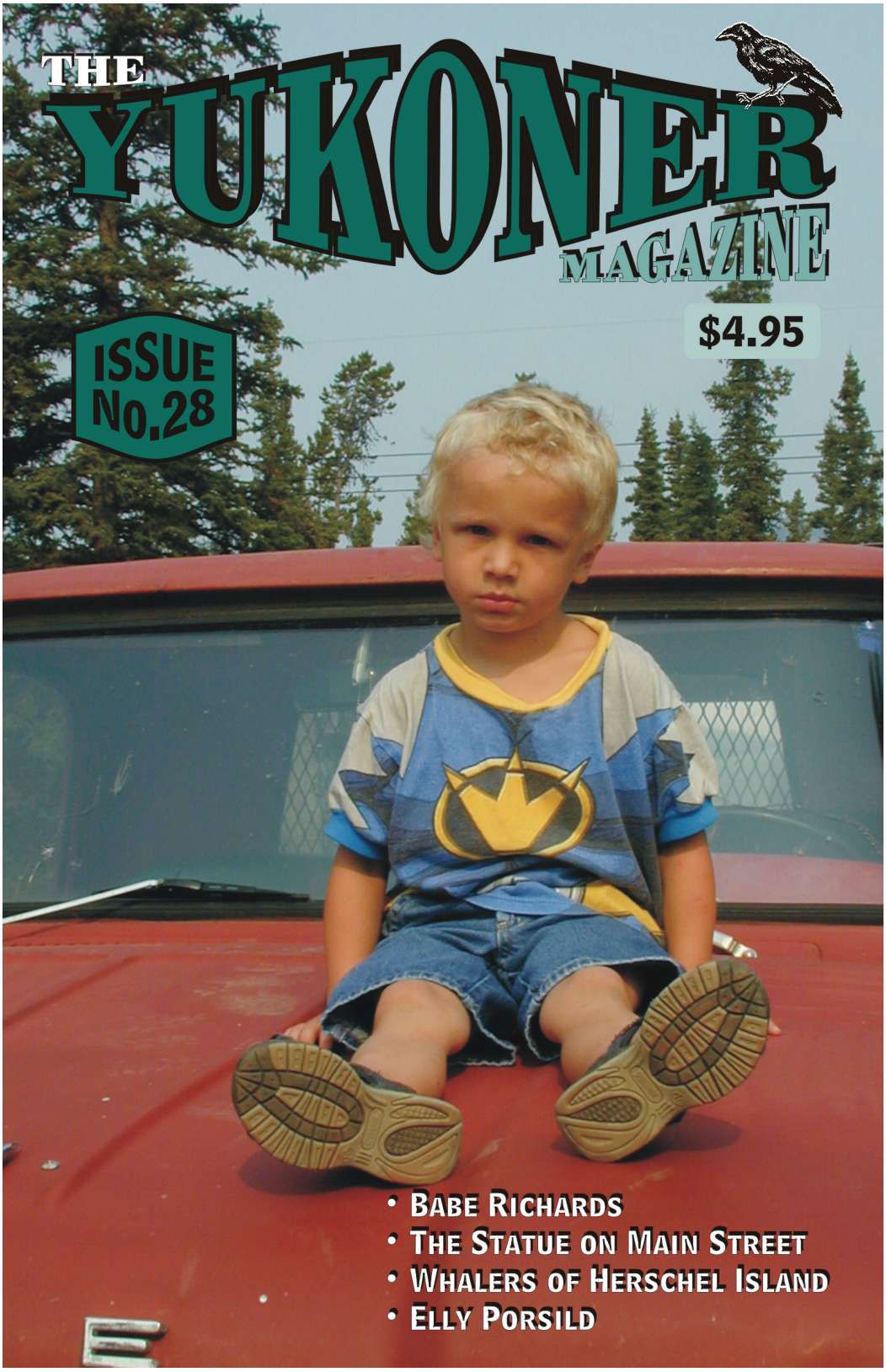
THE
YUKONER
MAGAZINE
ISSUE No.28
$4.95
• Babe Richards
• The Statue on Main Street
• Whalers of Herschel Island
• Elly Porsild

Kim Barlow

Yukon musician and singer, was born in Quebec, raised in rural Nova Scotia. With a B.A. in music, she taught herself to play the banjo beside a campfire in the Yukon.

She has produced three CDs, one of which was was nominated for a Juno award.

Look for her music under the label, Caribou Records of Canada.

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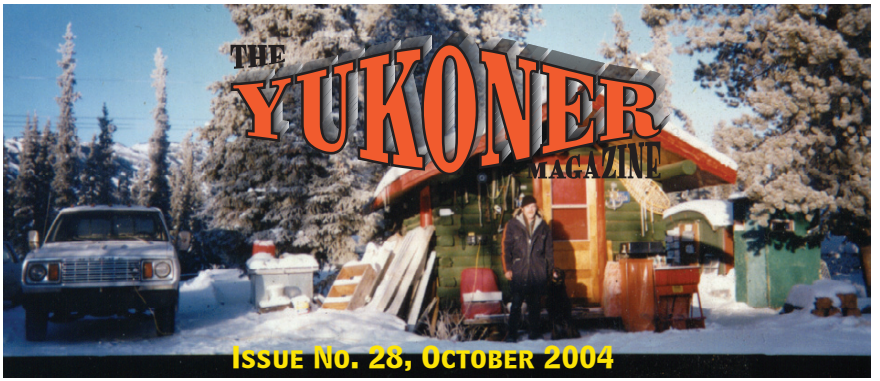

ISSUE NO. 28, OCTOBER 2004

www.yukoner.com

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

Cover: This is four-year-old Alex, a visitor to Army Beach, on the hood of old Dodgie Number Two. [S.H. photo]

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Publisher: Dianne Green Editor: Sam Holloway

From the Editor

You can see in the photos that I brought home some more old Dodgies. The 1966 van is especially sweet, and I am the second owner, having traded a magazine subscription for it. All it needs is body work, some glass, a new motor and tires and it will be ready to roll. We bought a 1972 Boler trailer to pull along behind it and Dianne wants the trailer painted to match the van. If we paint the trailer first, then I'll have to save some of that paint for the van. This is called getting the cart before the horse.

The other gem, in the bottom photo, is a genuine 1968 Power Wagon with stepside box, only needing a motor, tires, brakes, doors, paint, and a new seat. My neighbour down the road has kindly allowed me to park some of these treasures behind his house. The word along Army Beach is that I'm starting a Dodge museum, or far worse—a junkyard.

They are all wrong of course. All I want are some reliable, un-computerized vehicles to drive and security for old age. I figure that someday those Dodgies will be worth their weight in gold.

Talking about gold, one of our subscribers has won the nugget draw twice. We felt like drawing another name out of the hat, but that wouldn't be fair, what?

So long for now,
Sam

Nugget winner is:
Erson Castator,
Bolton, Ontario.

The Mail Run

Dear Dianne and Sam,

Issue No. 27 arrived in my mailbox today so everything ground to a halt while I whipped through it, cover to cover. In my late 80s I seem to have known more and more of these real characters and enjoy reading the great old stories.

Your cover featuring the dog named Ears earned you a copy of my little dog book, a story dating back to navy days, which I finally got around to publishing last year, with proceeds donated to Humane Society Yukon. Had to make the rounds personally to sell them but PING was instrumental in turning over $1000 to their animal shelter.

Have to tell you our family's favourite Polly the Parrot story. A visit to Carcross with our kids required climbing around on the little Duchess, then walking across to see Polly. The first time we took young Billy by the hand to see the bird, while he stared in silent awe the parrot shrieked "Hello Billy!" The kid nearly jumped out of his skin.

"How did he know my name?" he asked in amazement. We didn't tell him that was about all the parrot ever said, not wanting to destroy his childish faith. Now that William E. Whyard is the senior partner in his law firm at Powell River, B. C., do you think it would be safe to explain, gently?

Keep it coming, please!

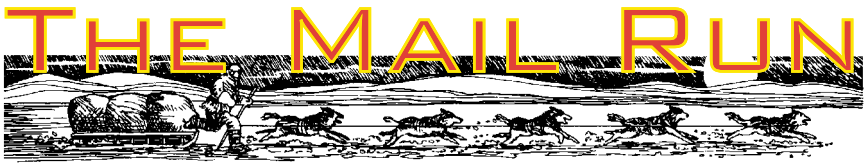
Flo Whyard
Whitehorse, Yukon

(Editors note: Now PING is available to our readers, with proceeds going to the humane society. See order form in centre of the magazine.)

Dear Dianne and Sam,

I have had a long and wonderful relationship with the North starting in 1950 when I worked on a Seismic crew exploring for oil in the Fort Vermilion area. I had a great uncle who actually made a lot of money during the Klondyke Gold Rush. My memories include:

- Travelling to all points along the Alaska Highway with my Mother (89 at the time) to the 100th anniversary in Dawson and attending the Scottish celdih ("cayley") in Whitehorse in 1998. Back packing the Chilkoot in the 1960s.
- Competing in the first Arctic Winter Games and coming third in the dog sled race. The trophy sits in a place of honour in our home. The owner asked me to ride as he was required to have a passenger. My wife has claimed for years that we would have won had she been the passenger. She is about half my weight.
- Selling explosives to most of the mines, and road construction companies in the Yukon and Northwest Territories,
- Owning my own explosives distributorship (ACE Explosives) as well as previously working for Continental Explosives and Explosives Limited,



- Boating the Mackenzie River from Hay River to Tuk with the owner of Yellowknife transportation in the early '60s,
- Supplying most of the explosives and ancillary supplies to Canada Tungsten and attending their famous curling bon spiel each spring,
- Supplying all the explosives to the contract consortium that built Inuvik—Dal Dalzeil and Hal Comish of Watson Lake and many others.

Bob Rintoul
Calgary, Alberta

Hello Sam,

I live in Whitehorse and have been methodically researching and physically searching for wrecks in Lake Laberge for several years. The lake does not give them up easily but there are several well-known sternwheelers and at least one aircraft in the lake. Namely the vessels "A.J. Goddard" and the "Thistle" (they went down in 1901 and 1929 respectively) and the WPYR Fairchild 82 CF-AXK (missing with pilot Jesse Rice and two passengers in the late fall of 1939).

I have always presumed the A.J. Goddard is located somewhere near Goddard Point but the location of the Thistle's resting place is sketchy. The general location of the Fairchild is documented but not very precisely. Each of these wrecks presents a huge task to try and locate them even with the aid of modern technology. So far I have not turned up any substantial wreckage.

With the help of my good friend Harry Lowry (and a relative of his) we now have a working underwater magnetometer to aid in our searches. What I would like to ask as a favour from you is if you have any anecdotal information in your files that might assist us in any way to narrow down the search area for any of these wrecks. As it is now, we are faced with searching many square kilometers so every little bit of information helps improve the odds.

If you can be of any assistance I would certainly like to hear from you.

Doug
Whitehorse, Yukon

Editor: Sorry, we don't have any information for you but our readers may be able to help so we're printing your letter.

Hello Dianne, Hi Sam,

Your last issue, No. 27, about roadhouses of the northern frontier was really of interest to me as you

The Mail Run

mention the Smythe's store and hotel. I remember seeing the name in a photo in the souvenir album of my Dad. So I enclose a photo of the Smythe place which was taken when my Dad left Dawson to join the 6th Field Canadian Engineer in North Vancouver, B. C. Also a Picture of him loading firewood for the boat on the way to Whitehorse. My dad went overseas and with good luck came back in 1919, met my mother and did not go back to the Yukon. In 1940 he joined the Veteran Guard of Canada. He was a good Dad and a good soldier.

I enjoy reading your magazine and look forward to seeing the next one in the mailbox.

Joseph Fournier
Matane, Quebec

Hello,

I enjoy your magazine very much. I was born on Hunker Creek in 1919, on September 15th, to Alex and Alice Maclennan. Spent most of my life in Yukon. We moved to Mayo in 1926 where I lived till 1973. My sister Mickey and I were married in the first double wedding in Yukon. We lived at Elsa mine till it closed down. My husband Alex Smith died three years ago. I am living now with my son Dwight in Creston. Keep up the good work.

Alice Maclennan
Creston, B. C.

Hi Dianne and Sam,

A note to say thanks for the interesting story about W. Perkins in the No. 27 issue.

Keep up the good work.

Liz Neave
Kingston, Ontario

Hello Yukoner Magazine,

My Dad, Al Allison, was a former Yukoner who passed away on August 3rd in Salmon Arm B. C. He loved your magazine and was a subscriber.

Dad came to the Yukon in 1946 after serving in WW II when he got a job with the Army driving truck on the Alaska Highway construction and was posted to Destruction Bay. He later worked for General Enterprises on clear-

The Mail Run

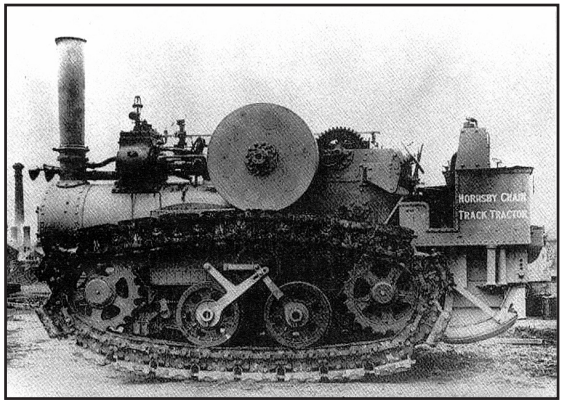
ing for the Haines to Fairbanks pipeline in the Kluane and Rainy Hollow areas and on the McQuesten River bridge. He later became a crane operator and bridge foreman for GE and built the Duke and Slims River bridges on the Alaska Highway. He and his crew also built 14 wooden bridges and two bailey bridges on the South Canol Road, including the present one over the Lapie River, which was the first Bailey Bridge constructed in the Yukon.

From 1958 to 1968 he and his wife Gloria operated the Fairdale Store in Haines Junction where he was also the fur buyer and propane dealer. He was also justice of the Peace and coroner there. They left the Yukon in 1968 but his heart remained there and his ashes will come back to the Yukon where he always said he spent the best years of his life.

Gord Allison
Haines Junction, Yukon

Sam:

This is a picture of the tractor mentioned in the letter to the editor from Neil Brady-Browne Sr. in Issue No. 26. It is a 1910 Hornsby steam chain traction engine used for hauling coal (in 8 wagons, each carrying 12.5 tons of coal) from Dawson to the Klondike goldfields.



Dave Fitchie
Camrose, Alberta

Dear Friends, Sam and Dianne,

I like dogs but pretty girls better so try and get more for cover pictures. I do hope I've encouraged some people to subscribe to our Yukoner. I've had my shooting eye operated on and hope to get the other done this month. It turned out wonderful—no need for glasses any more. Thank God for that wonderful eye surgeon at the hospital.

Tensley Johnston
Ross River, Yukon

ON THE TRAPLINE

By Tensley Johnston

One time, as I was checking my traps in the seven-mile lake area, I came upon some wolf tracks showing they were after a moose. There were bunches of hair and a spot of blood here and there. So I followed the trail to where the kill was made and there wasn't much left but as it was in quite thick willow bush suitable to good snare sets.

I made seven sets. I waited three days and went back and I had three wolves. For the rest of the season I got four more wolves at that set. I was doing quite well with marten and fox back there till a grizzly bear came and destroyed my tent. I set up another tent and made a good camp but for some reason I had poor luck from then on. Later I moved my camp another ten miles and did good and I found at least 20 old deadfalls. A native man told me his father had built deadfalls back there when he didn't have traps, many years ago. I rebuilt and baited some of those traps and had surprising good luck with them.

Later on I found an old campsite with an old rusty stove and a rifle barrel and a coiled up Swede saw blade still tied with babiche string. Then later on I found 13 leg hold traps, four of them had handmade jaws on them and very long chains. The remains of those old camps would surely have stories to tell. Some years later I found several burial platforms back there. No remains or signs of anything on them. I have to give up, but I'd give all I have now just to run my trapline one more winter. Me my dog and gun.

****

A morning in Ross River at minus 47 degrees Celsius. (SH photo)

The "Unsinkable" Babe Richards

On July 10th 2004 Babe Richards' ten children hosted a belated 80th birthday party for her. All ten children, plus grandchildren, great grandchildren, and other members of Babe's large extended family attended the party. Also present were about 250 family friends. Nona Loveless, Babe's 9th child, was the emcee for the evening. Some of the words in the following story are hers.

By Dianne Green

The biggest news in the Yukon back on May 25th 1924 was the birth of a 7 lb., 2 oz. princess, the third and final child born to Bernadine and T.C. Richards. Evelyn May Richards was known as Babe because her three-year-old brother, Bob, couldn't say "baby." She still has the nickname Babe.

She was the apple of her father's eye as she bounced upon his knee. The princess could do no wrong. Everyone in Whitehorse, all 300 people, loved her. Downtown was only a few city blocks back then—Main Street to Wood Street, then First Avenue to Fourth Avenue. It was not a very big place.

T. C. Richards worked for Burns and Company on Main Street. The family lived in a small house on Jarvis Street and First Avenue. T.C. drove an old Model T car, although there were few town roads upon which to drive and the Alaska Highway had not been built yet.

There was no bridge over the Yukon River, either, and Babe went on many rowboat trips to visit her Pop and Granny Langholtz (Bernadine's mother) who lived in a waterfront log cabin across the river from town.

Babe, her brothers and her friends attended the Lambert Street School. At the time it had no name and was known only as "the schoolhouse." Babe's mother and two aunts had attended the same school.

When the Richards family went on summer vacation to visit Bernadine's relatives in Wenatchee, Washington, they had to take a train ride to Skagway, then a cruise ship to Vancouver before proceeding to the U.S. There was no scheduled airplane service into Whitehorse and the Alaska Highway didn't exist.

On one such trip Babe lost her beloved Bulldog, Dempsey. Aboard ship Dempsey had to remain below deck where Babe went to visit him when the

crew allowed it. She knew Dempsey was upset about the separation because she heard him whimpering.

The family had made arrangements to leave the dog with a veterinarian in Vancouver while they travelled in the States. When they returned to collect their dog and take him home, the vet informed Babe that the dog had died. Poor Dempsey was so traumatized by the separation from Babe that he refused to eat or drink water in her absence.

T. C. Richards took over the Whitehorse Inn in 1937 then, in the 1940s, the family moved to the big house on Steele Street and Third Avenue. The house was built according to Bernadine's specifications and had stone fireplaces, hardwood floors, fine carpets and every conceivable luxury. It is now a designated heritage building.

Babe started driving at 13 years of age, before drivers' licences were required. To this day she has never had a written drivers' test or a road test. In the summer of 1937, Babe drove a taxi during the summer for tourists who wanted to see the sights of Miles Canyon and the Whitehorse Rapids.

Babe took on her first job at age 14 when she went to work for her father at the Whitehorse Inn as a part-time dishwasher. Restaurants weren't open all day back then, just for a few hours during meal times.

At age 16 Babe became a cashier at the hotel but her parents encouraged her to set her sights higher and sent their daughter to Crofton House,

Babe and all her children celebrating her 80th birthday at the Elk's Hall, Whitehorse, July 10, 2004. From left to right: Cecil Gayle, Richard, Bobbie, Nona, Doug, Bernelle, Anita, Charlie, Mike, John.

an exclusive girls' boarding school in Vancouver. She graduated in 1942, and planned to attend nursing school at Saint Paul's hospital in Vancouver later that year.

By 1942, there was scheduled air service into Whitehorse and Babe flew home for the summer, then tragedy struck. On July 26th 1942, the Richards family was devastated when Babe's oldest brother, Cecil, drowned

The famous T.C. Richards with his children, Bob, Babe and Cecil, on the running board of a Model T, c. 1930.

Babe Richards and school friend Phyllis Hinds (Walker) at Pennington, near Carcross, on the White Pass railroad

in Ear Lake near Whitehorse. He was 23 years old. The temperature that day was a scorching 100 degrees.

After Cecil's death, Babe did not have the heart to return to her studies, so she went to work as a desk clerk at the Whitehorse Inn. On September 17th 1943, Babe escorted the Governor General of Canada and Princess Alice around Whitehorse. That event was a highlight in a life that would be marked by many peaks and valleys.

Babe has survived so many ups and downs throughout her life that, in later years, her grown chil-

Babe in front of the Whitehorse Inn, c. 1941, with two oldtimers looking on.

dren dubbed her, "The Unsinkable Molly Brown." (Babe was still using her married name, "Brown." She now uses her maiden name, but her boys still call her "Molly" at times.)

In the summer of 1945, Babe borrowed a D-8 cat from the Army highway camp at Marsh Lake and pushed through the first road along a sandy beach near the camp. The machine had a cable drive and heaven only knows how she managed but she did. She remembers that people who saw her on the D-8 remarked, "Is it really a girl?"

Babe and a friend, Vera White, thought they'd like to build a cabin on the island that lies just off the end of the sand spit that is now called "Army Beach." They soon gave up on that idea and set up a wall tent next to a small

At age 14, with her beloved dog Dempsey.

Babe at age 17 on the sternwheeler Klondike, travelling from Dawson to Whitehorse in 1941. Standing next to her are Klondike Kate Rockwell and Babe's mother, Bernadine Richards.

creek at the end of the beach near the Alaska Highway where they spent the summer.

T. C. Richards then decided to buy two 150-foot lots close to the spot Babe had picked. He hired Leo Proctor, a contractor, to build a summer home and there he and Bernadine entertained their many friends. The property is still in the family, as T. C.'s grandson, Charlie Brown, has built a log home there.

In 1946, Babe gave birth to her first child. She named the baby girl "Cecil Gayle" for her late brother. Babe's first five children were born in less than five years. The next five took a little longer. Babe looked forward to having many children and set her sights on an even dozen but the total fell short. Number ten, Babe's youngest child, was born in 1963 when Babe was 39 years old.

In 1953, with baby number six on the way, Babe moved her growing family to Upper Liard, a village along the Alaska Highway near Watson Lake. Babe made the move reluctantly but the children's father had a job at the lodge there and she followed him.

While the family was living in Upper Liard, a native woman decided to make moccasins for all the children. Each child except the first, Cecil Gayle, had a nickname beginning with "B" and the woman wanted to put the nicknames on the moccasins. Newborn Charlie hadn't found his nickname yet so his mother decided to call him "Boots" in anticipation of the moccasins, and because he had big feet.

In 1956 Babe married John Brown and moved her troops from Upper Liard to the Brown Bros. Yukon Enterprise sawmill. Her new husband owned the mill, which was located then at the confluence of the Rancheria and the Liard rivers. Babe's happiness that year was marred by the death of her mother. Bernadine Richards died in Whitehorse at the young age of 58.

After his wife's death, T. C. Richards was a frequent guest at the sawmill where he enjoyed the company of his grand children—although he didn't live long enough to meet the youngest. Anita Christine, also known as "Bambi," was born in Watson Lake in 1963. T. C. died at Whitehorse in 1961 at the age of 72.

T. C. had given his daughter everything that money can buy. A good education and vehicles, purebred dogs and genuine alligator shoes—the

princess had it all. Nevertheless, Babe found that she didn't need money or material things to be happy. Babe loved family life in the bush and the years spent at the sawmill were among the happiest in her life.

As the children grew older they left the sawmill to attend the Catholic boarding school in Whitehorse. Babe missed having her children at home so, in 1960, she and John moved the family to Watson Lake where they took up residence in an unusual, custom-built home at mile 1.3 on the Campbell Highway.

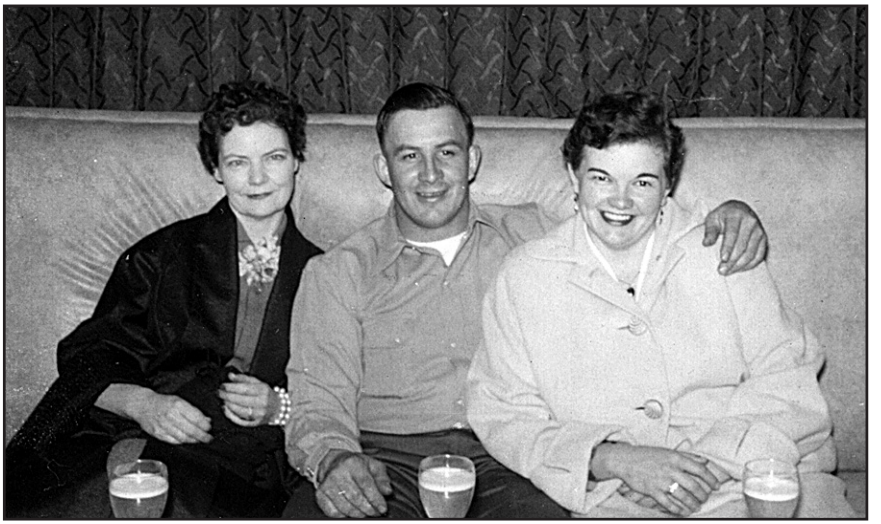
At the sawmill Babe and John had housed their growing family in a collection of portable skid shacks and bunkhouses. As the supply of timber in one area ran out, John and his employees moved the shacks to a fresh stand of timber. Eventually, John found a good stand of timber 17 miles from Watson Lake and there was no need to move again.

The new house in town borrowed the best features of the living arrangements at the sawmill. It included several separate skid shacks, all under one roof. An unheated corridor about 60 feet long ran down the centre of the house. A small propane stove heated each shack.

The children had their own quarters—a cabin for the girls and another one for the boys. Across the corridor was a deluxe version of a skid shack. It contained a master bedroom and baby's room, kitchen, utility room and living room. Babe kept her fine china and other valuables in the living room and the children were on their best behaviour in there.

While she lived in the Watson Lake house Babe cooked for 21 people.

Babe's 21st birthday party in the Whitehorse Inn Cafe, 1945.



Top - Babe with John Brown during their courting days. Photo taken at Tourist Services in Whitehorse. On the left is Belle Lethbridge.
Bottom- Babe with Cecil, Bobbie and Bernelle, dressed up for the Christmas concert at the Catholic School, 1957.

When the family moved from the sawmill to town, the planing mill moved with them. Babe cooked for these employees and her ten children.

Also at the table were four boarders who stayed with Babe so they could attend school in Watson Lake. These were children of parents who lived in the bush or in small settlements like Swift River. When the school bus stopped at the Brown house 14 kids got on the bus. One of those children was Dennis Fentie who is now the Yukon's Premiere.

Shortly after the birth of her tenth child Babe decided she was ready for some fun. On a weekend visit to the sawmill, Babe asked a sawmill employee named "Peterson" if he had ever had his name in the paper. "Yes," he said, "but only because I was in trouble at the time."

"The only time I get my name in the paper is when I have a baby," Babe complained. A conversation ensued and Peterson and Babe decided that he would push her in a wheelbarrow from the Brown house along the airport road into town. The stunt would take place the following Saturday.

"This Peterson was quite a drinker," Babe recalls. He was no longer a fit young man, nor was Babe a petite woman. When Peterson tried to back out of the stunt, claiming he had get an order of lumber out that day, John Brown gave everyone at the mill the afternoon off. At first Babe couldn't find a wheelbarrow but she managed to borrow one from the school.

When the big day arrived, John Brown followed Babe in the family station wagon with all ten children on board. Phyllis Fraser, Babe's lifelong friend who cooked at the sawmill, rode with them.

As the entourage progressed slowly along the road, traffic coming from the airport piled up behind them. A policeman appeared and instructed the cars to go around the wheelbarrow. Then he told Babe that she needed a

Babe with her family at John Brown's sawmill, in the bush near the Rancheria River.

Babe with Mike and Charley during Rendezvous, 1985. They are sitting on part of the log building contest, in which Charlie placed second.

permit to ride along the road in a wheelbarrow and he handed Peterson a ticket.

At first Babe didn't understand why the policeman would give them a ticket. She'd pushed a baby buggy along the road many times and it was almost the same thing. Peterson was not amused.

"I'd never heard Peterson swear before but he was swearing so hard the air turned blue. We continued along the road for about half a mile and right off on the side road is a policeman taking a picture. Now we know someone has put the policeman up to this. I never saw so many cameras in my life as when we got to the main drag in Watson Lake and everyone was out there taking pictures of us," Babe recalls.

When Babe and Peterson arrived in Watson Lake, John and the children joined them in the coffee shop of the Belvedere Hotel. Babe gave Peterson $50 that she had tucked down her shirt and the crowd that had gathered headed to the bar for a celebration.

The stunt was the talk of Watson Lake that day and for some time after. Babe's photo and a story describing the event appeared in the Fort Nelson newspaper, so Babe got the publicity she wanted.

Babe later found out that it was her husband who brought the police in on the stunt. Peterson said that he would give Babe his copy of the ticket as a souvenir but the ticket went up in smoke when his cabin at the sawmill burned down.

Babe likes telling stories about the lighter side of raising ten children. One of these involves a three-layer chocolate cake and a clothes dryer.

The cake was for Charlie's 12th birthday. Babe made it from scratch, as she always did. When she finished applying the seven-minute icing, Babe looked for a safe place to put the cake because the school bus was about to arrive. She decided the clothes dryer would be a good place because the children had been instructed never to touch it.

Babe put the cake in the propane dryer, which was raised above the floor similar to a commercial dryer. She left the dryer door open, then she looked for a towel to cover the cake. Instead of picking up the towel she closed the dryer door and turned on the dryer.

"Six months later there was cake coming out of there hard as a rock," she remembers.

Listening to Babe tell stories, it is easy to forget that she took child raising very seriously. A former public health nurse in Watson Lake recalls an impromptu visit when she found Babe's house "immaculate and in perfect order." On another visit the house looked just as tidy. It was obvious to the nurse that Babe was "in perfect control" of her household.

When the owner of a northern B. C. restaurant saw Babe's station wagon pulling into his parking lot he did a double take. He didn't know Babe then and, as her ten children spilled out of the car, the proprietor gasped, "I hope they're not coming in here." The family did come in and the restaurant owner remarked that he had never seen such well-behaved children.

"Spare the rod, spoil the child," was Babe's old-fashioned approach to child rearing and it worked most of the time. Babe had to be strict. The Brown boys were known for their high spirits and liked to test the rules. Number eight child, John "Buckles," remember the time his slightly older brother, Mike "Britches," caught him smoking.

The Brown family celebrating their mother's 80th birthday, July 10, 2004. In front are photos displayed as a road map of her life.

"If you do my chores for the next two weeks I won't tell Mom," Mike said. Buckles slaved away for several weeks doing his own chores and Mike's until he had had enough.

"Go ahead and tell," he said. When Mike told Babe that he had caught Buckles smoking she hit the roof. "Why did you wait so long to tell me?" Babe asked Mike.

"Mike got the paddle; all I got was a look," Buckles remembers.

By 1966 the sawmill was no longer profitable so in December that year John and Babe moved to Dawson Creek, B. C. where John went to work for a trucking company. It was a tough period for Babe. Three months after the move, on March 13th 1967, Babe's brother Bob died at age 47. Babe became the only surviving member of her birth family.

In Dawson Creek Babe, John and their five youngest children lived in a trailer. Cecil Gayle and Richard "Buddy" were already working and living away from home. Roberta "Bobbie" lived in Edmonton where she was training to be a hairdresser. Doug "Buttons" and Bernelle "Bubbles" went away to school. Number six, Charlie "Boots," was now the oldest child at home.

In 1969 John's company transferred him to Fort Saint John, B. C. and the family moved with him. In 1972 they moved back to the Yukon, this time to Whitehorse. In 80 years of life Babe has spent only five years outside the Yukon.

Babe opened her Main Street dress shop called "Broies Tienda" on October 24th 1974. Five years later she closed it down saying, "women can never make up their minds." It drove her crazy.

Babe's marriage to John Brown ended in 1977 and shortly after she and her two girls, Nona "Bows" and Anita "Bambi," moved into their new home in Riverdale. Babe has lived in the house for 27 years.

One month after closing the dress shop Babe opened up a home daycare, which she operated by herself for 15 years. Finally, when her knees gave out, she willingly retired. Following knee operations in 1995 and 1996, Babe felt like a new woman. Her family was delighted to see their mother finally enjoying her retirement.

Now a grandmother to 22 grandchildren and a great grandmother three times over, Babe is a tireless volunteer in her community. She is constantly on the go, testing the warranty on her new knees.

****

The Fabulous TCs

Babe Richards' parents were the legendary T. C. and Bernadine Richards. Known as the "T. C.'s," the couple brought elegance and fun to the business and social scene of Whitehorse for nearly 40 years.

T. C. Richards

Thomas Cecil Richards was born in 1898 in Lester, England. He came to Whitehorse in 1915 from the B. C. interior, where he had been a butcher. In 1918 he married Bernadine Piper, one of the most beautiful and accomplished members of her young social set.

Born in West Plains, Missouri in 1898, Bernadine arrived in the Yukon with her parents in 1902. The move was made with assistance from her grandfather, Frank Bigger who operated a trading post at Dyea, Alaska, a point of entry during the gold rush. After the Skagway to Whitehorse railway was built, Bigger and his wife moved to Whitehorse where he built a store. (City council demolished the tiny building on First Avenue, known as the "Sewell House," several years ago.) In 1917 the Biggers moved to Washington State where they operated a profitable greenhouse business.

As the manager of the Whitehorse branch of P. Burns and Company Ltd., a meat company that came to the Yukon with the gold rush, T. C. demonstrated his star qualities when he oversaw the first cattle drive into the Mayo area in 1921. The silver mines in the region were just starting up and the mining camps were out of fresh meat and moose was scarce.

In late August, P. Burns and Company Ltd., shipped 30 head of cattle aboard the *SS White Horse* down the Yukon River to Fort Selkirk. From there, a party of four men on horseback, which included T. C., two cowboys and an Indian guide, drove the cattle overland from Pelly to Mayo.

Although it was only September, the party encountered a snowstorm during which four head of cattle were lost. For the last 20 miles of the trail there was practically no grass or other feed on which the animals could graze. One night the cattle broke into the men's food supplies and ate everything except some tea and flour. The party subsisted on tea and bannock until the flour gave out; then they lived on tea and rabbit.

On September 23, 1921 the *Whitehorse Star* reported, "These are the first cattle driven into the Mayo country and from that standpoint the trip is

an historic one. Mr. Richards and others in his party are in fine condition despite the hardships of the trip."

In 1921, T. C. inaugurated a winter tractor-train freight and passenger service to Dawson. The old horse stage took five days with overnight stops at roadhouses—now the freezing passengers, huddled on bales of freight, made the trip in three. If they dared complain T. C. would say, "Well you wanted to get there fast didn't you?"

Bernadine Richards

By 1935, T. C. and his business partner, W. L. "Deacon" Phelps, had the Whitehorse-Dawson mail contract and were commended in the *Whitehorse Star* on the "speedy type of service they are inaugurating of late." Their company was called, "Klondike Airways," although it never owned an airplane. In summer, two Ford V8 trucks made the trip over the old stage coach trail from Whitehorse to Dawson in two and a half days

In winter the mail was carried by cat trains and, by 1936, new 'triple assembly snowmobiles', which covered the distance in 28 hours. Chief mechanic, Slim Koebke, was credited for these highly modern snowmobiles which he built in the company's own shops.

T. C. Richards was inducted posthumously into the Yukon Transportation Hall of Fame in 1998. While his contributions to the evolution of transportation in the territory are considerable, perhaps he is best known as the owner of *The Whitehorse Inn*.

Torn down in 1979, The Whitehorse Inn had been a popular social centre since the 1920s. Its infamous "Snake Room" was the scene of many a card game. In 1937, hotel owners Ken and Mack Yoshida were playing high-stakes poker with some of the town's most affluent businessmen. T. C. Richards was sitting in, as he often did. T. C. won the game and used his winnings—$20,000—as a down payment on the hotel. The Yoshida's returned to Tokyo and T. C. took over what would become his most successful business venture.

T. C. often managed to combine business and pleasure, but there were many times when he put business aside in favour of what he considered a plain old good time. He had a great love for big cars and as early as the spring of 1920 was sporting a handsome new Dodge, patiently waiting for the snow to disappear and the roads to dry up for joy riding.

He was an exceptionally courteous man and always tipped his hat to the ladies. T. C. always wore a white Stetson but he had a great love for hats

of any style. On one occasion in Atlin, B.C. he took the old hat off every man who walked into Sand's store, tossed it into the stove and bought him a new expensive one. At the end of this caper he'd bought the whole stock of hats at Sand's and "paid an awful price for the lot."

"The T. C.s had a large cottage at Marsh Lake where the welcome mat was always out. Mrs. T. C. prepared tubs of salads, cold cuts, all the gourmet fixings one could wish for—and no matter what your preference in drinks, they had lots of it.

"On one occasion, while loading a case of fine Scotch whisky into the trunk of his car, he told passing friends, 'I'm going out the cabin alone for a few days—I want to taper off.' He was a champion elbow-bender in a town full of experts and he never made any bones about it," one old friend reminisced for *The Whitehorse Star* in 1975.

It appears that Bernadine Richards was content to play a supporting role in the lives of her husband and children. She took an interest in the hotel and spent many hours making sure that the cleaning staff did their jobs properly. The family's log home on Third and Steele streets is a tribute to her love of luxury and her good taste. Bernadine was a perfect hostess and guests in her home knew that they were very lucky indeed.

The epitome of style

T.C. Richards taking his trucks across a Yukon river. From left to right are Mike Murphy, Babe Richards, Charlie Baxter, T.C. Richards, Bud Harbottle. [Yukon Archives photo, Harbottle collection]

and fashion, Bernadine set the bar very high for her daughter, who later opened a dress shop. Babe remembers having her photo taken on a Vancouver street while she was wearing slacks. She made sure that her mother never saw the photo as she knew she would not approve.

In Babe's living room a photo portrait of Bernadine shows a stunning woman with sad eyes. It was taken after the death of her oldest son, Cecil, in 1942. "After that mother never was the same," Babe says. Bernadine Richards died in Whitehorse in 1956. T. C. joined his wife and son in death in 1961. ❐

The Whitehorse Inn, built in 1927 by Ken and Mack Yoshida, c. 1940. [Yukon Archives photo, Harbottle collection]

Editor: In 1974, I took a room at the Inn for three weeks. It cost $5.50 a night, with a washroom down the hall. The floor tilted and the room had absorbed all the odours of unwashed Yukon characters over the years. I befriended a middle-aged, balding, shakey fellow in the room across the hall from mine. He came from Dawson City and proclaimed to be "stakey and snakey," which meant having lots of money and being bushed. A few days later he sported two black eyes and was trying to borrow money to go home. This had been his tenth yearly attempt to get from Dawson to Edmonton to visit his aging mother. S.H.

The Whitehorse Inn just before it was demolished in 1979. {S.H. photo]

The Yukon's Favourite Prospector

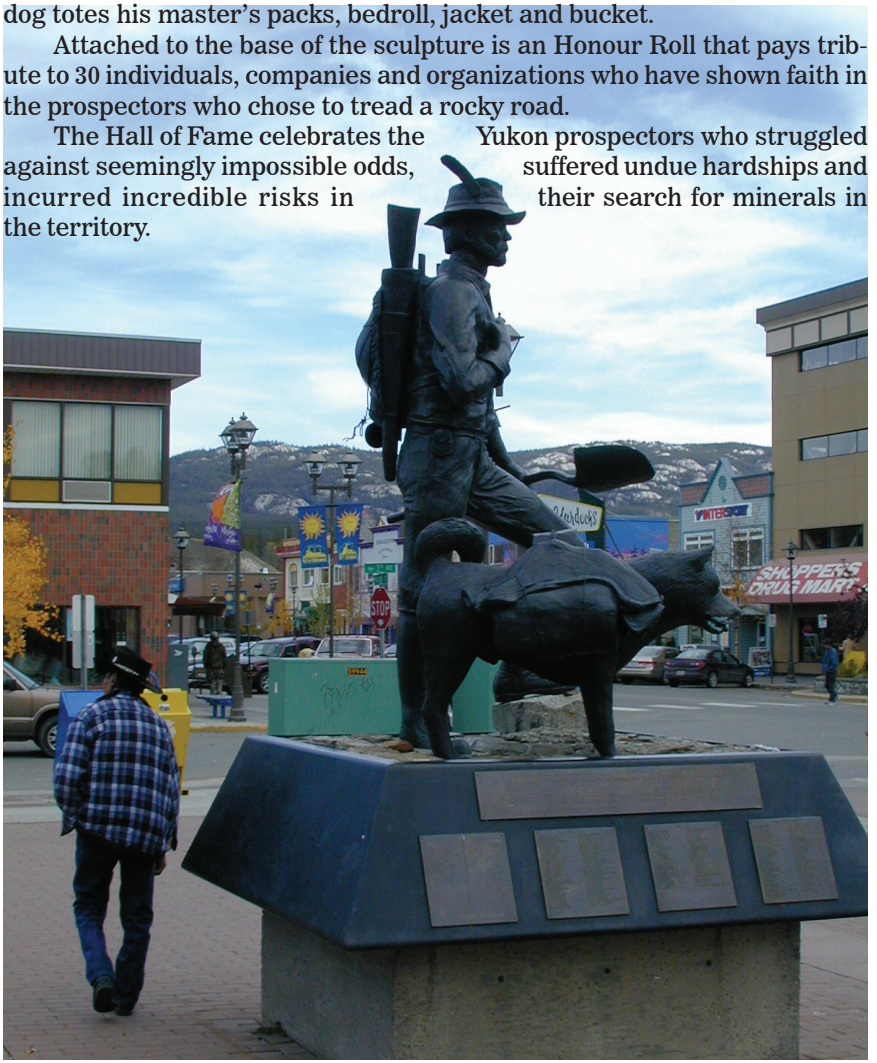
By Jane Gaffin

A larger-than-life prospector towers proud and confident over downtown Whitehorse overlooking the corner of Third Avenue and Main Street. The bronze figure epitomizes those who follow their dreams.

He is clad in high-top boots, a feather stuck in his wide-brimmed hat, a gold poke attached to his belt. In his left hand, he carries a long-handled shovel. A sheathed rifle is slung from his shoulder. A cup, an axe and the all-important gold pan are strapped to his backpack. The faithful, broad-faced dog totes his master's packs, bedroll, jacket and bucket.

Attached to the base of the sculpture is an Honour Roll that pays tribute to 30 individuals, companies and organizations who have shown faith in the prospectors who chose to tread a rocky road.

The Hall of Fame celebrates the Yukon prospectors who struggled against seemingly impossible odds, suffered undue hardships and incurred incredible risks in their search for minerals in the territory.



Well-known prospector Allen Carlos drilling near Ross River.

For the period from 1860 to 1992, 183 names are listed. Many were honoured posthumously. Induction is an on-going process. Space is reserved to engrave names of other contributors who either have been inducted since the Yukon Prospectors' Association erected the statue in the fall of 1992 or will be inducted in years to come.

"This special breed of individuals, though relatively small in numbers, has contributed tremendously to the Yukon," says the plaque.

One Hall of Famer whose name will be engraved is Ron Berdahl, a talented prospector who entered the profession when independent prospecting was practically dead.

Berdahl believes people are natural-born gamblers. "That's why they buy lottery tickets. Prospecting is just a way to do what I like to do. It allows a person freedom. It's a meagre living with a chance for a big pay off."

The young prospector had not turned 40 when he was nominated, elected and blessed by the selection committee as the 1997 Prospector of the Year.

One achievement that cut a rank above all others was the discovery of what is believed to be the first emerald showing found in Canada and probably the second one in North America.

The rarity was like finding the proverbial needle in the haystack to locate a gem-showing immediately across the Yukon border in the expansive Northwest Territories. Only about 10 profitable emerald mines exist in the world.

Prospector Allen Carlos spoke of freedom as the biggest reward in his chosen career. His name has been synonymous with independent prospecting in the Yukon almost since the day he struck out on his own in 1967. He was named 1991 Prospector of the Year and was presented with his engraved rock hammer during a traditional ceremony linked to the annual geoscience forum.

The true meaning of freedom wasn't fully realized, however, until Carlos was economically free to work on projects, he said. His philosophy was to stick to areas previously proven as mining provinces and to concentrate on geology, geochemistry and geophysics. He considered each prospect unique and treated it separately.

"It is good to compare. But one prospect should not be related to another. There's nothing definite about geology. And a prospector cannot preconceive ideas or try to draw the lines too straight on maps."

His philosophy paid off. The highlight of his career has been the Grew Creek hardrock gold property he and his two sons are developing near the village of Ross River

(Many of the prospectors mentioned here in are profiled in Cashing In, a definitive history of Yukon hardrock mining, 1898 to 1977; further, Carlos' biography is available as an eBook through <http://www.diarmani.com.)/ >http://www.diArmani.com.)

Recognition was paid to a late, great prospecting trio. Peter Versluce, who contended that an independent prospector is a millionaire even when penniless, was best known for discovering the Little Chief ore body that was mined by Whitehorse Copper from 1972 to 1982.

Versluce, his brother, Harry, who died in 2002 in his 93rd year, and their partner, Chuck Gibbons, literally staked mineral claims in their own backyard. The 17-mile-long, crescent-shaped copper belt extended into their homestead property north of Whitehorse where a group of prospectors had constructed cabins in a treed nook they called "Bachelor Cove".

"Too often prospectors doggedly hold onto a property, waiting for the market price on metal to go up," noted Versluce. "But you have to do a hundred dollars of assessment work on claims every year—whether trenching, geophysical or whatever. Sometimes it's not practical. It's best to get rid of that property for whatever you can, then go look for something else—in your own backyard."

The prospecting bar was set high for those who followed in Alan Kulan's footsteps. In 1953, the young and hungry prospector checked out a rusty area reported to him by members of the Ross River Indian Band. He made the first discovery of lead-zinc mineralization in Vangorda Creek.

One of his associates was native trapper/prospector Arthur John, who lives near Ross River. He is a Hall of Fame inductee, too.

Three years later and close to the first find, Kulan discovered another rusty zone in the Anvil Range area. This turned out to be the gigantic, 60-million-tonne Faro lead-zinc-silver mine that put the Yukon on the world map in 1969.

These self-educated geologists, the mainstay of the Yukon's mining industry, read about rocks all winter and break them all summer. Kulan gambled and won. He ignored the Geological Survey of Canada reports, which indicated his area of focus was not suitable for mineralization.

Kulan was murdered in September 1977. Ross River resident John Rolls, crazed with jealousy and alcohol abuse, shot the multi-millionaire in the face with a .357 Magnum handgun (see Yukoner Magazine #14).

The late Wellington "Wally" Green was hoofing over the hills alone well into his 80s. The spry, wiry little man is best remembered for and was most disappointed over his discovery of the Wellington copper-nickel mine near the Kluane National Park boundary.

Green came to the Yukon in 1944, as a chef for the U.S. Army during construction of the Alaska Highway. He couldn't find anybody to talk geology with him, though.

"Everybody knew placer," he said. "For placer mining you need a strong back and a light head. Too hard work for me."

The mine that bears his name had an ephemeral production life of 14 months before Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting closed it in August 1973. Mines did not fascinate Green; he just liked finding the ore and getting rewarded with his share of the loot. His advice to fledgling prospectors was to study more than the rocks.

"(A prospector) has to study the business end of prospecting, too, or he's going to get fleeced."

Al Kulan and Pete Versluce agreed there is more to prospecting than meets the eye. After much practical business experience, they suggested that potential prospectors take a basic course in law...and definitely learn to cook.

These venerable ambassadors to the rock trade substantiate why the statue, a several-tonne, permanent metal statement about Yukon prospecting, was such a grand idea. It was an incredibly huge project that came together quickly once it gathered momentum. From initial concept and design in 1988 to finding funds to sculpt and erect the monument took less than four years.

"But it wouldn't have come together without Chuck Buchanan and his knowledge and contacts for bronzing," praised Bruce Patnode, an artist in his own right, and former long-term president of the Yukon Prospectors' Association.

"Chuck is very organized," said Patnode about the sculptor, who owns a museum of natural history and frontier theme park south of Whitehorse near the quaint burg of Carcross. "He did it on a forgiving basis. It would be doubtful if any other sculptor could have done the project for $80,000."

The funding to cast and erect the metal creation was cost-shared between two government levels and private enterprise. Once the money was committed, Buchanan started the clay work on the larger-than-life figures, in June 1992. The clay casting was then sent to a Montana foundry for bronzing and was shipped to Whitehorse in record time.

It was nip and tuck. If the statue, expressed from the foundry on Consolidated Freightways, had missed the connection with Canadian Freightways, it would not have been in Whitehorse on time for the dedication ceremony.

It was on schedule. The statue was trucked to the Midnight Sun Drilling shop, where it was assembled and prepared for the concrete base. Sidrock Company was downtown digging up flagstones in the courtyard square and doing concrete work on which to bolt the base. Continental Crane was hired to unload the masterpiece from Jerry Vermette's lowboy onto the deck.

Only 10 months lapsed from the time Buchanan cast the miniature prototype until the three-metre-tall prospector, accompanied by his malamute companion, magically appeared for the unveiling.

The official ceremony was part of the Mines Ministers' Conference staged in Whitehorse in September, 1992. When the delegates went into their Monday morning meeting, the statue was not there; when they swarmed out less than three hours later for lunch, the statue was bolted in place and concealed by a plastic shroud. The area was tidy and the heavy equipment gone. The scene was ready for Patnode and federal and territorial politicians to speak to the crowd.

"It was Elmer MacKay, the Public Works minister, who liked the idea," said Patnode. "MacKay was instrumental in making the project a success as well as providing an excellent location for this landmark."

The public immediately assumed ownership of the art piece. Kids climb up and sit at the prospector's big feet to eat their lunch and have private conversations. And the prospector statue has proved to be the most popular backdrop and photographed item in Whitehorse.

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The Whalers of Herschel Island

By Dick McKenna

"It was the only time and place in western Canada's history that complete and unbridled lawlessness ran amuck " - the late R. C. Coutts.

Herschel Island is the Yukon's sole coastal island posses- sion. It is located in the frigid Arctic waters about a mile off the gently sloping northern coast. The treeless, bush less "desert" island of about six miles by eight miles in area is for the most part flat and featureless; however, at one point it rises to 600 feet above the ocean. The island is composed almost entirely of silt and clay, and wouldn't even exist if a glacier hadn't gouged the huge mass from the bottom of the shallow Beaufort Sea thousands of years ago.

The first European to sight the Island was Sir John Franklin on July 17, 1845 and, following tradition, Franklin named the Island after another British nobleman, Sir William Herschel, a famous astronomer. This was Franklin's second expedition sponsored by the British Royal Navy to map the Arctic coast and islands. His third expedition to the same waters the following year would be his last. Although many clues have been found, no one knows the exact fate of Franklin or his men.

The community of Herschel was born of the whaling industry—particularly, the bowhead whale. These 65 ton, 70 foot giants of the Arctic were hunted mercilessly for their valuable and highly sought after baleen, baleen being the long flexible plates that hang from the roof of the whale's mouth. These are used to filter out large fish, enabling the whale to capture its sole diet, small shrimp-like krill.

Unfortunately, humans had a use for baleen too. This tough, flexible,

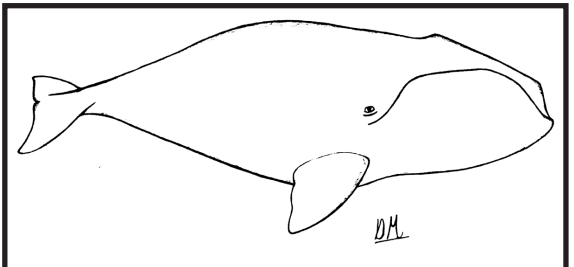
The Whalers of Herschel Island

elastic material was used in an assortment of items including buggy whips, umbrellas and fishing rods but it was the fashion industry that swallowed up the majority of the product. The hourglass figure of the Victorian lady was in peak style and, when used as stays in corsets, baleen was the perfect material that would help enable the ladies to obtain that ultimate 12-inch waist, often with severe medical consequences to the wearer. Such was Victorian vanity.

Another product of the hunt was the oil obtained from the whale's blubber. By the 1890s petroleum was largely taking the place of whale oil in lubrication and lighting applications but whale oil was used extensively in the tanning industry and as a "high-grade" base for cooking fats and margarine. A full-grown bowhead could produce up to 100 barrels of oil valued at $15 a barrel, plus a ton of baleen at $6 a pound netting the whalers up to $15,000 per whale.

By the late 1800s whalers had depleted much of the bowhead population along both the eastern and western Arctic coasts and each year they ventured further North in pursuit of this Arctic species. One barrier that prevented the whalers from tarrying long in Arctic waters was their fear of being caught in the pack ice. From October to June the Arctic seas are frozen solid and any time between, huge icebergs drift with the winds, threatening and often times crushing and sinking ships. Even if a sailor was lucky enough to escape by jumping onto an iceberg he had little or no chance of seeing his loved ones (had he any) again. More than a few whalers suffered this fate. In 1871 alone a reported 32 ships were crushed by ice off the Arctic Coast. This was the most probable if not obvious fate of the final Franklin expedition. Whalers who did have the fortitude to venture into these dangerous waters found little time to whale before having to "run the gauntlet" back to the ice-free zone and on to home port to unload the cargo.

By the late 1880s whalers had begun to voyage as far as the north coast of Alaska where the local Inuit gladly told them of lucrative whaling grounds located farther eastward near the MacKenzie River Delta. In order to substantiate the rumours, in 1888 the Pa-



The bowhead whale is the second largest of all living creatures on earth, after the blue whale. As long as a mobile home, almost as high as a two-story building, these massive mammals can capture a ton of krill (small shrimp-like crustaceans) with one swipe of its huge jaws.

cific Steam Whaling Company (PSW Co.) of San Francisco sent their best harpooner, Joe Tuckfield, east from their station at Point Barrow Alaska, along with a crew of hired Inuit. After spending the winter with the Inuit in the delta region, Tuckfield returned in the spring of 1889 with encouraging news. In his own words "The whales were as thick as bees." As a bonus, there was a small island with a perfect natural harbour where boats could put up for the winter and avoid being crushed by pack ice.

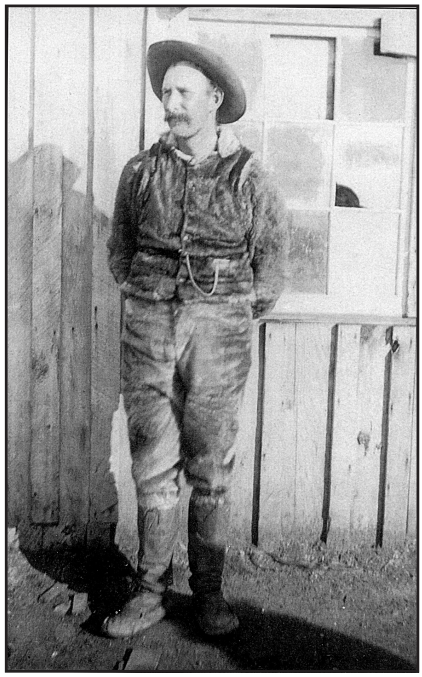
Hearing of the news, the U.S. Revenue cutter *U.S.S. Thetis*, under command of C.H. Stockton, steamed to the island to investigate, taking soundings and naming the prominent features including Thetis Bay and Pauline Cove, the latter named in honour of Stockton's wife. Stockton also drew up an accurate naval map of the island that was published the following year, in 1890. Fortunately the captain had enough skill to correctly determine that the island was east of the 141st parallel and therefore in Canadian waters.

Little did this fact matter to the PSW Co., which immediately sent two of its smaller ships. The 90-foot, 165-ton Schooner the *Mary D. Hume* and the smaller *Grampus*, ventured northward to winter in the harbour with the intention of heading out to the whaling grounds come spring.

On August 20, 1890 the two ships crewed by about 25 whalers each arrived at Herschel, and by the 15th of September were frozen fast. Crews banked in the ships, prepared them for winter as best they could and then set about to gather over 100 cords of driftwood for fuel. On the spit of the harbour they built a warehouse for the storage of whalebone (baleen) and oil.

In no time a small community of igloos populated by about 60 Inuit surrounded the ships. The whalers were eager to trade with the Inuit, especially when they found out that the woollen garments the company provided were no match for the cold and wet conditions they encountered. The whalers at first offered tobacco and coffee in exchange for garments of sealskin but the Inuit found little interest or use for such commodities (they had not become addicted yet). However, when offered more useful items such as needles, matches, knives and blubber spades, the Inuit became far more responsive and a thriving trade industry between the two cultures began.

The whalers found the Inuit "of good humour" and, in fact, very helpful in teaching them how to cope with the harsh northern climate. From this point on the Inuit would play a large and vital role in the lives and survival of the whalers in the remote northern outpost. The Inuit also had dog teams and sleighs and soon a hunting party was organised to journey inland in search of caribou to supplement the whalers' meagre diet. Hartson Bodfish, first mate of the *Mary D. Hume*, along with two of the crew, journeyed far inland spending almost two months living among and travelling with the Inuit during the expedition. Bodfish later said that he had "learned a great deal about the Arctic, and my guide, Innuello taught me many a lesson of the north."



Hartson Bodfish, Point Barrow, Alaska, 1892. [Presbyterian Church photo]

Bodfish, a New England salt, was half a world away from the lush green meadows of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts where he was born and raised. At 16 Bodfish caught sight of the *Belvedere*, the second steam whaler ever built in the country, gliding graciously past his island home on its way to New Bedford. "Bright with fresh paint and varnish, her sails snow white and covered with flags, the *Belvedere* was a beautiful and impressive sight," said Bodfish. "For the first time I felt a longing to go to sea, and on that ship." By a stroke of luck, Bodfish managed to do just that and shipped out of New Bedford on her maiden voyage to Honolulu and then on to the whaling grounds of the North Pacific where he spent four years aboard her learning the hard, dangerous life of a whaler. By 1890, after ten years at sea, Bodfish had risen through the ranks to second in command, or first mate of the schooner *Mary D. Hume*. As first mate, Bodfish was in command of the lead whale boat, with the additional fringe benefit of being the chief disciplinary officer or in other words, "Chief Flogger."

To say Bodfish was a tough old salt would be a rude understatement. Old Hartson was as tough as boot leather, as hard as ten-day-old flapjacks and had a constitution as solid as the polar ice cap. On one occasion, shortly after arriving at Herschel, the ships rigging had fallen on his toe, crushing it so bad that it required an amputation. When the Captain was too busy to carry out the duty immediately, Hartson decided to do it himself to the astonishment of all present. In his own words:

"I thought rather fast. My foot was numb from the accident. I knew that the longer I waited the more painful the amputation would be so, with the steward and cabin boy looking on and groaning, I whetted up my knife and cut it off myself...There was considerable satisfaction in having performed my first surgical operation", first being a key word.

Later that winter several whalers, driven by the cold and spartan conditions, boredom and the sheer monotony of the place "deserted ship" and fool heartedly made a run for it, attempting to go overland and to the "outside." The proposition itself was ludicrous to say the least, as the nearest settlement at the time was Forty Mile, some four hundred miles due south. Seven hours later Bodfish, along with a few other officers, some Inuit and dog teams, had tracked down the cold, hungry but happy-to-be-caught deserters. The final result: more surgical practise for Bodfish who hacked frozen toes off two of the deserters.

After enduring the bone chilling temperatures, the monotony, and the perpetual darkness of their first Arctic winter, the slightly stir-crazy crews were more than delighted to see spring. By May it was light 24 hours a day which did brighten the place and the spirits up a bit but, still, it wasn't until July that the Arctic ice melted enough to allow them to carry out their mission. Finally, on the 10th of July 1891, the *Mary D. Hume* and the *Grampus* headed out in earnest from Herschel to the whaling grounds of the Beaufort Sea.

Less than a day's sail away, a pod of about 20 whales was sighted from the crowsnest of the *Mary D.Hume*. Excited crew members scattered to lower the whaleboats, three in all, and with Bodfish in the lead, they were soon in hot pursuit of their prize. Each boat had four rowers and a harpooner who fired the tripod mounted harpoon gun. The boats were 30 feet long, tapering sharply at bow and stern, and built for manoeuvrability and speed. The harpoon was of the new fangled variety with a tip that exploded once it entered the whale's body. The idea was to stun or maim the huge mammal into an early submission. Fortunately for the whale, the new gadget tended to malfunction 50 per cent of the time.

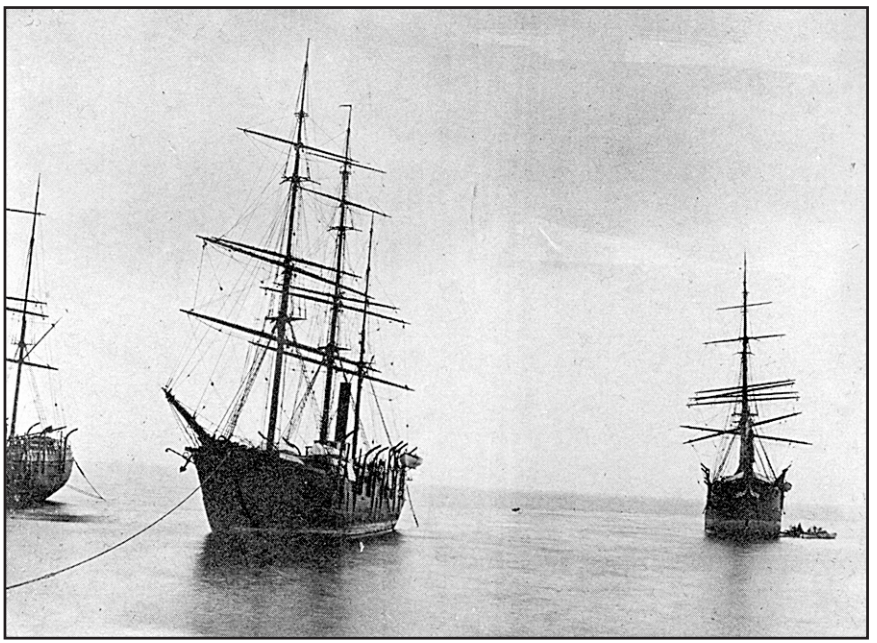
Attached to the harpoon was a coil of high quality three-quarter-inch hemp rope up to a mile long. The whole setup was not unlike a gigantic fishing rod and reel, the harpoon and rope, being the hook and line, and the coil being the reel. When struck with the harpoon, a whale, just like a salmon or trout on a line, would not go down easily. A fearsome "run" would ensue. It was not uncommon for a whale to string the line out so fast that the resultant friction would cause the coil of rope to become so hot that smoke would billow forth, and without dousing, it would literally snap. When the mile of line ran out, it was also not uncommon for the whale to pull one, two and even three whaleboats along at six knots through the iceberg infested waters.

Other times, a whale may suddenly turn around and head straight for the whaleboat and, with a slightly aggravated disposition and one big swat of his huge tail, send boat and occupants into the icy sea. During the first

two seasons in the Beaufort, Bodfish noted in his log two deaths as a result of "the whale upsetting the boat." On a third occasion another unlucky whaler had somehow managed to entangle his foot in the line as the whale was "taking a run." Bodfish noted matter of factly: " It took a round turn and took Oscar overboard, drowning him. As he went forward he struck three of the men knocking John Sander overboard. Mr. Nickle cut the line and picked Sander up. The whale ran a short distance then Mr. Look struck him again and killed him. Found Oscar's body on the line".

In the end, it was usually the whaler who won the battle. The bowhead, vitally wounded from the exploding harpoon and sapped of all remaining energy from the ensuing battle, finally died, rolling over onto its back and floating to the surface. A black flag would then be raised by the lead whaleboat signalling to the "mother ship" that a whale was ready for slaughter.

Immediately, the mother ship would steam up beside the whale and attach the fore and main rigging to the jaw and tail fin. Once the whale was securely cradled along side the ship, a half a dozen men wearing special cleated boots and armed with blubber spades jumped upon the mammal to begin the flensing process. Large strips of blubber were cut off and hoisted aboard where they were cut up in two-foot squares and stowed away for boiling down later. After all the blubber was removed, the huge head was cut off and hoisted on deck for the removal of the baleen. Each bowhead held about 600 plates of baleen, each measuring up to 13 feet long, which was cut from the top of the mouth and then cached below deck to be scraped



Whaling ships at Pauline Cove, c. 1895. {Anglican Church of Canada photo]

of hairs. The remaining carcass was cut free and set adrift in a sea coloured a crimson red for a quarter mile around.

In less than 40 days the *Grampus* took 21 whales before successfully "running the gauntlet" and sailing off to San Francisco for the winter. The *Mary D. Hume* took 27 whales, but tarried too long in the whaling grounds and was forced to shelter again in Pauline's Cove for another long, dark, dreary, and trying winter. The only consolation for the whalers was, according to Bodfish, "It was our first opportunity, after years of struggle, to really make some worthwhile money."

Whalers at the time were paid according to a percentage of the catch, commonly known as the lay system. Right off the top the whaling company, or ship owner, took 70 per cent. The remainder was split amongst the captain, officers and crew based on rank. For anybody to make any real money an exceptional catch was required. And that is exactly what the *Mary D. Hume* and crew got: When the Hume finally steamed into harbour at San Francisco in the fall of 1892, she was loaded to the gunwales with a "bonanza" of baleen, blubber and whale oil aboard. The cargo valued at $400,000 was reported to be the most valuable in American whaling history! According to the lay, the captain would have received somewhere around $10,000. officers $6,000 to $8,000, and regular crew about $3,400. For perspective, the average factory worker in 1892 received less than $400 per annum.

Within seconds of the *Mary D. Hume's* docking, a motley horde of "wild men of the north"as they were called, staggered down her gang planks to place their toes, or what was left of their toes, on unfrozen ground for the first time in over 30 months. They were longhaired, long bearded and in "clothing that was patched and tattered beyond recognition of the original hue or texture of the garment." One exasperated reporter paid particular attention to the shaggy whalers' footwear, noting that only three of the wild men of the north were properly "shod" at all. The rest of the crew "being shod in deerskin and rubbers."

In any event the word was out. Unseen profits were to be found in the deep dark reaches of the north. The following year, Pacific Steam Whaling Company sent four ships north to winter at Herschel. Their catch was unprecedented—286 whales, worth millions of dollars. And the following spring the PSW Co., not being a company to pass up opportunity should it beckon, gleefully sent a full fleet of 20-some ships, barks, brigs and schooners north to plunder the Beaufort Sea for the mighty bowhead. By October of 1894 there were at least 28 ships crammed into little Pauline's Cove at Herschel Island. Most were PSW Co. ships but jammed in alongside them were a few independents and one or two trading vessels keen to get in on the action.

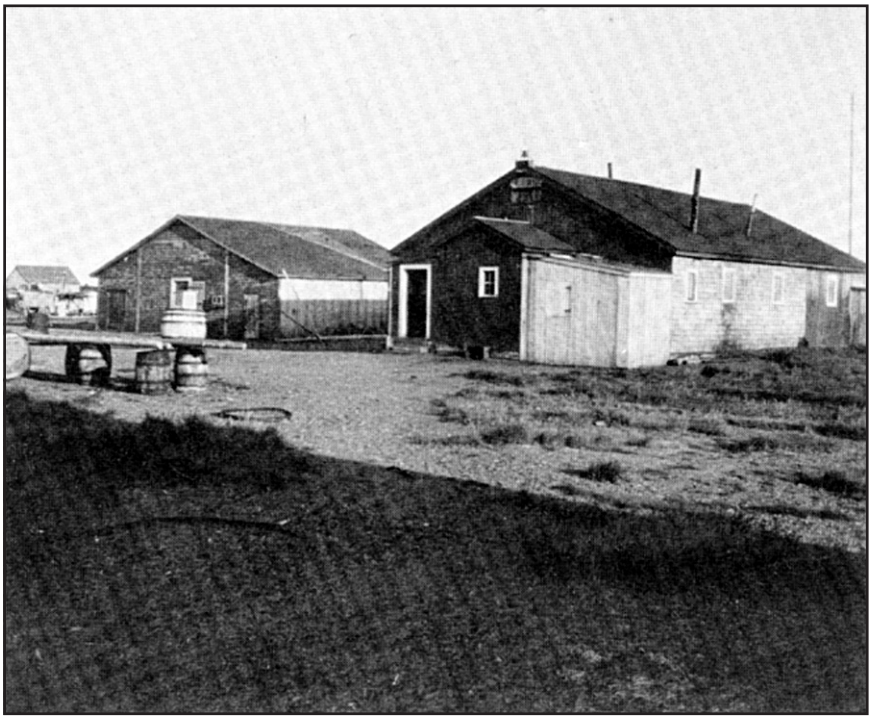
Virtual boomtown

Herschel during the 1890s has often been referred to as a boomtown. Some may disagree. Herschel lacked the telltale signs of a boomtown. There were no saloons, no barbers, no hardware stores, no red light districts, no doctors, in fact no real businesses of any sort, and there was definitely no sheriff.

For nine months of the year, Herschel had a floating population of 1,000—literally. The scene itself must have been a haunting sight, especially in the dead of winter. Twenty-eight ships were frozen fast in a solid sea of ice, banked in so that only a small sliver of the bow, the poop deck and the masts rose above the endless sea of snow and ice. The masts appeared ghostly and were weighed down with leg-sized icicles, set against a perpetually dark and sombre sky. The vicious north winds violently whipped the snow about like desert dunes, so much that a trail cut to a neighbouring vessel would be obliterated in an hour. In the distance, an igloo lit by a whale-oil lamp glowed like an ember in the darkness. A short distance away stood a shanty of sod huts put up by a few of the whalers seeking privacy away from the crowded ships' quarters.

On a narrow spit of land that arched out into the sea, were three large wood-frame buildings. The rectangular, single- storey buildings were clad in a generous coat of white paint, only adding further monotony to the scene. In the dark, foggy haze they seemed almost invisible. Carried on the brisk north winds, the sure sounds of men laughing, carousing, and shouting could be heard.

Boomtown or not, Herschel was an interesting place in the 1890s and, with over 1,000 souls taking up residence in and around Pauline's Cove, the



The Anglican Mission buildings at Herschel, c. 1895. [Anglican Church of Canada photo]

community had a larger population by far, than any other in the Yukon. This was a time before Dawson was founded, and Forty Mile, with about 400 miners, trappers and traders along with a couple Mounties, was the only other community of size in the Yukon.

Of the 1,000 and some souls at Herschel Island, there were at least five separate tribes, or bands of Indians and Inuit. These included the Copper River Inuit from the Mackenzie Delta and further eastward, the Vuntut Gwitchin from the Old Crow basin of the interior of the Yukon, and Inuit from as far west as Point Barrow, Alaska some 500 miles distant. Their main purpose for being there was to trade amongst each other and, of course, with the whalers and other traders. Trading with the whalers opened up a whole new world to these people, a world where very fascinating, interesting and useful items could be had, for a price. The natives' traditional homeland provided a rich bounty of goods for trade. The ships' crews consumed tons of caribou weekly, almost all of it coming from native hunters. Other items fetching good prices for the native traders were whales, walrus ivory and muskrat and white fox furs.

In exchange for these items the Inuit would receive food items such as flour, tea, molasses, canned foods of various types: prunes, beans, meats, and even candy and chewing gum. The elders were particularly fond of canned goods, while the young ones would gather a big bundle of firewood for a taste candy. Of interest to the women were pots and pans, knives, beads and needles and thread. The men were desirous of hunting items such as traps, knives, ammunition and rifles. Additional items available to them were matches and, most likely, tobacco and alcohol. Other items were available too. Interestingly, gramophones and records as well as fiddles were a big hit. To this day, the foot stomping and fiddling proudly continues all along the northern coast of Canada and Alaska.

Ninety percent of the whaling ships' Captains and higher-ranking officers were Americans. Most, like Bodfish, hailed from New England and sailed out of New Bedford, Massachusetts, a city steeped in proud whaling tradition. As well, a certain number of Canadian whalers and trading vessels wintered on the island too. For the most part, these men were literate, worldly, sophisticated, proud and tough. The captains ruled their crews with an iron fist. They were the supreme authority and it was an exception for a captain not to abuse this authority. Corporal punishments dating from the "pirate days", were still practised and often dished out with sadistic pleasure.

The crews on the other hand, were from a slightly more diverse background. Captains and ship owners picked up hands wherever they could find them. A whaler's crew in the Arctic at the time consisted of men of multi-racial and ethnic origin. Many were Afro-Americans, Russians and even Polynesians, with Inuit making up to 15 per cent of some of the crews. By the late 1890s much of the bowhead population in the Beaufort Sea had been wiped out, making the hunt far less lucrative. Consequently, keeping an efficient crew of able-bodied seamen willing to sail off to the frozen far

flung outpost for little monetary gain, was becoming an exceedingly difficult task.

To combat the situation, PSW Co. employed a company of goons to ply San Francisco's seedy waterfront flophouses for likely subjects. Contemporary writer S.R. Gage wrote: "Many PSW Co. men had been plucked from the bottom of San Francisco's social ladder by a system of agents and boarding house keepers known as land sharks. There were stories of men shanghaied - plied with liquor and dumped on a ship, only to recover as they passed the Golden Gate."

In 1903, Inspector G.M. Howard of the Mounties wrote, "They were not sailors at all, and have never been to sea before signing on. Some are men who have come to sea to get away from a drinking habit, and a few have done time for some offence in the United States.... Altogether they are a rough lot."

The crews were housed in the "black and slimy with filth" forecastle of the ship, a small triangular shaped room directly below deck in the bow. They slept in bunks lining the walls, often so densely stacked, that to sit

Whaling ship captain with Inuit friends at Herschel Island, c. 1895. [Whaling Museum photo, New Bedford, Mass.]

upright upon the hard bedbug infested mat was impossible. Instead, to eat or play cards, a sailor sat upon his sea chest, in which he stored his entire worldly possessions. The men ate salt pork, or horse, mouldy biscuits, rice, potatoes or beans and "cockroach laden molasses." Vermin such as rats, bedbugs and fleas were endured in their food, on their bodies and in their quarters.

The captains and officers on the other hand had "appointments" that were slightly more lavish. The captain slept in the stateroom in the ship's stern and enjoyed a handsomely furnished cabin, a dining room and a pantry stocked with the best food he could procure. The captain of the *North Stars'* quarters were said to be fitted to the finest of Victorian style and elegance. The interior panelling was of curly and birds-eye maple, door panels of French laurel, pilasters of mahogany, coving of rosewood and "other parts inlaid with black walnut and gilt." The floors of the handsomely furnished affair were equally as elegant being generously covered with a "tapestry of carpets of subdued colour." Apparently the captain was not going to get his toes cold while on a late night excursion to the pantry, which incidentally, was completely finished in black walnut.

Roast pig, ducks, chickens and other wild game provided meat for the captain's table. Potatoes and real butter, fresh eggs, pastries and bread, and various additional canned foods and delicacies complemented his meal. The captains and mates were the only ones on board to enjoy sugar in their coffee. The lesser hands had to put up with the rotten molasses.

The mates had smaller cabins also in the stern of the ship and dined with the captain in the main cabin enjoying mostly the same food. The crew members of higher skill and rank, including the boatsteerer/harpooner, blacksmith and the cooper had bunks midship and ate in the main cabin after the captain and mates had left. Usually they ate the same food minus the sugar and butter.

For recreation, the PSW Co. converted one of the large warehouses on the spit into a recreation-games room complete with pool table, card tables and a stage for theatrical performances. Another activity the whalers participated in during the long winters was baseball, and there was always a healthy rivalry between the officers and the crews. A league was organised with four teams: The Arctics, The Herschels, The Northern Lights, and The Pick - ups and it was a strict rule that when a game was played all work was stopped on all ships so that every one could attend

Starting in 1894-95, some of the captains and high ranking officers began bringing along their wives and children to share in the joys of being "marooned" on a dark frozen island somewhere near the north pole for the winter. These new occupants according to one witness, added "peace and tranquillity" to the place.

The wives would organise elaborate dinner parties to be held in the main house or on one of the ships, complete with elaborate and decoratively printed invitations. On other occasions it could be anything from a dance, a dress ball, or whist party, to an amateur theatrical production. The

crews often participated as actors and musicians but they were seldom, if ever invited.

One event held in 1904 points to some level of sophistication and camaraderie. The officers of a Canadian whaling ship invited their American counterparts aboard for lectures and lantern slide shows with subjects including:"The evolution of fishes, a trip to the Klondike and various voyages to the North Pole."

Fraternities were even organised with Bodfish being the president of a rather interesting predecessor to Alcoholics Anonymous called the D.T's. The "Dry Throats", had a charter membership of 22 officers and engineers, and eight golden rules, including:

1. In all gatherings of the Dry Throats Intoxicants to be barred. Any member breaking this rule is liable to be expelled, ridden on a rail or any other punishment that a majority of the D.T.'s may concoct.
2. Each and every member do his best to entertain a brother Dry Throat.
3. Each and every member is supposed to make no remarks or criticisms on the performances of other members as there are no professionals in the crowd.

Monotony to mutiny

Living in close confinement and dealing with the boredom and the sheer monotony of the dark, cold windswept island grated on the whalers' nerves. Often, there were violent outbursts over the most trivial of matters. In an argument over loading ice from the pond one sailor from the *Karluk* stabbed another almost killing him. Another stabbing occurred when two stubborn sailors couldn't agree on the laying of a baseball diamond. A third, brutal stabbing took place in 1903 aboard Bodfish's vessel the *Beluga*: One seaman was so tormented by his fellow crew members that he went berserk and took a knife to one of them, delivering eight cuts. And in 1896, the second mate of the Jeanette, while intoxicated, "shot a sailor through the leg."

Punishments handed out by the captains and officers for such offences, or for "otherwise displeasing" them, were straight out of a Captain Kidd novel. One could be put in irons and chained to the galley or other suitable location on board for an extended period of time, sometimes months. The man who stabbed the other aboard the *Karluk* was put in "irons" for two months and while so confined he had threatened several other of his mates with a similar fate. In response, the crewmembers petitioned the Captain with the result that the man was kept in irons "indefinitely."

Another punishment, was being tied at the wrists to the mast and flogged mercilessly with a "cat-o-nine-tails,." a whip with nine knotted lines at the end for maximum lacerations. Such punishment often was so brutal that many a hardened sailor could not bear to watch, let alone be subject to the procedure. Unfortunately one sailor aboard the *Mary D. Hume* did, receiving125 lashes before confessing to his part in a desertion scheme.

Sometimes the more rambunctious of sailors would resist their subordinate officers, or even strike back with rather disastrousresults. Bodfish, in his usual casualness noted an incident aboard the *Beluga* in August of 1898:

"Second mate Mr. Leigh had some trouble with one of the men, Wm. Clark. He struck with his fist then slipped down. Clark grabbed a hand spike and two or three of the others told him to kill Mr. Leigh. One of the boat steerers, Jerry Ross, interfered and quelled the disturbance. Mr. Leigh told me of the affair while at the masthead. He and I came down. I struck Limburg with my fist and Forster interfered. I grabbed up a shovel and threatened him. He pulled a knife on me sticking it into me between the lower ribs and the pelvic bone, but not very deep I think. I put Forster, Clark and Limburg in irons. Triced Clark and Limburg up for twenty minutes. Then let Limburg out as he came to the conclusion that he could behave himself."

As news of the gold strikes of the interior of the Yukon began filtering into the tiny prison-like island, desertions, which had already been of periodic annoyance, became more common and in larger and more organised numbers. On January 21st, 1896, 17 men deserted the ships and a party of officers and Inuit on dog teams recaptured all but two within a week. The other two were never caught and were presumed frozen.

Then on March 12th another dozen men stole dog teams and supplies and made a run for it. Several days later the renegades happened upon the camp of a hunting party from the ships which they promptly ransacked before stealing additional supplies and provisions and heading again due south. The following account of the incident from John Bockstoce's *Steam Whaling in the Arctic* bears a strange resemblance to a dramatic scene straight out of a John Wayne movie:

"A pursuit party was again dispatched and again "held up" by the deserters, who this time took sleds and dog teams as well as supplies from their pursuers. A few days later a pursuit party of officers again reached the deserters, but were driven back twice in attempts to shoot it out with them. Ten days after the initial desertion, natives reported being robbed by the deserting crewmen, and a third party was sent out. A pitched battle again took place when the party reached the deserters' camp: this time the officers returned with six of the deserters, one of them shot to death in the gun battle and another badly wounded. The survivors were put in irons and chained to the decks for a month."

Luckily for the whalers, the pursuing "posse" didn't always get their man. In 1895, a ships engineer miraculously managed to scale 400 miles of tundra, ice and mountain, before reaching Forty Mile and the only Mountie post in the Yukon. Ragged and destitute, but lucky to be alive, the "sailor" reported to Inspector Constantine of the "evil" doings on the island.

Constantine took the report seriously and wrote to his superiors in Ottawa: "The carryings-on of the officers and crews of the whalers there was such that no one would believe. Large quantities of whiskey are taken up into the ships, as long as the liquor lasts the natives neither fish nor hunt

and die of starvation in consequence. The Captains and mates purchase for their own use girls from nine years and upwards." Inspector Constantine also suggested strongly of the possibilities of opening a post on the island, but the poorly funded Mounties, considering the Arctic of low priority, quickly shuffled the report aside and forgot about it."

There is no doubt that the whalers were wreaking havoc amongst the Inuit.

In addition to providing them with alcohol and demoralising and raping the women, the whalers brought diseases that the natives' immune systems couldn't withstand such as measles, smallpox and V.D. Also, the whalers' voracious appetites for caribou, fish and firewood greatly reduced these resources. Furthermore, the Eskimo's natural way of life that has carried on for numerable centuries was forever damaged. Where once the Eskimo father hunted, fished and trapped year round to provide for his family, many worked on the ships in the summer and "laid around all winter" whooping it up with the whalers.

Missionaries bring respectability to Herschel

In the early 1890s the Anglican Church of Canada wanted to expand its ministry among the indigenous peoples of the Western Arctic. Although Herschel Island was considered for such expansion, in an 1892 report Bishop Reeves wrote to his superiors informing them that Fort McPherson located 300 miles south at the confluence of the Peel and McKenzie Rivers would be the site chosen to establish their first permanent mission. From this central location, the minister was to "work among the Inuit at the MacKenzie Delta, along the Arctic Coast to Herschel Island, and eastward to Baillie Island."

A volunteer was needed who was not only intelligent, capable and quick learning, but above all, young, strong and able to endure the hardships that the vast Arctic ministry was sure to provide. Bishop Reeve addressed his students at Wycliffe College in Toronto, Ontario on the matter and after much thought and prayer, 26 year old Isaac Stringer, whom Reeves already had an eye on, "steeled himself to offer his services."

In addition to performing the role of missionary, Stringer would also act as teacher, doctor, dentist and social worker to name just a few of the services expected of him. In preparation, for the remainder of the 1892 semester, Stringer was excused from regular classes to "learn the rudiments of medicine and something about extracting teeth." Marking his success, Stringer noted in his diary "As a special Easter Celebration I pulled a tooth for my father."

On July 14th. 1892 Stringer arrived at Fort McPherson after having travelled 1300 miles down the McKenzie River on the steamer "Wrigley." In the following months Stringer concentrated on learning the language and customs of the Indians and Inuit and on the difficult task of translating the Lords Prayer and other biblical verses into Eskimo. Finally in March of

1893, Stringer set out on dog team for Rampart House, 180 miles westward to visit with the Indians, before embarking on a long anticipated trip to Herschel Island, located some 200 miles northward. It was on a journey through these very same Mountains (The Richardsons) many years later when the Bishop would suffer an experience that would forever immortalise him as "The Bishop who ate his boots."

In short: On August 25, 1909, Stringer and companion left Fort McPherson intending to travel 500 miles to Fort Yukon and Dawson by way of canoe and dog sled. Their intention was to travel the McDougal Pass route, which ascends the Rat River with a short portage over the summit. From there it would be easy sailing down the Bell and the Porcupine Rivers to Fort Yukon where they would acquire a dog sled for the final leg to Dawson. Unfortunately for the two faithful chaps, winter came too early. After getting hopelessly lost in the Richardson Mountains for 50 days and bone chilling nights, during which they scaled the icy peaks on hands and knees, the two were forced to do what any true northern pioneer would do. They ate their boots. Excerpts from the Bishops dairy explain:

October 17th, 1909 - Travelled 15 miles. Made supper out of toasted rawhide sealskin boots.

October 18th - Travelled all day. Ate more pieces of my sealskin boots, boiled and toasted. Use sole first. Set rabbit snares.

October 19th - No rabbit in snare. Breakfast and dinner of rawhide boots. Fine but not enough.

October 20th - Breakfast from top of boots. Not so good as sole. Very tired, hands sore.

Later that day they stumbled out of the mountains (wearing make shift snowshoes) and came upon a large river where they camped for the night. In the morning they crossed the river and spotted smoke coming from a cabin down river. It was an Indian fish camp belonging to William Vittiekwa. They were taken in where William's wife immediately served them a wholesome feed of roast fish and cooked rabbit. Afterwards, they were taken in comfort by dog sled 20 miles down the Peel to Fort McPherson. Apparently once they got to the mission, "for several days it was impossible to satisfy their hunger for more than a half hour at a time." Both had lost 50 pounds during the near fatal 51 day ordeal, but "had succeeded in gaining it all back within a fortnight."

The bishop first arrived at Herschel Island in April of 1893, whereupon he began his ministry to the Inuit who "had never even heard the name of god except as a profanity from the whalers." Stringer also noted that "they did not seem anxious to learn", but by treating them with dignity and respect (unlike the whalers), he soon won their confidence.

The whaling captains welcomed him with open arms, providing him with a sod hut, coal for fuel, and "all the provisions he could carry." They also encouraged him to set up residence permanently on the island. A re-

quest Stringer was unable to fulfil until 1897. In the meantime, the bishop made regular visits to Herschel Island where he held prayer meetings, baptisms, weddings, and attended to the Inuit's medical needs as best he could. Stringer also visited the men on the ships and eventually held services for them. Sometimes with over 100 sailors attended.

From the start, Stringer was highly displeased with the whalers' treatment of the Inuit, especially the women, and with the fact that they were "inclined to offer the Inuit alcohol." Starting in 1893, Stringer wrote a succession of letters to Ottawa requesting that they set up an NWMP Post on the Island to curtail the "drunkenness and debauchery." However, Stringer's request and prayers would not be answered until 1903, ten long years later when the drunkenness and debauchery had settled down to a dull roar.

In 1895 Bishop Stringer set sail south from Herschel Island aboard the whaler *Jeannie* to San Francisco and then on to Ontario via railway where he received a warm and welcome homecoming. While on his furlough the Bishop lost no opportunity for talking about his beloved Inuit. Stringer also lost no opportunity sweeping his childhood sweetheart off her feet and in March of 1896 he married Sarah Ann Alexander. After a quick honeymoon in New York City, the newlyweds made the long journey to Herschel Island, arriving in May of 1896. There they set up house in the sod hut provided by the PSW Co., where they lived for a few months in the spring. Sara recalled later when they were guests of the King and Queen: "What a contrast this is with the sod hut where we lived when we were first married. Then our makeshift curtains were made from my wedding gown; the oven from old tin cans; my rolling pin from a whisky bottle; and we wore caribou hide clothing."

Acknowledging the Stringers presence as beneficial to both the Inuit and the whaling crews, the captains of the whaling ships took up a collection amongst themselves for money to be used to establish a mission. Thirty-one captains readily donated $1,500. Also in good will, they. made available the "big house" to serve as the mission quarters. According to Sara, it was a "comfortable frame building with coal stoves and fuel. It stood in the centre of the little community and had a large room at the front that contained a billiard table but could serve as a schoolroom and chapel. The living quarters were at the rear. In one of the back rooms, she continued, "I laid out a rag carpet, a big writing desk, an eight-day clock, a sewing machine and a dear little portable organ— all brought 2,000 miles north from the end of steel by rowboat, steamer and oxcart."

From 1897 to 1901 the Stringers would spend most of their time at the Herschel Mission providing religious, medical and educational services to both Inuit and whalers alike. In addition to providing a day school with up to 30 children, Mrs. Stringer taught shorthand to some of the whalers. She recalled later with some pride: "Having graduated from the Stringer Shorthand Course at Herschel, they were able to give up whaling and obtain clerical positions in San Francisco."Another event they held which turned out to be popular was a weekly choir practice. "It gave the whalers an opportunity for a social evening which all seemed to enjoy." The Stringers also unself-

ishly kept an infirmary in their private quarters, which were always full of ill and dying patients.

During their four-year-stay at Herschel, as if their schedule was not demanding enough, Sara gave birth to two children. A daughter Rowena and a son Frederick Herschel Stringer, commonly known as "Herschel." And on August 17th 1901, with these two cherished keepsakes to remember their stay by, the Stringers left Herschel for the last time aboard the whaler *Narwhal* on an 81-day journey 5,000 miles across the open seas to San Francisco. Stringer himself would return over the years to visit his beloved Inuit but his days as their minister were over. Stringer's replacement at Herschel Island was Reverend Whittaker, "the unpopular one," who in stark contrast to the Stringers, "had an extraordinary talent for alienating every one." including the Mounties, the Inuit and the whalers.

Incidentally, on the Stringers home journey, the whalers couldn't seem to catch any whales, and given the old sailor superstition that whistling, ministers and women brought bad luck to a ship, Stringer, with two strikes against him was held accountable. There was talk that if conditions did not improve, they were going to set Stringer and family adrift on a lifeboat. Meanwhile, to break the curse, they confined them to a cabin depriving them of food and water. In the night, Springer managed to creep to the pantry in order to secure provisions for his family where he was promptly caught. The "desperate" crew then decided that "they had no alternative but to resort to their original plan."

Isaac and Sadie Stringer at Herschel Island in 1898. [Anglican Church of Canada photo]

Stringer pleaded with the whalers for the allowance to break the misfortune that dogged them. And they grudgingly gave him 24 hours to change their ill luck. That night, Stringer and his wife Sara "strengthened each other with prayer and Holy Scripture" and then Stringer made a final plea to his heavenly father asking the almighty to give him a sign. Dawn arrived with haunting suspense for the young couple. "Would this day be their last?" No it would not, at about mid-morning, as if heaven sent, shouts were heard—"Thar she blows!"—and as the delighted whalers ran across the decks cheering to lower the boats, the Stringers fell to their knees in "profound thankfulness" for their deliverance from the mouth of Jonah.

A popular biographer sums up Stringer's devotion to the Inuit: "Isaac Stringer was the first permanent missionary to the Inuit and they honoured and loved him on that account. He possessed a strong and simple faith, and was always ready to believe the best of men of whatever race. He possessed the ability to be at one with the Inuit: to enter into their life and to a degree into their thinking. In these he was able to gain their confidence, affection and trust. These gifts were shared to the full by his wife."

Canadian law and order finally came to Herschel Island on August 7th 1903 when Sergeant Francis J. Fitzgerald and Constable F.D. Sutherland of the RNWMP landed their ice scarred whaleboat on the shores of Pauline Cove. The two woefully under supplied Mounties possessed little more than "the force of their personalities and the tenuous authority of the Canadian Government, thousands of miles away." Evidently, they even had to borrow a sod hut and fuel from the whalers to serve as the first detachment.

But frankly, not only were the men in scarlet woefully under supplied, they were also woefully too late. By this time. very few whalers actually wintered on the island anymore and whaling itself was in rapid decline. There were a few occasions however when Fitzgerald and Sutherland would be awakened from their slumber to assist captains in escorting the odd drunken sailor back to the ships to be put in chains. Other than that they did their best to enforce the laws of the land upon the some 50 Inuit and about 100 or so whalers. They also started collecting duty on trade with the Inuit and whales taken, of which previously many millions of dollars went unchecked.

In 1907 the price of baleen bottomed out at 50 cents a pound from a high of $5 a pound a few years earlier and by 1910, the American whalers had "steamed south never to return." The Mounties and Reverend Whittaker were then left with a "bunch of quarrelsome Inuit."

Herschel did not die with the end of whaling though. Herschel continued to live on through yet another era, the era of trapping and trading. By the end of World War I furs, especially white fox, were commanding top dollar on the luxury market. Inuit from hundreds of miles around were bringing their pelts to trade at the Hudson Bay Company (HBCo.) post that had been established at Herschel in 1915. Hartson Bodfish, was still in the vicinity, now commanding the *Beluga*, a full-time trading vessel and making yearly voyages to San Francisco to "cash in his booty." Shortly after the war, Bodfish finally retired to his childhood home of Martha's Vineyard, where he lived in relative luxury amongst a trove of souvenirs collected

during his 30 years on the Arctic Seas. There, he wrote a book called appropriately, *Chasing the Bowhead*.

By the 1920's HBCo also had two posts on the Yukon's north coast. One at Shingle Point and another at Demarcation Point and there was also a competing American firm, H. Liebes & Co. from San Francisco, located at Shingle Point. Some Inuit made upwards of $15,000 a season and some even owned their own schooners.

Two events, both occurring in the late 1920's, spelled the end of Herschel as a community. An outbreak of influenza amongst the Inuit population in 1928, and the stock market crash of 1929. The influenza epidemic killed a large number of Inuit on the island as well as at other "camps" in the vicinity. And the crash of '29 caused the luxury garment market to spiral. By the early '30s, a white fox fur, once worth $50 was almost valueless as the once rich and famous were now reduced to paupers. By 1937, the Mounties, the missionaries, and the trading posts were gone. When Arctic mariner Henry A. Larson visited Herschel Island on a voyage in 1944, he noted: "Once a thriving metropolis, Herschel Island is now abandoned and not a soul was to be seen."

Of course this being a Yukon story, it shouldn't hurt to sprinkle a little gold on top for good measure. In 1948 gold was discovered on the Firth River, one of the rivers that empties out into the Arctic Ocean on the Yukon's "north slope." A prospecting rush ensued. Herschel Island, being but a crows caw away from the diggings, was where the Mounties decided to set up their post in order to record claims and keep a watchful eye over the prospectors. The rush soon died out due to the high costs expended in operating in such a remote location, coupled with the fact that the gold was sprinkled a little too thin. The Mounties stayed though, and set up a sled dog breeding and training station on the island that lasted until 1964 when snowmobiles put these furry friends out of business.

After some bureaucratic fumbling in the '60s when Ottawa gave the island to the NWT for a period of time, Herschel was rightly returned to the Yukon and in 1972 Commissioner James Smith visited the island to raise the Territorial flag.

Ironically, in the 1960s and '70s capitalists again had their eye on the Beaufort Sea and Herschel Island as a source of oil—crude petroleum oil. A drilling program carried out by Gulf Canada in the 1970s found in excess of 800 million barrels of crude sitting below the bottom of the shallow Beaufort Sea. Herschel Island was considered as a staging area for further exploration. But this time it would not be.

Conservation groups were highly opposed to the idea and brought their concerns to both Ottawa and Washington, D.C. Of primary concern was the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd, which moves between the two countries' northern frontier on their annual migrations. The environmentalists were successful. In 1978, Ottawa announced that the north Yukon, including Herschel Island, was closed to development pending the establishment of a national park. In 1987 over 1,000 square kilometres located in the Yukon's northeastern corner was designated "The North Yukon National

Park" (now Ivvavik National Park). The same year the Yukon's commissioner again stepped on Herschel Island and raised the flag, this time proclaiming it Herschel Island Territorial Park (now Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park).

After being reduced nearly to extinction, the bowhead of the Beaufort Sea now numbers 8,000 strong. Unfortunately, circumstances have not been so kind to the Inuit people, formerly known as Eskimos. Out of some 2,000 Inuit known to inhabit Herschel Island and the Mackenzie Delta just prior to whaling, not a single descendant survives.

If one walks the lonesome shores of Herschel Island today, the scattered remains of whalers' ships can be seen, ships that have met their cold and dreary end so long ago in pursuit of the mighty bowhead whale. The buildings erected by the PSW Co. still stand, defiant to the Arctic gales that pound them ceaselessly year after year, their redwood timbers amazingly preserved in the cold Arctic air. On the bench overlooking Pauline Cove can be seen, two graveyards: One of Inuit, and one of the whalers. Their crumbling fences, headstones and crosses, though still well preserved, silently bearing testimony, perhaps for aeons, to the fact that Herschel Island was once "the last jumping off place on earth and whiskey, lawlessness, and debauchery was the order of the day."

Post script: To out live them all, was the *Mary D. Hume.* Refitted in the 1980's as a sea going tug, it is rumoured that she still plies the waters of Puget Sound.

A recent photo taken at Herschel Island. [Yukon Gov't photo, Dep't of Tourism and Information]

Pauline Cove in 1968—by the editor

I believe that one of our regrets when we get older is this: in our younger days we didn't appreciate, didn't revel in the experiences of those carefree, irresponsible times.

In 1968 I spent ten days at Herschel Island, trapped there with a boat crew in dense fog and enclosing ice flows (see Collected Stories, "Captain Courageous).

I was a deckhand on a towboat and we had pushed and pulled ten barge loads of drilling rigs, pipe and muck all the way from Hay River to the Beaufort Sea. The equipment was destined for the North Slope of Alaska where they had started drilling for oil.

The captain steered us into Pauline Cove and we deckhands set to work burying a "dead man." This was a timber buried deep in the sand, from which a cable was run out to the towboat to anchor us on that treeless coast.

I explored the lifeless buildings at Pauline Cove, noting dishes set on tables and blankets still covering some of the beds. I found a 38:55 hexagon-barrelled rifle with a broken stock that I carried home in my duffel bag some months later.

My only desire at the time, and the rest of the crew felt the same, was to get away from this godforsaken place. The fog, so thick that it wet your face, sometimes cleared away enough for us to see that everything was brown or grey, that no colours but these ever graced this pile of sand at the end of the earth.

A wind came up, clearing the fog and blowing the ice floes to the west. The engines fired up, we made up tow, and got ourselves to hell out of there. None of us ever wanted to go back.

Herschel Island in the 1960s.

Elly Porsild: Grand Dame of the Yukon

By Ellen Davignon

The room in Macaulay Lodge is quite small. A single bed takes up a quarter of the space and a desk, dresser and an easy chair with a lift mechanism fills the rest. A tiny but convenient bathroom off at the end of the room further reduces the living area and encroaches on the narrow entrance from the hall. All in all, there is barely space to maneuver a wheelchair and the furniture bears scars of practice, but after four years, Elly Porsild has learned how to turn and when to use the brake and today she rarely finds herself crossways and stuck, as she did so often in the beginning.

And that might be an analogy of Elly's approach to life: learn what works, discard what does not, and make good use of the opportunity that life hands you..

Elly Porsild in 1985

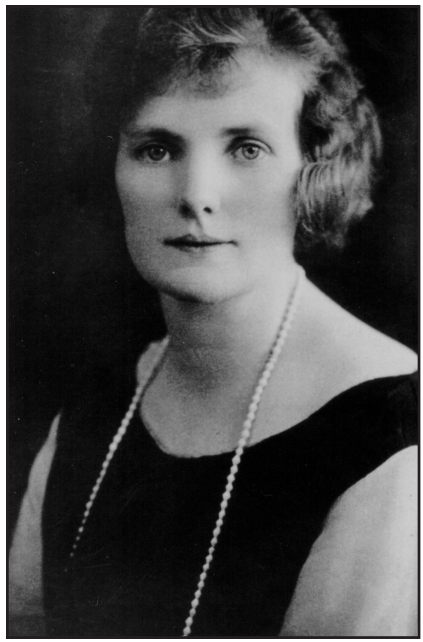
Elly came to Canada from her native Denmark as a young woman in her twenties. At this time, she had never travelled more than a hundred miles in any direction, but when Bob Porsild, a handsome adventurer home to Denmark on a vacation, after a short but intense courtship asked her to marry him and come to Canada, Elly did not hesitate but answered his question with one of her own. "Do you have to ask?" It was a testimony to her own thirst for adventure that in spite of a year's delay between betrothal and marriage, she eventually travelled from her home in Denmark, across the Atlantic by steamship, across Canada by rail to Edmonton and from there to Aklavik in the Northwest Territory by a variety of conveyances, to marry a man she had known for only three weeks.

Bob was involved, at that time, in one of the greatest trail drives in the history of the north: a project that involved mngeroving a herd of 3000 reindeer from a starting point in Alaska 1500 miles to the eastern shores of the Mackenzie Delta. It was to have taken 18 months; in fact, it would take more than. 5 years to complete. Having previously travelled and explored the proposed route with his brother, Erling, in 1930 Bob was situated in a camp some 40 miles up Delta from Aklavik, preparing for the arrival of the herd.

And it was to this small settlement that he now brought his bride.

The gently-reared young woman settled into her new life with a boundless and intrepid curiosity that would have daunted a lesser man. Everything had to be tried and tasted from learning about the land to hauling water with pails and a yoke to driving the team of half-wild dogs that was their only transportation when the river froze. An early pregnancy was welcomed as one more experience to savour and enjoy.

Elly and Bob spent four years on the Delta. While there, Elly safely delivered their first child, Betty, but a subsequent pregnancy ended with the death of a small boy, born without an esophagus and unable to survive.



Elly Porsild, c. 1930

From the Mackenzie, they moved to Vancouver, a brief and happy hiatus before setting off on their next excellent adventure in the Gold Fields of the Klondike. For the next six years, Bob searched, with limited success, for the elusive Mother Lode in the summer and hunted and trapped m the winter, while Elly added a son, Aksel, and two more daughters, Ellen and Johanne, to their family. In 1940, with their family requiring a more formal education than Elly was able to provide, they moved into Dawson and a couple of years later, to Whitehorse, where they settled into the fabric of that community which was booming with industry due to the building of the Alaska Highway.

In 1947 they purchased the US army camp that had housed the crew of soldiers that had built the bridge over the Teslin River at Johnson's Crossing, and so began their greatest collaboration: their Johnson's Crossing Lodge.

While Elly ran a tiny roadhouse in one of the abandoned buildings closest to the road, Bob salvaged lumber from the huge mess hall and built his lodge, a two-story building built just above the high water mark and overlooking the wide, blue Teslin River. It was opened for business m the spring of 1949 and for the next 17 years, Bob and Elly gave food and comfort and entertainment to the travelling public, locals and visitors alike.

Their children grew up "in the business" and it was with great pleasure and confidence that they sold the Lodge to daughter Ellen and her husband, Phil Davignon and retired in 1965.

For the next twelve years they spent their summers roaming the Yukon, collecting botanical specimens for the Museum in Ottawa and making friends wherever they journeyed. They bought a house in Whitehorse and, as they had earlier, they made their presence felt in every aspect of their chosen location, becoming involved in church and community with the joy and enthusiasm that had highlighted the whole of their lives together.

Bob died in 1977 and since that time, Elly has journeyed on, alone but rarely lonely. She continued to lend her support to the organizations that she and Bob so avidly espoused, often taking on whole new causes and situations but always sparing the time to spend with her family and friends.

In 1999, two broken hips and increasing blindness forced her to leave her home and move into the small room m Macauley Lodge. There, she has hung pictures and mementoes of her long and fruitful life on the walls, has become quite adroit in the manipulation of her rolling chair, and holds court regularly for a steady stream of visitors. On January 25, 2003, this gallant little lady with the white hair and bright blue eyes, turned over her one hundredth birthday marker with her usual practicality and humour.

"So, now 1 am 100. 1 wonder what the next years will bring?"

And we can only wonder: What indeed?

* Elly Porsild passed away in August, 2004.

An old sternwheeler across the river from Dawson, photo taken in 1978 by Peter Laight.

The Ghost of Will Perkins

By Sam Holloway

In the last issue we ran a story about an Australian miner called Will Perkins. You will recall he and a partner located and developed the Grafter copper mine. Perkins died young from appendicitis and is buried in the Pioneer Cemetery in Whitehorse.

A month ago Dick McKenna and I went to the site of the old Grafter Mine, on the hillsides above Porter Creek in Whitehorse. To get there we went up Fish Lake Road to where the old Copper Belt Railway bed (now a gravel road) starts on its journey to Mount Sima. The Grafter mine site is located about a mile and half down this road on the right, looking uphill.

We found the tailings pile, lots of old garbage, and where a small townsite once stood, which housed the workers during the early 1900s. Dick had been through the area many times before and he showed me an old cabin, built under an outcrop right beside the original diggings.

Speaking for myself, I could feel Will Perkins' spirit all around the place. Dick and I agreed that this cabin was most likely the one Will Perkins built when he was prospecting the area, because of the location and it being the size that prospectors built, rather than a permanent dwelling.

We also found another building which was obviously an animal stall, but the height was too short for a full-sized horse to stand inside. We thought that perhaps this is where Perkins kept his famous mule, his great friend that hauled his supplies back and forth to Dawson City.

The remains of the tramline that hauled the ore from the Grafter down to the railway is still there. The oldtimers built it down a steep grade, using axes and bucksaws, and the line is remarkably well-preserved.

Perhaps some readers might go up there and check it out for themselves. Although lots of people use the area for bike riding and hiking, no mention is made that hard-working miners built all these trails and roads.

The Grafter mine tailings pile, Dick McKenna standing in the centre of it.

The remains of an animal stall at the Grafter mine site.

A cabin very close to the diggings. Could be Will Perkins' cabin.

Part of a tramline that brought ore down the mountain to the railway.

Where the tramline meets the road. This is where the ore was dumped into the railway cars.

Alaska Diary

AUG 12 Moved to our new home in Alaska. It's so beautiful here. The mountains are so majestic. Can hardly wait to see them with snow covering them.

OCT14 Alaska is the most beautiful place on earth. The leaves have turned all the colors of red and orange. Went for a ride through the beautiful mountains and saw some moose. They are so big. This must be paradise. I love it here.

NOV 11 Moose season is over. Can't imagine anyone wanting to kill this animal. Hope it will snow soon. I love it here.

DEC 3 Snowed last night. Woke up to find everything blanketed with white snow. It looks like a postcard. We went outside and cleaned the snow off the steps and shoveled the driveway. We had a snowball fight. (I won) When the snowplow came by, we had to shovel the driveway again. What a beautiful place. I love Alaska.

DEC 12 More snow last night. I love here. The snowplow did his Trick again lo the driveway. I love it here.

DEC 19 More snow last night. Couldn't get out of the driveway to get to work. It's beautiful here, but I'm exhausted from shoveling. F_____g snowplow.

DEC 22 More of the while s__t fell last night. I've got blisters on my hands and a sore back from shovelling I think that the snowplow hides around a curve and waits until I'm done shovelling the driveway. A__hole.

DEC 25 Merry F_____g Christmas. More frigging snow. If I ever get my hands on the son of a bitch who drives the snowplow, I swear I'll kill the bastard. Don't know why they don't use more salt on the roads to melt the f_____g ice.

DEC 27 More white s__t last night. Been inside for 3 days, except for shoveling out the driveway after that snowplow goes through everytime. Can't go anywhere—car's stuck in a mountain of white s__t and it's so frigging cold. The weatherman says to expect another 10" of that s__t again tonight. Do you know how much snow 10" is?

DEC 28 That f_____g weatherman was wrong. We got. 34" of that white s__t this time. At this rate it won't melt before summer. The snowplow got stuck in the road and that bastard came to my door and asked to borrow my shovel. After I told him I had already broken 6 shovels shoveling all the s__t he pushed into the driveway, I broke my last one over his f_____g head.

JAN 4 Finally got out of the house today—went to the store to get food and on tbe way back a damned moose ran in front of the car. Did about $3000 damage to the car. Those f_____g beasts

should be killed. The bastards are everywhere. Wish the hunters had killed them all.

MAY 3 Took the car to the garage in town. Would you believe the thing is rusted out from all that f_____g salt they put all over the roads.

MAY 10 Moved to Texas. I can't imagine why anyone in their right mind would ever live in that godforsaken state of Alaska.

Main Street, Whitehorse, April 2001. [S.H. photo]

A DOG-PUNCHER ON THE YUKON
1896-1902
By Arthur Treadwell Walden
Part Eight

Continued from Issue No. 21

We had no further excitement until we reached the Canyon and the White Horse Rapids. Here we caught up with a large crowd of people who were taking their stuff around the rapids. The Mounted Police had taken charge here and would not let any one run the rapids with an overloaded boat, or run at all unless he could give some kind of proof that he was used to river work.

Some men were permanently camped here, acting as pilots, and were making very good money, all the way from five to a hundred dollars a trip, according to the boat and what they thought a man could stand. As I knew something about river work and wanted to earn a little money, I acted as pilot for some time. Quite a number of men were drowned that year, but I didn't actually see any.

When we reached the rapids we turned the dogs out of our little dog-boat and cut it loose. It went through the rapids all by itself. One man coming in with a large number of barrels of whiskey threw them all into the river at the head of the canyon. The men at the foot of the rapids caught them, and I think he didn't lose a single barrel. Here I met Peter Bernard, whom I had left at home in New England on the farm. The last I had heard of him was a report that he had died of exposure somewhere in the Arctic.

The next thing of importance on this trip was crossing Lake La Barge. This was the largest of the lakes and notoriously windy. As all the boats were heavily laden all hands waited till the wind was favorable, when they could sail down in a few hours, accomplishing what would have taken them two or three days to do by rowing. For that matter the scows were not built for rowing.

More than a thousand boats had accumulated the day we started. When we were halfway down the lake the wind dropped and every one waited for it to come up again. The lake was crowded with boats of all descriptions.

A scow which was near our boat contained a man and his wife and another man. This scow was decked fore and aft and the woman was standing on the after-deck, when a sudden gust of wind caused her to lose her balance and fall overboard, there being no rail. The unattached man ran forward to let down the sail, leaving the husband to rescue his wife: but he, losing his head, began to run up and down the deck yelling for help.

A boat lying near by contained two men. While one of these was fum-

bling with his sail, the steersman jumped overboard, swam over to the girl, and brought her back to his boat, where they were both dragged on board by his partner. The scow in the meantime had drifted away. This was rather a plucky thing to do, as the lake was full of ice and the man was pretty well exhausted.

The partner then rowed his boat over to the husband's scow, where the woman informed her husband that she had had all of HIM she wanted, and that 'if this man will take me, he can have me!' The man gave her one look (she was a very pretty girl) and said, 'Yes, I'll take you!' Whereat his partner, who was back on the rowing seat, made a kick about a woman coming in between their long friendship.

At this the rescuer, drawing his six-shooter from under the canvas that covered their goods, where the guns were kept in readiness for game, dropped it on his partner, and informed him that the lady was under his protection now and he had nothing to say about it. Then, without taking his eyes or his sixshooter off his partner, he talked to the husband and told him to put the lady's effects into his boat, which was eventually done.

So much for men's friendships when a woman comes between! She eventually got a divorce from her husband, came back into the country, and married her rescuer. She had the admiration and he the envy of all the people who knew the circumstances.

From this point on things went smoothly until we came to the boulders in Thirty-Mile River. These are not so bad to get around with only one boat to control. But our little dog-boat with its freight, trailing twenty-five or thirty feet astern, suddenly decided to go around one side of a boulder while we went around the other. The jerk pulled off part of the stern of our boat. This could have been remedied, but the dog-boat swamped, and required some desperate work to get it ashore. As all the dogs were chained to it with short chains they were nearly drowned. But everything came out all right in the end.

The rest of the way to Dawson was uneventful, except for the mad race between the boats, that never stopped day or night. Sometimes we would take a course behind an island, and when we passed it we would see another man, whom we had been racing, swept away ahead of us by the current while we had been going down the other side out of sight. This race among the islands would have been amusing if we hadn't been in such dead earnest.

CHAPTER IX
DAWSON IN THE MIDST OF THE BOOM

THE town of Dawson had undergone tremendous changes since I saw it last. The whole river-front now for half a mile was tier upon tier of boats,

scows, and rafts, so that a man landing on the edge of this mass of boats would have to cross possibly a dozen or more before getting on shore. A good proportion of the people were still living on their boats. The river was in flood at the time. It was only the big eddy that sets back in front of Dawson that saved all these boats from breaking away and being swept down the river in a body.

The town itself was a swirling mass of humanity. The main street was nothing but a sea of mud, and the pack-horses and mules were always getting stuck in it. The buildings were almost entirely of canvas, consisting of tents for smaller uses and canvas-covered frames for larger purposes. Saloons, dance-halls, and gambling-halls were the chief industry. But the North-West Mounted Police had charge and gave us a good government.

The town was the most unsanitary place imaginable. I know a man who made a bet that he could go down the main street and travel the whole way jumping from one dead horse to another or to a dead dog, and he won his bet. The latter part of the summer typhoid began to rage and there were often eight or ten deaths a day. There was only one cow in town and she died, leaving the patients with only condensed milk.

A good many medical men had arrived in the country for one reason or another. No doctor could practice in Canada without an examination and license from the Government at Ottawa, so they got around this by all turning nurses. This typhoid raged until the freeze-up. Men came in from the outlying creeks for a few days, and returning carried the disease back and died in their camps, often alone. I found a cabin the following year, almost a hundred miles up the Klondike River, with two men dead in it, and as they had died in their bunks and had plenty of food we presumed their deaths must have been from typhoid.

We had only a few cases of scurvy. As this had always been more or less prevalent before, we laid its abatement to the greater variety of food. It was claimed that a man never got it after he had been there two years, but whether this is universally true or not I cannot say. I never heard of dog-drivers having it, and they certainly lived more roughly than any one else.

The mines didn't really get into full swing until almost a year later. A friend of mine discovered a salt lick about ten miles up a side creek of the Yukon, moved his camp up there, and hunted moose for the market. He always made his headquarters with us when he came to town, and used to give us the moose nose, which is considered the daintiest part of the moose. This we used to skin and boil whole for several hours, and then soak it in vinegar. It was a great delicacy. This man eventually starved to death. Some men coming down the river stopped at the mouth of his creek and walked up to his camp, where they found him dead in his blankets, and not a bit of food in the camp. Investigation showed that he had had scurvy and then starved to death. Scurvy affects the legs first, and he had dragged himself around the camp till he got too weak to do even that.

The first trip I took up the creeks after getting back, I lugged a large

Colt revolver and cartridge belt with me, in case I should see a moose. On my way down I got sick of packing the thing and strapped it onto a large dog I had with me. No one in that country would have thought it a strange sight, but when I got down to Dawson, a boat that had just arrived was tying up at the wharf, and a man yelled out, 'For Heaven's sake, Bill, come and look what sort of a country we've got into! The dogs are carrying six-shooters!' When they spoke of it I noticed the swagger that the dog seemed to put on, and didn't wonder at the exclamation of the Cheechako.

Queen Victoria's birthday was celebrated that spring by every one. As the summer crept on and the Fourth of July approached, an ugly rumor got started, from I don't know where, that the Mounted Police were not going to allow the Americans to celebrate it. The Americans outnumbered the Canadians about fifteen to one, as every one who wasn't a Canadian said he was American. We swore we would celebrate in spite of everything. Nothing was noticeable as the time drew near except the excessive politeness of the Americans and Canadians toward each other. We all knew that if the Mounted Police said we shouldn't celebrate they meant it, but we determined to celebrate anyway. It was an extremely difficult proposition to handle, and a very nasty undercurrent was running in the camp.

After the rumor had got started, the Mounted Police knew that, if they didn't say anything about it and allowed us to celebrate, it would be said that they were afraid to stop us. If they said that the Americans could celebrate, it would amount to the same thing. A few days before the Fourth a proclamation came out, signed by Colonel Steele, the commanding officer, written almost in the language of a command, saying that the Americans and Canadians would celebrate the Fourth of July together. You might call this tact.

When the Fourth arrived,~all that we did in the way of gun-play was to shoot each other's stove pipes off. Later in the day various sports were held and the greatest good will prevailed. The only things that seemed to suffer were the dogs, and the town was full of them; they simply went mad with fright, running in every direction. My team disappeared completely, with the exception of one dog which I found under my bunk twenty-four hours afterwards. Some of the dogs never turned up at all.

The town was now building at a tremendous rate, and all of logs. Everybody was trying to get his cabin or other building finished before the cold weather set in. Rafts of logs were coming down the river all the time, and two sawmills were working overtime. Large pack-trains were constantly going out to the mines with provisions, and a crude suspension bridge was thrown over the Klondike River. Restaurants, stores, theaters, dance-halls, and of course gambling-halls and saloons, were going full blast.

The saloons were almost like club-rooms, patronized alike by temperance men and drinkers. The custom now began among the saloon-keepers of shutting down for a few hours or days while they made minor changes or repairs. Then they would hold what was called a 'Grand Opening,' and everybody seemed to patronize them the more to help them recover from the

time when they were closed. But with all this activity there didn't seem to be the insane feverishness that you meet in a large city.

An incident happened the next winter which I think I shall mention here in connection with the Dawson saloons. One very popular saloon-keeper had a 'Grand Opening' which was, you might say, too successful, because he was so well patronized that they drank up all his available whiskey. Being a man who could rise to an emergency, and seeing that he was losing trade, he made a speech to the gathering, something like this:

'Gentlemen: I opened to-night with the expectation that I could give a good welcome and plenty of refreshments to my friends. But fate is against me.I have twelve dog-teams coming down the river, which are expected to-day, loaded to the gunwale with the finest whiskey that man ever drank.

'You remember when I was out last summer I visited my old home in Kentucky. As a boy a legend floated around there of a hidden cave, 'way back in the times of the Civil War, which was raided by the Government officials, and a hundred and forty barrels of whiskey were found in it. The distillers themselves were killed in the fight, and the heads of the hundred and forty barrels were stove in, and this priceless fluid was spilled on the floor of the cave. The cave's mouth was then roughly rocked up, and soon overgrown with the verdure of that country, and in those harrowing times when men's hearts bled and women's tears ran, all trace and memory of the cave was lost.

'By chance a boy, a rabbit hunter, chasing his fleeting game through this howling wilderness, saw his prey disappear into these deep rocks, and being a boy and knowing that he would get a licking from his father if he didn't get the rabbit, he pried out some of the rocks and discovered the cave of the legend. This was done just when I got back to Kentucky. And, gentlemen, those hundred and forty barrels of whiskey spilled on the barren rocks of the cave had drained into a hollow, and there by evaporating for some forty years had reduced down in the sterilized air of the cave to only ten barrels, and I, gentlemen, bought every drop of it, and am now having it shipped to the brave men of the Yukon.

'Now, gentlemen, my dog-teams are somewhere on the ice, if they are not under it, but rather than disappoint you I will give you a little of my private stock, which I scooped out with my own hands from the deepest depression of the pocket. This, gentlemen, I will give you to-night at the same reduced price you have always paid.'

With that he turned to one of his bar-tenders, who was wearing a broad grin, and said, 'Johnny, bring in my private stock.' The bar-tender, rising to the occasion, dipped two buckets of Yukon water out of a barrel, produced several demijohns of alcohol and different ingredients, and made his whiskey before our eyes. It must have been pure because we all saw it done, and what's more, everybody went up and had a drink to see what the stuff did taste like. But I don't think any saloon-keeper in the place but Pete Macdonald could have got away with it.

At this time I saw an example of the unique way of advertising that

some men practiced up there, and how earnestly it was taken by the men who came in contact with it. One of the large restaurants came out with the old story that had been told a great many times in the North, with many variations, that a mastodon had been found in an underground glacier, in a perfect state of preservation, and how the bones and hide were being shipped out to the Smithsonian Institution. This particular restaurant was said to have bought all the flesh, and was serving it a dollar and a half a plate. What they were really serving was simply first-class beefsteak. They also backed up this article in the newspaper by a large notice on their bills of fare: 'Fresh Mastodon Steak To-day.'

An old-timer coming down from the creeks, where he had been for over a year, asked where was the best place to get a good feed, and a friend showed him the article in the paper and advised him to try it. The old-timer went to the restaurant and called for mastodon steak, which by this time had become a regular order of the patrons. After getting the steak and trying a mouthful, he remarked to the waiter that it tasted like beef. The waiter, having got sick of this mastodon business and not seeing the joke of it anyway, said, 'You damned fool, what do you expect?' Whereupon the old-timer rose in his wrath and said he had ordered mastodon steak, which they had advertised, and mastodon steak he would have or nothing, and stamped out, mad all through.

Almost from the very beginning of the rush there had been a constant buying and selling of claims. A great many of these were bought and sold without anything being known about their contents beyond their proximity to good or bad claims. As the saying goes, 'Gold is where you find it.'

It is a fact, of course, that the pay streak in a claim that had only a few prospect holes in it and appeared to be a big find might suddenly stop, or, on the other hand, a poor one might turn into a rich one. Later on people grew wiser, and claims were thoroughly prospected and holes were made in many places so that a good guess could be made as to their richness. A half-interest in one claim I know of was sold for a hundred dollars, and afterwards turned out to be worth half a million. Another claim was sold to a man for two thousand dollars, as this was all the money he had, and this turned out to be one of the very richest of the Klondike. This man panned out ten thousand dollars' worth of gold in his mud-box during the winter, and gave it to the man who had sold him the claim, with the remark: 'When you have spent all this you can come back and get a job on your old claim.' Of course 'salting' was practiced, too, with more or less success.

There was a man here whom I presume that everybody at the time had heard of, called 'Swift Water Bill.' This man, when I first met him, was in the Birch Creek district, digging out the only habitation he owned on earth, a tent, which had fallen down and been overrun by a glacier. As far as I know he didn't have a cent in the world. But as luck would have it he staked a very rich claim in the Klondike.

Immediately he began to improve himself in dress. By picking up a piece here and a piece there he was soon garbed like a civilized man, and could

have passed very well in a city; though having only one shirt he had to go to bed while it was being washed. I think he had the distinction of wearing the first white collar in the Yukon.

He soon became engaged to a girl in town but they had some tiff, and to take it out on him she went to a restaurant on the arm of a gambler. Swift Water Bill was sitting in the restaurant near the door, and heard her say she would like some eggs. Now these eggs were the first that had come into the Yukon Valley. The entire lot had been bought by the restaurant-keeper and were being served at a dollar-fifty apiece. Swift Water Bill, being no fool, sent for the proprietor before the gambler had a chance to get in his order, and bought every egg in the house. As they brought him relays of fried eggs, he flipped them out of the window to the waiting dogs outside, with remarks to the crowd in general on the smartness of the dogs in catching them. This little episode cost him six hundred dollars, but the girl came back to him.

This time, though, she married him, helped him to spend all his money, and got a divorce from him. Again with his luck he struck another good claim, and married a sister of the first girl. This was repeated with a third sister. His first two wives were on the stage, acting in a play called 'Still Water Willie.' Swift Water Bill used to go and see himself caricatured, and applaud louder than any one.

During the winter, when the gold was being got out from his claim under the charge of a foreman, Swift Water Bill stayed in Dawson. As the goldbearing diggings were thrown on a dump, frozen, and were not available till the next spring, Swift Water borrowed money to gamble with at ten per cent a month, which was the usual rate of interest of the country.

He became a famous gambler, and was very fond of hiring a faro table for the evening, when his customary remark before beginning was, 'Gentlemen, the limit is from the floor to the ceiling,' which meant that there was no limit. Any one can beat a faro bank if only he has money enough, provided there is no limit, by doubling his bets. Various little flurries took place that were well worth watching. It was interesting to see a man, dirty and unkempt, with earth-stained clothes, lose ten to twenty thousand dollars at one sitting.

Gambling has always been thought of in a mining camp as connected with shooting and fighting of all kinds, but here I don't remember one gambling fight that amounted to anything. The gambling halls were orderly, well conducted, and on the square. This I think was entirely due to the NorthWest Mounted Police, who were always in evidence.

They allowed things to go without interference to a certain limit. After that they stepped in.

The dance-halls also were orderly, and generally had two policemen lounging around, apparently not taking the least notice of anything. But toward morning, when the better element had gone and things began to get rougher, the policemen were always Johnny on the spot. I saw a case where a man, running to catch a girl, pushed a policeman out of his way, not knowing who he was, and threw him in a heap in a corner. The policeman was on

his feet in a second and after the man, but was grabbed by his fellow constable and they both laughed, knowing that no insult was meant.

Sometimes in the midst of the noise and uproar a man's voice would ring out in a different tone, and all the dancers would fall away from two men somewhere in the hall. But instantly there would be a policeman at their side and the thing would be settled without any trouble. The individual dances lasted for three minutes each and cost a dollar, paid to the man at the bar. With this a drink was included. The girls got twenty-five per cent of the money for each dance, and some of them made as much as twenty-five dollars a night.

These girls as a general thing were professional dancers. Some of them were married women who were escorted to the dance-halls by their husbands, danced all night, and were then escorted home by them. The girls were always dressed in the height of fashion and danced in slippers, not moccasins. I never saw any real rowdyism at these dances. Occasionally a couple would get up and give a fancy dance, usually an impromptu affair, and some of them were certainly wonderful. The men were dressed in everything from the attire of civilization down to the Siwash garb, but no one ever knew from the looks of a man's clothes how much money he had.

The theaters were good, bad, and indifferent. We had a troupe that was wintering there, and they gave a series of old plays that were really very well done. Of course 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' had to be given. I have seen this several times in my life, but I never saw the parts of Eliza and Simon Legree so well done. I can't say as much for the pack of bloodhounds. These were represented by a Malamute puppy, drawn across the stage in a sitting posture by an invisible wire and yelling his full displeasure to the gods. The ice was represented by newspapers. Eliza acted her part exceptionally well on the newspapers, having seen people actually cross floating ice.

Among some of the interesting people whom I met at this time was a girl who had come in over the ice that winter, with two dogs. She was the only true 'cowgirl' I have ever met, although I have seen a good many imitations. She was born and bred in the West and had run her own ranch in Alberta, taken care of her mother, and taught school. She was independent, fearless, and intelligent, and on top of it all was extremely good-looking and could have made her way in any walk of life. This girl had come into the country alone, stopping at the Mounted Police posts on the way down. She hired the cabin next to ours in Dawson and immediately started to acquire some mining property. She was, I think, the most remarkable horsewoman I have ever known.

One day she wanted me to go with her and show her some mining property she wanted to buy, and she asked me to get her a good horse. I selected the best horse I could find in town. On the way to her cabin the horse and I had a difference of opinion, in which the horse won out. Thinking myself something of a rider, I had misgivings about offering her this horse, but I changed my mind when I saw her get onto it.

I was walking, and in the rough places I got ahead of the horse. We kept

passing and repassing each other for the first ten miles up the Klondike River. At this point there was a horse-ferry. One of the down-river scows had been brought up and attached to a tight wire cable stretched across the river at some little distance above the water. There were two pulleys on the cable, from one of which a rope ran to the bow of the scow, while from the other a rope ran to the stern. By tightening or slackening these ropes the proper cant was given to the ferry, so that it was carried across the river by the force of the current.

These scows were decked fore and aft for about eight feet. The horses were taken onto the forward deck by a narrow gangplank and thus into the cockpit. The river being swift and deep near the bank it was a ticklish business getting them aboard.

When we arrived at the ferry two Englishmen were trying to get their horses into the scow. They had taken the packs off and with a great deal of handling and talking to the horses they managed to get them over the plank and down into the cockpit. Miss Howe sat on her horse, waiting for them to get out of her way, with a rather amused expression. When everything was clear she literally seemed to lift her horse by the spurs to the middle of the gangplank, which buckled badly with the impact, but the next jump was made onto the deck of the scow, where she rode him down into the cockpit, and swung off, throwing the reins over the horse's head for me to hold. I don't think any of us got our eyes and mouths closed till we reached the other bank. There the process was reversed.

Before this ferry had been installed, a bateau used to be run here in the same way. One day several men came down with their packs on their backs to be taken across. They all took their packs off with the exception of one man, whose pack was fastened so tight that he couldn't remove it. As ill luck would have it, the ferryboat tipped over. Everybody was saved except the one man whose pack was so heavy that it sank him.

About this time we had an epidemic of something around town that resembled grippe. Among others Miss Howe came down with it. The doctor who came to see her told us she ought to have some means of communication with us if she was taken sick in the night. One of us rigged up a small rope that ran from her bed through the wall of her cabin, across the alley to ours, then through our wall and across our floor to the wall beyond, where it was hitched to a dog-harness with bells on it. The idea was that if she needed anything and pulled the rope in the night, the dog-harness would drop down and the bells would wake us up.

There was no signal until some time in the middle of the night, when with a bang and a rattle of bells the harness dropped to the floor, scooted across it and up the other wall. We all woke up with a jump, thinking that the girl must be terribly ill. Getting on what clothes we could, we rushed around to her door, banging on it until a voice sang out from the interior, ' I don't know who you men are, but if you aren't gone in one second I'm going to shoot"

...to be continued

From the Publisher

Until now we haven't published book reviews in this magazine but a new offering written by a subscriber deserves a mention in this space. Bill Miller started researching "Wires in the Wilderness: the Story of the Yukon Telegraph" after finding remnants of the old telegraph line near his home in Atlin, B. C.

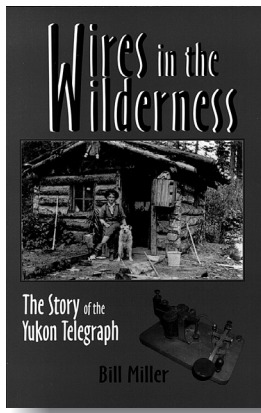
"This discovery sparked my interest in learning more about this 1,800-mile telegraph line that was built up through the spine of the province 100 years ago to connect the gold fields of the Yukon with southern Canada. I also wanted to become more intimate with the land through which it passed," Miller writes in his introduction. A former university archivist, Miller also worked as an engineer and a history teacher before retiring in Atlin.

In Miller's book, the story of Thea Frances (see Issue No. 21) appears in a chapter that chronicles the adventures of women hikers who ventured along the Telegraph Trail in the 1920s and 1930s. One of these women was the legendary Lillian Alling who, determined to return to her eastern European homeland, set off on a journey across the United States and Canada to the Bering Sea.

Alling chose the telegraph line as her route through northern B. C. A tiny woman weighing no more than 100 pounds, she carried only a small backpack with blankets, clothing and a few camping supplies. For food and shelter she relied heavily on the telegraph workers who assisted her from one station to the next.

The telegraph line operated for 35 years before wireless communication replaced it. After the telegraph operators left their stations, travel through the region became even more difficult. Soon the wilderness reclaimed portions of the route. In many cases, steel wires and white porcelain insulators were a traveler's only indication of where the trail had been.

After 1935, the telegraph line became the telegraph trail and along with the change came a different set of challenges. For a new generation of hikers, many of them Europeans, the wilderness portion of the trail between Hazelton and Atlin is the ultimate test of endurance and bush survival skills. In his summary, Miller argues that this portion of the trail should be preserved for its recreational and historic value.



"Wires in the Wilderness" by Bill Miller is published by Heritage House. It is available off the shelf or by mail from Mac's Fireweed Books, Whitehorse.