

NAHANNI 1979

Book 1

June 18 – July 16

W.D. Addison

For Wendy, Michelle and Kirsten

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June 18/79 (Mon)

This is being written on June 23.

For over 2 weeks prior to our departure, Jake and I had set the morning of June 18 as our very latest departure time. The house and carpenters dictated differently. Six weeks ago we had determined not to leave until all the trim in the house was up and varnished. As always happens, things took longer than expected. Tim MacLeod was still putting on baseboard on Saturday. On Sunday we fixed up the fiberglass paddles which Dave and I damaged last summer. We took off the badly worn aluminum shoes, put on a layer of fiberglass, an aluminum plate, a second fiberglass layer and finally a thin finish coat of resin. In between coats we worked on the packing. It was hotter than blazes, so in the afternoon we all went over to the Park for a swim. What a crowd! The kids enjoyed it despite getting cold. I enjoyed everything but the swim. Despite living in the area for seven years I had never walked up beside the rapids to the control dam. Quite pretty in spots if one ignores the litter.

Monday, June 18, was more packing, mow the lawn, clean up the upstairs a bit, rehang the two upstairs, outside doors, clean paint brushes and goodness [knows] what else. Departures were put off successively from 3 pm to 6 pm to 9 pm until finally at 11 pm all was loaded and ready. Even at that there was last minute dashing about and throwing in of nearly forgotten reports and maps. In short, the usual total madness, and confusion which seems to have accompanied all of our late departures over the past 4 or 5 summers. Each time there has been incredible pressures to get certain tasks done as well as equal pressures of shortages of trip time to do all the things we want to. Invariably, we leave with some things undone and late. This year is no exception. Our original departure was to be June 10 at the latest. Caught under the pressure of late departure Jake and I decided to drive non-stop to Edmonton if we could stay awake to manage it.

Earlier in the day, Michelle gave me quite a tearful farewell, the first time ever. Up 'til this year she has been pretty casual about my departures. However she now seems to have a concept of how long 2 ½ months is. She didn't want to express how she felt, other than by crying. She said I wouldn't understand! She was able to settle down when I assured her I thought I did.

At 11 pm Wendy and I said our goodbyes and we were off, exhausted but anxious to escape varnish and sanding for a good long while.

Tues, June 19/79

One way or another Jake or I managed to stay enough awake to drive all night. Jake was driving around the Winnipeg by-pass when he missed the turn West. That took us nearly an hour to straighten out since we had nearly circumnavigated Winnipeg. We thumped across the prairies all day through showers and occasional sunny periods. Actually, it was a fine day for a long drive. We finally pulled into Marg and John Campbell's in Edmonton some 26 ½ hours after leaving home and 1300 odd miles later. We were very tired but still talked until 1 am.

The prairies are gorgeously green this year what with a lot of rain. However, things are a couple of weeks late. In some areas of Manitoba the grain is barely out [of] the ground. The numbers of ducks and other birds also seems down. Perhaps they are just out in the reeds on nests.

Today was shopping day in Edmonton. First stop was Kluane Mountaineering to pick up Jake's sleeping bag and our tent bag. I also ordered down booties with nylon overshoes for about camp, which were finished by late this afternoon. Next stop was Precision Camera Repair to have exposure meters checked. Despite the three meters disagreeing it seems that they are seldom more than ½ stop out, but in opposite directions producing a one stop difference. I shall correct them on the ASA dial. The one I used last year is about ½ stop low. The Lunasix [sp?] and the new Nikon read about ½ stop high. In talking to them I mentioned my focusing problem on the Hasselblad. On checking, they found a number of small but cumulative errors which they were able to correct by 6 pm. The rest of [the] morning and early afternoon was spent at the U. of A. Archives going over Dr. A.E. Cameron's papers. Some letters and his report to H. Snyder on the Prairie Cr. Lead-zinc-silver deposit seem to be missing. Never sent by the family or else lost by Cameron.

June 20 [Wed]

Bill Fuller also seems to have located all the stuff Bill Clark gave him and finally put it in the Archives. I went through it as well but there isn't much useful on the Nahanni.

The last chore of the day was finding Jake a rain suit and life jacket. Just as it seemed we were to draw a blank we had success. A frantic day of scurrying over, we headed out of town about 8 pm, after loading up with fresh fruit. We drove all night again.

June 21 Thurs.

The drive north was as usual, totally boring. The few interesting places, like the Peace river prairies, we drove through in the dark. I really missed travelling the back road into Peace River town with its awesome view up the Smokey and Peace. It was simply drive, drive, drive.

We stopped and enjoyed Alexandra and Louise falls on Hay R. The next stop was the Hart L. tower where Bill Clark spent so many years. We could see Great Slave Lake still plugged with ice. A yellow flower, looking like an Oxytropis, was blooming on the limestone pavement. On the cliff edge of the escarpment, we had lunch at Whittaker Falls. It was booming better than ever before in my two previous trips. All the way north everyone has been complaining about the continuous rainy, showery days. The same across the prairies. It doesn't bode well for us. The mountains are usually worse.

About 40 miles out of Fort Simpson we had our first and only flat tire of the trip.

On arriving at Simpson we scurried around getting fishing licenses, checking in with Parks, buying a couple of things and failing to get a hunting license. They don't have the new ones yet.

Eric Hiscock is out at Hole-in the-Wall for the climbing school. This is too bad, for I wanted to talk to him about locations of hot springs and other odds and ends. Dan (?), Eric's office manager, says Parks Canada was made part of the Department of Environment by Joe Clark. This is probably a good move for Environment is philosophically more in tune with Parks than Indian & Northern Affairs. Dan was also moaning about the budget cuts, yet there are all kinds of wardens along with a chopper up at Hole-in-the-Wall. I am sure that, again this year, I will find myself critical of many of the ways they spend money on the Park. Certainly, my priorities and ideas for what needs doing don't match theirs.

Finally, we went over to Lindberg's to find Susan home. We got our usual warm welcome. They are quite a pair – so natural, easy going, warm and sincere. Sue invited us to stay with them again and for supper. Moose steaks and fresh rhubarb pie! Wow.

Went down to see Mansell Patterson at Simpson Air. The weather isn't good here and likely worse in the mountains, so it seems we won't be going anywhere tonight. Things are set for tomorrow, weather permitting.

Edwin arrived home from a trip up the Nahanni, with a judge from Hay R., a probation officer from Yellowknife, the RCMP sergeant at Fort Simpson and a DPW

fellow from Simpson. We had to go with Edwin and Sue, to the Sergeant's for drinks with the crew. Jake & Sue fell asleep and the rest of us (wives and self) had trouble fathoming all the group's "in" jokes. However, the judge has promised help in obtaining court records, so it wasn't entirely a misspent evening.

June 22/79 Fri.

We were stomping about at 7 am on the dock, as requested, under glowering skies. Finally, we found someone up at the hanger. Nothing doing today, which is just as well for we still had some organizing to do. Then we got the tire fixed and back on the truck and greased the truck. I took everyone out for supper at the Sub-Arctic Inn. We ate Chinese food. Anna Lindberg, Edwin's mother came along also. It was a grand evening as we talked over various things.

We also spent time today going over reports of the Parks Canada office to see what was new. Found several things but the most interesting by far was Amsden's [sp?] report on his archaeological reconnaissance.

June 23/79 Sat.

Up at seven again to very dark skies & fog. Things don't look promising this morning. In fact, they degenerated during the day into the now normal afternoon showers and thunderstorms. Jake and I helped Edwin build a little barn shaped shed to house the two goats they now have. The goats are quite a curiosity about town even though they have been here several months. Kids keep dropping in to see them.

Tonight we had a lovely ham dinner at Anna's with fresh rhubarb pie again. We may be getting frustrated with the waiting but the food is great. Today we found that Parks has booked the Beaver so we are to go in with two trips in the 185. That isn't all bad for it allows us two chances to see and photograph the country.

June 24/79 Sunday

Up again at 6 am to no avail. Cloud, Ugh, but with a few blue patches and a cold north wind. At least that is a change.

We spent the morning helping Edwin build the roof on the goat shed. All the while the cloud was dissipating, and things looked even more hopeful. About 10, I phoned Simpson Air and started to get the runaround. Nobody seemed to know anything as far as we were concerned. They thought they might get us out

tomorrow. I reminded them that yesterday we were top priority and why were we now being put off today. They got a bit of a change of heart. Call back later.

At one, I went down to see them in person. After much humming and hawing they decided to try after I put a little pressure on. What the hell, there wasn't a cloud in the sky. We got away about 2 pm.

Lance Russell was the pilot, a nice enough guy but a bit green. He didn't know how to tie on a canoe and once in the air it transpired that he had never flown one and didn't like it at all. He had no map but even before leaving he was honest enough to ask if I knew the way. So, I was navigator. The current pilot shortage makes for strange situations. Despite his lack of experience he flew well, so I elected to keep going, especially since the mountains were quite clear.

On the way in, the reason for all the delay became clear. Lance's girlfriend, a CP stewardess of fairly low seniority, had been recalled early for work. He had intended to fly her up to Fort Nelson himself but when I insisted on getting going, he had a problem. Get her to Nelson or she would lose her job. We flew almost to Nahanni Butte before he got all the arrangements made by radio.

Lance's inexperience actually proved to be a boon. He only felt confident if he could fly up the Nahanni. We crossed the Liard Range at Bluefish Lake, flew up The Splits, over Yohin Lake, and so on up the river. I hope I got fine photos of many of the features I had missed previously. At Deadmen Valley, Lance tried turning up the Meilleur, thinking it the Flat, until I set him on course again.

The Flat and Nahanni are raging torrents at the moment. The Nahanni is standing waves all the way from The Splits to the Flat. They only vary in size. The Gate has a huge chute in it. What a contrast to last fall!

While going up the Flat I began to feel sick and got that way just over Loon Lake. We went past it about 10 miles to look at another possible lake. It was too small. Pity, because it would have saved 10 miles of walking. So, back to Loon Lake where we landed at Turner's old goat camp. They don't seem to have been here for at least 3 years, likely 5. The caches are broken open and stuff scattered all about. Likely the work of ravens. Quite a mess for such a pretty spot. I left the food barrels under the canoe but put the packsacks, paddles, etc. up on the slightly more solid of the two rickety caches. Loon Lake is a touchy one to get off for there is a big ridge at one end that has to be cleared. The first run Lance tried as a trial. We made waves then used the entire lake the second time. It worked. We flew home via Pass Creek and at Hole-in-the-Wall Lance turned in as though to land. When I enquired what he was doing, he said leaving me off! More confusion. What they had told him at Simpson air, goodness knows, but there was no way I was getting left at Hole-in-the-Wall with only a shirt and no food or shelter. This

confusion was once again to our advantage for it let me see some of the country we hoped to hike over. From the air it looks great. I hope it is as good on the ground.

We flew down the river on the way home and I took a lot more photos of things I had wanted for a long time, like The Gate, the abandoned meanders, Prairie Creek fan, etc. The North Karst was too heavily in shadow to do much with and we were also too far away from it.

When we got to Simpson, I found Jake at Pat and Patti Wood's for supper. We had been invited with Lindbergs. Jake had already eaten a scrumptious meal of pickerel, salad and rhubarb pie. I declined because of my air sickness, so what did Patti do but package up an entire supper big enough for the two of us! They certainly seem like quite a pair and judging from all the Woods, big and little, they enjoy their food with gusto. Pat works for Water Resources and it was he that was taking in Moore's mail.

We got away about 7:30 pm or 8. Mansell was flying 3 fellows, one canoe and their gear into Deadmen Valley. They are badly overloaded for the stage the Nahanni is at. On landing at Hole-in-the-Wall, I asked Lance to phone Parks and notify them of the situation. Anyway, they took off just ahead of us and we soon overtook the rather slow moving Beaver.

The trip in was quite uneventful. With the arrival of evening, the air was quite calm and most of the clouds had dissipated into a never ending blue void. Since it was too dark for photos, I was able to concentrate on a running commentary for Jake and to a lesser degree Lance. We flew right up the river again, flying over the North Karst and North of the First Canyon. Jake got a look at Virginia Falls. He has heard so much about it that he really wanted to see it. At least this gave him a glimpse.

After landing at Hole-in-the-Wall, all three of us were overpowered by the beauty and roar of waterfalls. Lance stayed a good half hour taking it in. High above the Lake, sun gleamed off a few granite peaks, arêtes and snow patches. The snow glowed yellow in the last weak rays. We actually had to crane our necks to their fullest to see this. The peaks above our campsite on a gorgeous beach on the south shore towards the west end of the lake, tower 4000 feet over us. They do this in a horizontal distance of equal amount or less.

With Lance off, and quickly out of sight and bearing around the shoulder of the peak to Hole-in-the Wall valley, we very slowly started to set up camp. We pitched the tent, all the while exclaiming over a waterfall slithering and spraying down the granite across the lake from us. We blew up air mattresses while admiring the reflections of snow streaked spires in the Lake. Getting firewood led to the



discovery that alpine fir is common around the Lake. Finally, we had Patti's supper. Probably nobody else has ever eaten baked pickerel, fresh salad and very fresh rhubarb upside down cake on Hole-in-the-Wall before. Certainly very, very few humans in the world are eating as well as us tonight, with a view like this to distract one from the meal.

It didn't take us long to turn in after eating. It was probably midnight and still quite light. We both took about 30 seconds to fall asleep. Strange, but there was none of that lonely feeling, seeing the plane leave, nor any of the uncertainty of having the plug pulled on all the life support cords that civilization provides and which we take for granted.

Some might think that attitude indicative of cockiness. Quite the contrary. I still am suitably awed, respectful or afraid of those things with which I am unfamiliar or which I know demand respect. The big difference this year, is that I feel at home here, even though I have never been here. I know the area from the literature, which is a fair introduction, and I know what to expect from things like buckbrush, granite slate faces and so forth. I feel some trepidation re the trip to Loon Lake and especially crossing the Flat. But at the same time, I am quietly confident we will bring it off without incident, perhaps with flair.

Mon June 25

We awoke to brilliant sun, both of us at the same time from a dead sleep. The lake was a mirror for the surrounding slab peaks. I grabbed cameras and started shooting. Over the course of the morning, we worked our way along the quite irregular south and east shores to the outlet. It was calm until we got to the east end, so photo opportunities abounded.

There is a huge rockfall area of truly immense granite blocks between the shore and the hill. Two blocks which have rolled close to the lake are the largest, being fairly rectangular and measuring (by estimate) 5-6 m high X 10 m long X 8-10 m wide. There are a couple of even larger blocks further up the slide area. What a frightening, awesome spectacle it must be when they let loose.

Jake was standing on top of the one by the lakeshore, spotting lake trout and telling me where to cast. To no avail. As with every lake I have fished in where you can see the fish, they are next to impossible to catch. However, Jake did catch a couple of small (1 kg & 0.7 kg roughly) lake trout in front of camp. They were fine eating.

While down near the rock fall, I happened to look back towards camp and spotted an adult bald eagle just behind camp. Then we noticed a large lump in another

tree. Lo and behold, a nest. Last night and this morning we heard peculiar bird cries, a bit like a whiskey jack's. Now we know what they are. The adults seemed to spend too much time off the nest so we decided we had better move camp.

A walk to the west end of the Lake showed gorgeous sand beaches most of the way, nearly all with eminently campable camp sites. The best of all however was the last, just at the mouth of Hole-in-the Wall Creek from Lonely Lake. We didn't move though until I had a couple of hours sleep to recuperate from the morning walk of about 3 miles over boulders, through swamp and buckbrush. I was tired!

Not just the walk though. About the time we spotted the eagle's nest, I took the time with the compass – 5 am. We had gotten up about 4. Yesterday had been a tiring day and 4 hours sleep just isn't enough for me even at the best of times. It seems the sun is up about 20 hours right now and it never gets dark.

If ever there was an aptly named lake it is Hole-in-the-Wall. As one flies the Pass Creek- Hole-in-the-Wall Creek valley, suddenly there is this gap, with the lake sitting at its mouth. The glacial trench in which the lake sits is 3-4000 feet deep, depending on the mountain. It contains a series of pater noster lakes of which Hole-in-the-Wall is the lowest, Lonely next, then a series up two valleys which are little more than big tarns. Glaciers lie in a number of cirques.

The granite seems to be easily broken down, producing all the sand & gravel in and around the lake. It supports a black spruce, white-spruce-alpine fir forest at lake level (3,900 feet) the percentage of each depending on the soil, drainage and altitude. The main ground cover about the campsite –beach area consists of cranberry, bearberry (*A. uva-ursi*), feather mosses and sphagnum. Labrador tea is abundant and starting to bloom, as is swamp laurel. There is a bit of juniper and lots of blueberry and cranberry which are also blooming or about to. Underbrush and/or buckbrush is common and consists of alder, probably two or three species of willow and the ever present birch.

So far we have seen three ducks which I suspect are buffle heads, possibly golden eyes. Then there are two other ducks, almost certainly males, with orange-brown sides, a hint of a crest of the same colour, white patches at the base of the bill, the eye and towards the back of the head. They also have black and white wings. We have heard but not seen a loon. There are thrushes about, probably veerys and hermits if I remember my calls correctly. Also robins. We have seen several unidentified sparrows and heard things which have songs or parts of songs sounding like song, chipping and white-throat sparrows.

The lake abounds with grayling and lake trout. We see both wherever we go along the shore. There are all kinds of uncatchable grayling, 20 feet from the tent. We had 2 trout for supper. Yum-m-m.

There is no quiet here in the true sense. Waterfalls, all of little volume, but some of spectacular height, tumble down the cliffs all about. They don't produce a roar unless you are close to them and even then it is more like a heavy splashing. Their cumulative sound heard at camp is more like a good breeze sloughing through jack pine. Despite the continuous noise the lake seems utterly peaceful, especially before mid-day breezes start to ripple it. During the day it has been hot.

Tomorrow we are going to try and scale a diagonal shelf sloping up the peak off the SW corner of the lake.

Tues June 26

We arose at a more leisurely hour this morning, probably about 6 am. Another utterly cloudless sky. Judging from the mountaineers' reports, one just doesn't get blessed with weather like this in the Ragged Range. We must be living under a lucky star. Shortly after breakfast, we threw cameras and hiking clothes into the packsack and headed for the peak off the southwest end of Hole-in-the-Wall Lake. A rock chute comes with[in] a quarter mile of the lake and from the top of it a diagonal ledge in the granite face climbs at about 35°. It looked climbable from the bottom the other day, but I was concerned with the state of moss on some of the slicker looking rocks and the state of various snow patches.

We slogged up the rock chute from the tiny cirque. To say we gained altitude rapidly is to understate. It was steep. My lack of conditioning is horrible as I stop and gasp or stop and let my legs recuperate. Actually, the lungs gave out a bit before the legs.

The agony was made more and more bearable as the view, of admirable quality to begin with, improved perceptibly with nearly every step. Even before we hit the ledge, it was obvious that a better viewing route didn't exist. We had full scope of the valley from about half a mile west of the Lake around to the mountains 10 miles east on the other side of Hole-in-the-Wall Creek valley. The east end of Hole-in-the-Wall Lake was cut off by the most dramatic granite face I have ever seen. It towered sheer over us for 1500-2000 feet. Great, gently arcing dark water stains flowed down the light grey face. Huge, nearly cream dabs lighted the face here and there indicating recent spalling of slabs.

Near the base of this cliff, the snow started, not the ice I feared it might be. In fact, it was lovely firm avalanche snow, just soft enough to kick decent steps in. It turned out to be the best travelling of the day – on the hill or the level. Nice evenly spaced steps took us up 100 feet in no time. The snow was ever so lightly streaked with gossamer curves of dirty snow. These curves seemed to emanate from the

base of the dark curves on the cliff. The grace with which the two sets of curves complimented each other, despite their sharp angle of transposition at the cliff base, is rarely equaled anywhere. Its beauty seemed both poignant & bold at once. The kind of thing you want to etch in your mind forever. Later in the day when sun reached the cliff, the entire effect was destroyed, washed out by the sun.

Once we reached the ledge, the going was, if anything, steeper but quite good. The mossy areas we had seen from the bottom turned out to be moss plus lots of rooted vegetation. It was well anchored. If this slope is any indication, we are too early yet for the alpine flowers. We saw a bit of white heather and a buttercup type thing near the bottom, nothing higher except on one west facing ledge against the cliff.

As we puffed upward, the view still improved as more and more of the southeast end of the Hole-in-the-Wall Lake came into view. Finally, we topped a ridge and were awed by the view up the valley to the west.

At the limit of view were three granite slabbed towers just poking up behind the ridge forming the end of the valley. They appear to be a climber's ecstasy, just plain wonderful to we more timid souls. The end of the valley is formed by a series of peaks with cirques between, which probably contain glaciers in some instances. It is hard to tell for there is still so much snow about. More snow than bare ground. Much of the head of the valley looks eminently hike able. So, we will try it. Coming down the valley we could see the second of the pater noster lakes above Hole-in-the-Wall (but not the third), the lower of Buckingham's Nightwind Lakes. Next was Lonely Lake, obviously a very good size probably as long as Hole-in-the-Wall. In between each of these lakes Hole-in-the-Wall Creek is a raging torrent whose noise is the dominant sound even up here, 1500 feet above it. Throughout much of its length it is a waterfall or a series of short waterfalls. Definitely not the kind of thing one would want to chance crossing.

The best hiking is obviously along the north side of the creek, so we will cross it in the slower water behind camp. The bush is quite thick in spots and further up valley there is buckbrush, quality indeterminate from up here, so the hiking could be unpleasant. Certainly, hiking the north side presents no problems with crossing tributary streams, of which there is one dandy coming out of a cirque on the south side.

About a mile above Hole-in-the-Wall Lake, the north side of the creek has a number of lush, brilliant green, open patches along its north side – the Hole-in-the-Wall Hotsprings. There is only one place where there is obvious seepage and we could even see a little rock dam that some[one] had made on it. From up here the springs themselves seem very common, the vegetation being the most prominent feature.

After taking all this in, it was a lunch of Gouda cheese, summer sausage and rice [?] crisp, between large gulps of water. At that stage we both were tired enough that we flopped out on a gorgeous piece of tundra with a 200 foot drop on the east and a 600 foot drop on the west. The hot sun was tempered by so pleasant a breeze that by all accounts I slept two hours at least.

Just before starting down, I took a last couple of photos and what did I do, but drop the front of the camera case which promptly rolled 8 feet down a narrow crevice between a slab of granite and a 200 foot drop. Jake wanted me to lower him on the rope over the edge to a 6 inch ledge where he thought he could reach up in to get it. No way! So, then we started to look for things which we could tie on the end of string to hook it. Nothing worked. Finally, I tied a large knot in the end of the climbing rope and after a number of tries, hooked the knot in a slit in the side of the case. Phew! The case wasn't essential but certainly I didn't want to lose it for it offers a lot of protection to the camera in the pack.

After rolling a number of boulders off cliffs, the afternoon was wearing on. Jake is an inveterate boulder roller. The longest took 7 seconds to fall. Some landed and smashed in spectacular fashion, others landed and took off in great booming bounces downslope. What fun. It is amazing how quickly a soft snow patch can soak up a moving boulder's energy and bring it to a halt. One of Jake's boulders hit a ledge and scared up a ptarmigan in a great clucking whirl of white.

The trip down was easy, nay a pleasure. We stopped to photograph the buttercup type plants and the deep purple-pink of a small clump of *Saxifraga oppositifolia*(?).

Supper was trout, on a sand beach on a perfect evening, with the ducks rippling mountain reflections. We have decided to head up the valley tomorrow.

June 27, Wed

Another perfectly cloudless sky! We probably got up about 5:30 am. We puddled about camp for quite a while, me writing, Jake sorting and packing the grub to be left behind on the cache behind the campsite.

I forgot to mention that last evening just before we lost the sun, both clothes and me got our first wash. Bathing in these mountain streams is a ritual that is borne barely. At least a [hot] day, or at the very minimum a hot sweaty climb like yesterday's, is required to screw up sufficient desperation to contemplate such action. Having made the decision to start stripping, the real terror begins as one places feet in the water to wash the clothes first. By the time they are scrubbed and soaped, the feet are numb. Rinsing requires wading into the knees so then the lower legs are numbed. Finally, all that is left is the worst – you. A very quick

splashing baptism is followed at lightning speed by a good soaping. Then the hair. By this time, one isn't sure of survival, but the soap must off. So, the first, only and last immersion occurs, only long enough to get the soap off. A mad rush out to the sun, then a warmth slowly seeps back to the body, while the mind gloats in self virtue at enduring such torture and the general all-round good feeling of being squeaky clean for the first time in days.

We were packed and off about 10 am only to go 100 yards or so to the crossing place. We picked up spruce poles recently cut, probably by the Parks Canada wardens' climbing school group. Off all clothes and into the steam. Jake hadn't done this before and he started across without a pole until I got him to bring one. Even though the water was flowing on a sand bottom only about 30 inches deep at the deepest, it was all we could do to stay upright in the current. But we crossed safely.

After dressing, we headed into thick bush and it certainly didn't take long to warm up. Soon we had a game trail of magnificent proportions. Despite this, I was filled with foreboding for our progress was through alpine fir primarily - that hikers' nightmare. Not that it was bad yet. But thoughts of gloom were soon fulfilled when after a mile, large windblown fir were lying every which way, often high off the ground. At the same time the valley narrowed, and the sides were incised with steep-sided former and current run-off channels. So, it was up and down, up and down over trees, and down and up while we crossed these channels 6-15 feet deep. There wasn't much of this before we hit the first warm spring clearing.

The area was devoid of trees or brush and my, but the vegetation was lush. Over the next mile we hit three clearings. Obviously, we missed some for we saw more from the peak yesterday. At any rate each had different vegetation to a degree, but all had some species in common. Cow parsnip (*Heracleum lonatum*) was in each one. Now more than ever, I am convinced that it is absolutely diagnostic of warm spring flow. Every warm spring in this country, that I have seen, has had it, and I have never seen it anywhere else. There were at least two species of orchids (unidentified), one of the Solomon Seal or false Solomon Seal type, one or two probably chick weeds, bluebells, yellow buttercup type of plant we saw on the mountains and others which I either didn't note or couldn't begin to identify because they were just emerging. The photos should be of some help in identifying things.

The waters were approaching hot only in one spot and there someone had tried unsuccessfully to make a bathing pool by building a rock dam. I didn't have a thermometer, but I would guess that at the point of emergence the temperature was between 30 and 35°C. In all cases the warm water quickly mixed with the cold or was already mixed with cold before it emerged so that usual rivulet temperatures were in the 10 - 20°C range.



There were a few swallowtail butterflies about, quite a number of fritillaries on the Heracleum, and literally thousands of little speckled grayish brown moths. At least 3 or 4, often more, flew up with each step.

The warmed soil seems to have made the alpine fir grow faster, mature earlier and die earlier than elsewhere in the valley. Trees of 12 inches dbh and 50 feet height weren't uncommon. They lay by the hundreds, large and small everywhere between the clearings. As bad and, I think, worse than any burn I have ever travelled. Totally miserable, exhausting walking, with or without a 65 – 70 pound pack. Not even Jake was immune to tiring in it. Often, we only went 150 yards before stopping for a rest. However interesting the spring areas might have been, this hiking took away much of the joy in seeing them.

The springs themselves all issue from granite boulder piles or seep out gradually through the soil in the vicinity of the boulder piles. Whether or not it has anything to do with it would need careful study, but the mountain above the springs on the north side of the valley is the most heavily frost shattered of any. Does this indicate a slightly different type of granite and/or does the shattering permit more water to seep into the rock to percolate down to be warmed? There is no odour nor any different taste to the spring water.

Shortly after leaving the last spring area, the quality of walking took a quantum improvement even though a lot of it was now in buckbrush. The hike from the start of the hotsprings up, had, besides the other things, been climbing at a rapid rate. Periodically we were alongside the creek. Creek? It had the roar of a full blown river at a waterfall. I doubt there is a single pool between the lower end of the hotsprings and Lonely Lake. It is white water, foaming, smashing, violent white water whenever it actually isn't a waterfall. Suddenly, before we really expected it, we topped a ridge and there was Lonely Lake. What a relief. I was exhausted, and Jake was tired.

We hiked along it about 2/3 of the way looking for a campsite. Nothing particularly appealed to us, mostly because there wasn't much of interest to us in the surrounding mountains. Finally, we stopped for lunch with the resolve to push on to the lower of the Nightwind Lakes. The climb from Lonely to Lower Nightwind is a beast with a pack. It is up and over a main glacier curved step in the granite then a series of smaller ones. The downstream sides are very steep, usually glacier plucked cliff faces in spots. Throw in a few stands of stunted alpine fir and numerous soggy to wet patches in the game trails and you have a combination designed to thoroughly exhaust tired lads.

Finally, we topped the last rise to the lake. I gasped in relief, being far too tired to appreciate whatever beauty it possessed. We chose a caribou moss capped flat slab of granite just above the outlet for a campsite. The thought of sinking into

that moss was quite irresistible in our state. We chose the tent spot. I flipped open my pack and in a rather quiet but surprised way said, "where is the tent?"

A stupid question for it was the topmost item in my pack. But it wasn't there! Now I got alarmed. Next to sleeping bags and food, probably equal to them in importance was the tent. We had nothing to keep us dry and that is the key to survival in wet weather. Suddenly I was literally in a sweat and doing no work to get that way. This was truly serious. The sad thing was, I should have realized I'd lost it the minute it happened. It is about 1/10 the weight of the entire pack. I even remembered thinking as I slung the pack up on my back by myself, something we don't normally do, "Gee, that pack feels lighter now". I suppose I was just too tired to ask why this should be or perhaps ascribed it to delusions due to tiredness. This happened at our first rest coming up the steep hill from Lonely Lake.

Finding the tent would be an easy [task] were one on a trail. Just walk back to it. In a sense we were on a trail, a game trail and a good one. But even the best game trails fade out when the going gets tough as at clumps of alpine fir. Then one thrashes through or around as need be until another trail is located. This trail was no exception. We were often diverted off the trail for another reason. Once we reached the buckbrush zone at Lonely Lake, the game trails were often filled with water or else actually carried run-off. Whenever we were diverted from the trail for whatever the reason, we wandered about as we pleased with nary a care for following our trail a few hours later looking for a tent.

If we were to find the tent we had to try and follow our exact route back, by following our tracks. If we failed to do that we would have tracks both coming and going to confuse the issue. No problem where they are clear, but they are seldom clear.

We left the packs where we intended to camp, and in so doing did something else foolish. In our exhausted state we didn't even take any candy to give us a bit of energy. My energy reserves were away down and suddenly I was burning a lot more energy fussing about what plans of action to follow.

Off we went very, very carefully and slowly. We picked up signs here and there and when we lost the trail, one stayed on the searched portion until something else was picked up by the other person. We did all this by unspoken agreement and under Jake's leadership, me being too tired it seemed. We were thorough. No tent after an hours' search.

We had had it at lunch on Lonely Lake. I was also fairly confident on when and where I realized the pack was light. On we went still carefully but feeling ever more desperate and worried. We were in trouble, no mistake about that. About a quarter mile along the shore of Lonely Lake and near the end of our possible



search area, suddenly I said, "Here it is." There was the yellow bag lying right on the trail in buckbrush. I picked it [up] and hugged it.

We hiked back to the packs reaching there relieved, Jake very tired, me quite exhausted. We collected rocks and got the tent up, amidst remarks about a lesson learned at little cost. The tent sits crosswise on the top of my pack. Being wider than my pack, it sticks out from under the cover either side. I guess the buckbrush snagged the tent bag drawstring and pulled it out without my noticing. Rest assured it will be thoroughly tied in from now on.

Jake began supper. The smell of it nearly made me ill so I just piled into bed to sleep and recuperate. I slept with a vengeance.

#### June 28, Thurs

We both slept late (7 am?). I got up for a pee. Jake got up for good. Then I rolled back in to sleep several more hours. I still couldn't hold my eyes open. Finally, I got up about 10, more or less part of the living world. Jake had been patiently waiting, watching things on the lake, washing his socks and so on. He surely is a fine travelling companion. He has a great combination of patience, strength, agility and boldness. It's funny but in the past Dave was the one that usually had to restrain or tone down my ideas. This trip I find myself having that role. Jake has loads of good ideas and suggestions but being unfamiliar with the country doesn't always see all their implications. Between the two of us we balance out to what I now feel is a first class travelling team. I feel that way more so than ever, after yesterday's tent episode.

We packed up and in relatively easy fashion it seemed, found ourselves at upper Nightwind Lake. Oh yes, I puffed, grunted and sweated up the steep slope to it but the total hike was only about 1.5 miles. We found a pretty fair campsite on reasonably dry ground about 2/3 of the way along the north shore of upper Nightwind. It is a small grassy clearing in the buckbrush about 150 feet back from the Lake. The higher up the valley we come, the more scarce a commodity dry ground becomes. At last we are where we want to be. We see a number of possible interesting day hikes into the mountains from this camp.

The tent was soon pitched and with the day but half done, we decided to venture up a ridge to a saddle behind camp. There was a short stretch of mush along the lake before we hit the very steep, buckbrush-alpine fir covered hill. It was soon obvious that we were at unaccustomed altitudes. I especially had to stop every 100 feet or so to catch my breath. While that sounds terrible, and is, we were still making good progress, the hill was so steep.

Soon it was obvious that easier progress was to be had on the other side of a creek raging down a gorge it had carved in the granite ridge. We found a place where we could cross on the rocks and on up again. As we got further away from the roar of the creek, we gradually became aware of a periodic rather musical whistle about us.

"Whistlers probably", says I. Sure enough, I soon spotted a head sticking up on the ridge ahead. It was only my second good look at a hoary marmot, the other being at Cantung in 1966.

As the slope tapered off to the ridge, Jake let out a whoop and nearly ran the last bit. I puffed up slowly and soon realized what he was excited about. Ahead lay an absolutely gorgeous, linear cirque carpeted in tundra. Whistlers seemed to be calling from everywhere. Ground squirrels chucked in equal volume. The torrent we had crossed on the way up was now transformed into an alternately turbulent or even flowing rivulet across the cirque floor. Its banks were profusely lined with the low yellow buttercup type flower we have been seeing. Apparently, it is the first up and in bloom in this country; akin to the snow lilies further south. Snow patches were loosely scattered about lower down, and more common up on the higher slopes just below the cirque walls. They gave the scene gorgeous contrast.

We plunked ourselves on a dry knoll beside the stream to drink all this in over lunch. The clouds were more solid by now so every time a spot of sunshine was strategically located, one of us would leap up to take photos.

After lunch, the whistler intrigued us as it sat out sunning itself and watching us. I had never got close enough to them for photos but decided to try. I used a rock for cover to get within 75 feet of him. He wasn't alarmed so I started to advance slowly, stopping to let him adjust, taking the odd photo as I went. When I was within 40 feet I tried to wind on the film. Out of film! Damn.

I slowly backed off and went back to Jake and gave him the lens. He crept up slowly over the next ½ hour or so to within 8-10 feet. I must have some dandy shots. Finally, the whistler had enough of this nonsense and ducked down his hole for the afternoon. I hope we have some good shots. It was interesting to note over the course of the afternoon, the differences in whistles between animals and how one animal's whistle changed character from whistle to chirp, the more threatened it felt as we got closer.

We spent another couple of hours ambling about enjoying it all. At times we behaved as if in a trance. It was an idyllic several hours. We felt at ease, in tune with our surroundings, and I felt at peace with self and the world about. Moments such as these are precious just because of their rarity.

We were brought to our senses as the sun began to set behind the cirque walls. Was it 8 pm? 9 p.m.? Who knows? Who cares? Just as we started down, a big black monster started to ooze over the peaks across the valley. It meant business. No doubt rain from it. Now it was a race to see which reached the tent first, us or it. Going down was a breeze. We made it to the tent in time to snug things down and actually get supper started.

The chili con carne was just about hot when it caught us with a vicious wind, hail and rain. We backed into the tent and ate it lukewarm. Dinner music was a din on the tent. An hour later the sun was lighting the tops of the peaks. What a country! Actually, we have been totally blessed by the weather so far. Four days of sun up here? It's true.

June 29, Fri.

Yet another sunny morning but a cool one. I wasn't in any rush to get up for everything was still well soaked with last night's rain. I rolled over for another couple of hours. I shouldn't have. By the time I got up, it was clouding over in impressive fashion. While we have had sun each of the last few mornings, each day the sky has started with a little heavier high cloud layer, a haze really, and each day it has clouded over or got big fluffies (cumulus) earlier in the day.

We resolved to hike up a cirque at the west end of the lake and see if a valley behind the peak went anywhere, especially up to the glaciers. The weather was far from perfect but experience other years and this year already has shown that one shouldn't wait for the weather. It is just too changeable.

We had just reached the end of the lake when it started to rain and hail. On went the rain suits and we sat it out for 15 minutes or so. We had to climb a lot of moss covered granite. Now it was really slippery. Caution was the operative word. All the [time] we were gaining altitude rapidly beside a gorgeous little waterfall spilling out of the cirque above us. Today is the first day I can note an improvement in my performance. I have to stop and blow a little less often and my recovery time is better. It feels good, but there is still a great deal of improvement needed.

As we topped the rise to the cirque, one of the prettiest little views of the trip was exposed. The cirque floor was very small, less than an acre in size. Most of the slopes around it were snow covered and water in amazing volume drained onto the floor from all directions. A series of rivulets rushed towards the brink we had just come up, some coalescing just as they got there. The webs between these fingers of flashing water were green and red with different mosses and speckled with the yellow of the buttercup. What beauty danced in that few hundred square feet. We had sun to make us appreciate it all the more.

We thought we could see a route up to a col which we hoped would put us in sight of the glaciers to the south. The first part was up scree which was good going. Soon it became snow covered and we were forced into an ever narrowing band between low granite cliffs and the snow. The sun bouncing off the granite had melted the snow closest to it. On a similar slope across the couloir (?) from us, purple saxifrage, anemones and buttercups bloomed on the cliffs. How things take advantage of microclimate at these altitudes.

Just as we ran out of snow free ground, we got a way up the cliffs. Now it was a scramble over very steep mossy granite, with plenty of snow patches to dodge. Jake is just a natural on this stuff. He is so lithe and graceful that he seems to have little trouble handling it. I am more ponderous, and I have to be more careful. The result is I am always trailing. None-the-less, we made amazing progress upward until we just ran out of bare rock.

Now we were at about 6000 feet, the highest this trip so far. If we wished to reach the col at 6500' it would have to be a snow walk. Onto the snow we went.

The snow turned out to be quite unlike the avalanche snow of four days ago. This stuff was soft, very wet, mushy corn snow. In no time we were soaked from the knees down, boots included. If one sunk only 8 inches, one counted oneself very lucky indeed. At times we went in to our hips. Then there was difficulty extricating oneself. The technique was to spread one's weight around, then wiggle the offending foot or feet free and finally jam surrounding snow down the hole to provide a base to stand on to proceed with the next step.

We would hit firm or soft patches without apparent rhyme or reason. We tried and discarded all kinds of theories to predict where the firm walking was. Snow texture, rippling on the surface, supposed drifted areas, all were useless. But up we went. Jake took the pack because of his lesser weight and larger feet. That certainly helped me but not him. He also broke trail because of his greater speed and wind.

Finally, we made it to the top; a moss covered, snow free granite col. The entire area was under heavy cloud and the weather seemed to be deteriorating. A hasty lunch out of the way (the last of the cheese & sausage). I took some photos for the geology class. At 6500 feet the snowline was a good 500-1000 feet below us depending on the exposure. What a cold, dreary, inhospitable world under these conditions. The photos will show it. Without a bit of sun, much of the necessary detail was washed out.

An ever worsening sky was ever deepening my concern about our position. Our feet and legs were cold and wet. We wouldn't fare well were this a major

mountain storm. Down we went. It was, as usual, a lot easier and faster than coming up. At one point, while crossing the snow, Jake disappeared from sight without a sound. I came to a large rock to find Jake standing in a hole up to his shoulders. There was a hollow beside the rock, under the snow. We had noticed this a number of times before in smaller ways. Here was a dramatic reminder to be careful near rocks. We had him out in a jiffy.

As if to scorn my concern for the weather, the sun came out after we were down onto the rocks. Pictures missed, but there was no way we were going back up. By the time we reached the pretty cirque floor it was starting to cloud again and by the time we reached lake level we were walking to the tent in rain.

It eased as we got here so we took time to give our socks and underwear a much needed wash since they were wet anyway. As we did this, a terribly black mess moved up the valley toward us. We just got in the tent as it hit. Now that we are dry and getting warm, the world seems a friendlier place.

We had a superb spaghetti supper courtesy of Jake. Then we drifted off to sleep, lulled by a broken blue sky of good things for the morrow.

June 30, Sat

Rain, Rain, Rain, Rain – ugh-h!

It showered on and off all night, a nice gentle sound on the tent. It continued this morning as I variously thought about things between spurts of catching up on the diary. Already, I am missing the girls, all three of them. Their little screeches of delight, then laughter, then pranks, their need to be cuddled and loved. I could even stand a crying, surly one for a little while about now. One wonders about the wisdom of trips such as this, but if I don't get away for at least a few weeks from it, I go crazy. I even thought about the work that needs doing on the house. That has never happened this early on a trip before. Not that I feel ready to return and face it just yet either.

The rain let up for several hours and we got some of the clothes started drying before it returned with a vengeance. It has now poured and blown for several hours non-stop. The peaks are hidden. We are still dry and evening seems to be coming on. Hard to tell though.

July 1, Sun

It just poured for 8-10 hours yesterday afternoon and into last night. It rained, somewhere between 1 & 2 inches. You could notice the waterfalls, spilling from the cirques around camp, increase from just a rushing sound to a full fledged roar which boomed at times. This morning the lake is up 6-8 inches. Sometime during the night, the rain tapered off to showers which are continuing with decreasing frequency this morning. However, there is no sign whatsoever of a change in the weather yet.

We have slept and slept and slept. We have lain for hours with our thoughts. We have talked about various things. We have each read "Being Your Own Wilderness Doctor" and Jake is working his way through the only other book "Learn to Speak French". We have tossed and turned. We have sore backs from lying. And still it is miserable weather after 36 hours. Oh, the joys of wilderness trips, especially in small tents.

Shortly after the above was written, Jake proposed we head for Hole-in-the Wall Lake. We both had had enough lying in beds and a tent that we're getting rather fetid. The thought of a real fire was irresistible. It had stopped raining, so we began to pack. Cameras and other things which had to stay dry went in Jake's pack for he had the one and only pack cover, mine being at Hole-in-the Wall covering our cache of food.

Off we went, squishing and slurping through the moss and buckbrush. Jake wore his rain suit and vest, something I couldn't do because I would heat up too much. I started with the rain jacket worn open but even that was too much, so off it came. It didn't take long to get damp even with Jake in the lead knocking the worst of the water off the brush. Then it began to rain and quickly I was thoroughly soaked. On we ploughed to the end of Upper Nightwind.

The waterfalls between Upper and Lower Nightwind had ceased to exist, at least as we had known them. When we last saw them, they were a raging, seething mass of water tumbling over cliffs and huge boulders. Now they were just a smooth slope of white water as on a vertical waterfall. All the boulders and little cliffs had disappeared, and now the noise was noticeably less. Their power and rush was frightening. A person would be killed instantly if they ever fell in. The creek between all the other lakes proved to be much the same. If this rain is doing this here, what must the Flat and Nahanni be starting to look like?

Ploughing through wet brush and rain began to take its toll of me. My body was warming up each drop that hit it and soon I was getting cold. My legs got numb and stumbly first. When I tripped over a root and fell flat on my face, I put the rainsuit on. Now was the time to have it on. I was able to maintain a comfortable



temp. Despite sucking on candies, we were both getting tired but we passed Lower Nightwind, then Lonely Lake successfully.

We stuck to the game trails wherever possible, which was most of the way. This was easier than ploughing the straight brush despite the fact that the depressed trails were usually now ponds or creeks. Damp boots were soon soaking boots so we just splashed through.

Every once in a while, one would look up and ignoring footing for a few steps, take in the scene. Dismal as conditions were, sometimes it was a magnificent sight. Peak tops floating above clouds. Reflections lightly rippled by drizzle drops. Clouds flowing up and down hillsides. If it hadn't been so much trouble to get a camera out and if we hadn't been so miserable, some fine photos would have resulted. I was also sorry to be leaving this area without one more day of photography, for there are quite a number of educational photos I don't have. However, this weather may last several more days and we just don't have that kind of time.

We did much better coming down through the hotsprings area. Our mistake on the way up was in staying too high on the hill and just catching the top end of the larger springs. Why, when one travels up a valley or hillside is there that tendency to stay higher than necessary or to keep moving up the slope? Coming down we managed to find all the game trails between springs by staying much closer to the creek. It sure was a lot easier but I wouldn't want to suggest we didn't have to clamber over Alpine Fir deadfall. Just less of it, that's all. We saw all the spring sites on the way down but we didn't stop. The second large one from the downstream end, we agree is the prettiest, although none are really beautiful. They are remarkable for the profusion of flowers and their lushness. [In] Two of them, people have tried quite unsuccessfully to create bathing pools by damming with boulders.

Once past the springs, I was faced with an ever mounting trepidation about the river crossing. About ¼ mile before the lake, Hole-in-the Wall Creek comes out onto a delta it has built up, and meanders over it in a very swift fashion to the Lake. When we reached our crossing on the way up, the water was up about 10-12". We selected the most favourable spot and I made two attempts to cross, with the rope tied to me. It was positively frightening and I was never in water over my knees or further than 10 feet from the bank. That plan was out.

Downstream was an island with log jams at the upper end on one side with a couple of snagged trees in the other channel. The log jam slowed the creek down and caused it to widen. We knew we could wade its channel. Perhaps, if the water wasn't too deep we could use the submerged logs to support us while we crossed the second channel. We waded the first channel easily. Then Jake as calmly as though he was on dry land and wearing spikes walked out to mid stream on the

wet, slippery snagged logs, sounding with a pole as he went. It was chest deep. No way. If we were swept away it would be into a V of more snagged trees.

No, we were desperate. Further down, the channel was about 15-18 feet wide with a small eddy on the far shore. I figured that if the rope was tied to me and I took a flying dive, that two or at the most three good stokes would put me in the eddy, providing I started 20-25 feet upstream of the eddy. I tried it. It worked like a charm.

What about the packs? By poor management but very good luck, Dave's little pulley ended up in the backpack. Until this moment I had cursed every ounce it weighed, but now it was blessed as the solution to our problem. I should add the climbing rope received similar curses and benedictions. We tied the climbing rope between two small spruce trees on either bank, then tied my pack to the pulley already threaded on the rope, then tied a long cord to the pack. Jake threw me the end of the cord on a stick, and while he tightened the climbing rope to lift the pack off the ground, I pulled it across. Very neat thank you.

We got Jake's pack rigged, he tightened and I started to pull. Suddenly the rope slackened. Jake with all his power had pulled the larger tree on my side right over – uprooted it – a 4 inch spruce poorly rooted in gravel. The top end of Jake's pack was in the creek. The end with all cameras and lenses. I was having conniptions. "Pull it in Jake, [a squashed mite appears at this point in the diary] pull it in! I yelled. He pulled as only he could, the equal of two or three ordinary men. He thought I meant pull on the rope to tighten it. I meant pull the pack out of the water.. He hadn't noticed the tree was down. Finally, I yelled for him to work his way up the rope and grab the pack. For if he ever let go the rope, down would go the entire pack. The strain of how hard he was pulling was written all over his face and hands, the rope nearly cutting his hand in half. Finally, in what seemed hours, but must only have been a few tens of seconds at most, Jake had the pack and yanked it ashore. "Check the cameras Jake. Check the cameras!"

He opened the pack. "They're dry".

I let out a whoop that should have started 10 rock slides.

Now what strategy? Obviously lighten the pack. Throw over the sleeping bag, food sack and cameras. By this time, I was so upset over possible wet cameras, I was willing to risk smashed cameras in missed catches. Sleeping bag flew over. Food sack flew over and by then a saner frame of mind set in. Take Jake's outer sleeping bag bag, toss it to him and ferry the cameras over in it on the rope. But first to get the rope up again. A small tree was nearby so I tied the rope to it, but left enough extra to make a guy rope down to some bushes so Jake wouldn't pull it over. Everything else came over like a charm. I do believe that our near



disasters of this crossing taught us how to handle any others effectively. Throw over what you can. Then ferry the packs over. Finally I reeled in Jake as he pulled my initial stunt. He was glad of the pull. We were across cold wet and happy.

Camp on the lake was only two minutes away. We scrambled up some fairly dry spruce. While Jake started the fire, I went in search of dry dead spruce. With three in tow, we were set for the night. Soon a solid lasting blaze was going and we spent the next several hours dry[ing] out ourselves and our gear. Miraculously, my sleeping bag was dry. Hooray for Ed's plastic bags. The best we've ever had. Most of the rest of the stuff got wet but was dry by bedtime.

Jake, ever the fisherman, had the line in the water before he or his stuff was all dry. Supper was baked grayling and chili, a fine combination eaten under a slightly breaking sky through which an ominous cloud overstory was barely visible.

I fell to sleep as Jake caught grayling after grayling trying to get another "decent" sized one for a snack. His whoops told of the fun he was having. He also caught one lake trout.

Not a bad ending to a miserable but exciting day.

July 2, Mon

Today dawned sunny after showers last night. Just what we need & want. As soon as we were up, the washing was started. I washed all I had including the sheet. Bathed & shaved myself. Wow, does it feel good tonight! Everything clean, fresh smelling and dry – except my boots. They are still quite damp unfortunately, for they need sno-seal. I guess I go damp tomorrow.

This was a delightful unhurried day. After washing, we lay on the air mattresses in the sun to catch up the diary for yesterday. The air is very hazy from forest fire smoke, probably north of here quite a piece. Nothing could burn here. The haze made for some nice photos.

Jake fished and caught grayling after grayling, releasing most of them. Later this morning he let out a big yell. I went over to see what I thought was a 4 pound lake trout on. Well, after letting the fish wear itself out, I grabbed it. About 7 pounds. Very nice. Jake was going to let it go but we severed an artery getting the hook out of its gills, so we kept it. We couldn't eat it all for supper. In her rather distended belly, she had three good size grayling heads that Jake pitched in the lake on cleaning them. Quite a day for Jake. So, I'll go to bed now, caught up in everything & ready to start our big hike tomorrow.

July 3, Tues

Not much sleep last night. It blew and blew and blew from the east. I was up three times restringing the guy ropes. The last time there was a most ominous solid black layer over the mountains to the east that was coming at us like an express. I quickly cut wood stakes and really pegged everything. Just as I got back in bed a light patter started on the taut nylon. Finally, I fell asleep during which nothing but a few showers transpired.

We got up this morning to cloudy skies with the odd sunny patch, very odd. The wind still whistled from the east, the waves setting up a real rip where the creek sliced into the lake. Its unfamiliar noise was probably one thing keeping me awake last night.

After smelling the air (good, not stormy) seeing how rapidly the clouds flew by, and a few more sunny patches we decided to up and go. Packing was a real chore. We didn't want to throw anything out so we ended up with the hugest and heaviest packs I've ever seen. They must weigh 75 lbs each. Real back breakers.

Off we went; around Hole-in-the-Wall Lake, along its nice beaches, past campsites of old, under the eagle's nest (she flew off), to the big rock, and our first break. Despite the good going, we needed it. The packs were as bad as they felt. I felt a certain winsome loneliness at leaving Hole-in-the-Wall and the other lakes upstream. They are so beautiful. Because of the weather we hadn't sampled as much of it as I would have preferred. Hanging valleys, glaciers we were too early for, the two little tarns or kettles on the shoulder of the peak at the contact zone, at least one major peak to our credit and so on.

Up packs and over the game-trail-less section to the end bay on Hole-in-the-Wall. Here we rested and tanked up. I found a spotted sandpiper's nest with four eggs, under some buckbrush. Here, I should say that the other day we watched the eagle make motions similar to regurgitation. Therefore, it may now have young. And Jake found a Junco's nest at the Hole-in-the-Wall cache, with 5 eggs on June 27. When we returned July 1, she had 5 young but on July 2, one chick was dead just outside the nest.

From the end of Hole-in-the-Wall, we took a perfect game trail up over the shoulder of the moraine and mountain going towards Pass Creek. It was dry, free of brush, an even grade, in total wonderful walking. It continued on over gravel ridges towards the Hole-in-the-Wall Pass Creeks summit. Before the summit, we left it to dip down across the gully and up onto what I presume to be a big interlobate moraine area between glaciers heading down the Pass Creek and Hole-

in-the-Wall Creek valleys respectively. This entire moraine area has a lot of sandy, gravelly soils plus boulder patches. Much of it seems to be perfect wolf den country. No signs though. On this topic we have seen wolf and grizzly bear scats wherever we have been, often very common, but no fresh stuff. Not even any I would ascribe to this season. Some of it is two or three years old. Nor any fresh prints.

The entire moraine is covered in buckbrush but, glory hallelujah, low, well spaced stuff with a nice shallow carpet of lichen. Fine walking but infested with mosquitoes to the point of my carrying a birch switch and considering putting on dope. Across the moraine, our campsite goal was a little lake. When we topped the moraine and could see up the upper Pass Creek valley, the lake proved to have a most unattractive shoreline. Ahead of us though, lay two tundra covered knobs which were extremely attractive. We headed for the first. By now the wind had died down a lot, but clouds and the odd light shower still scudded by. Although hit by a couple of showers, they weren't worth putting on rainsuits for. We did put on the pack covers, the first time I have actually hiked with them. They are good but need a bit of reinforcing at the ties, and perhaps one more tie.

Our mound proved to be a real Shangri-La. Its biggest asset is its 360 degree view in which we look down on much of the surrounding terrain. Both of us reacted spontaneously and most happily to this. It is such a change to be able to look out and down over open spaces after looking up or up higher in a trench for a week. There is a perfect tent spot on tundra beside a small patch of spruce. There is a perfect firewood supply of dead, weather bleached spruce. The only thing missing is water which is 150 yards away at the bottom of the hill.

We got here at 4:30 pm. An early, but fortuitous stop. The supper of beef stew and rice pudding was just cooked when we were forced into the tent. For the past hour the showers had been mounting in frequency and size. They had gone north and south of us. Now, one hit.

With supper out of the way, us warm and dry, we started on the diaries. I didn't last long. It had been a heavy day. I awoke, perhaps an hour later to see Jake dozing off, pencil in hand. A couple of hours after that he awoke to announce he was going for water to make porridge. I was puzzled but said nothing. He was back shortly with water but he was chased into the tent, package of porridge in hand, by another of the now, many showers. When I enquired about his eating porridge on top of a monumental supper, it transpired he thought it was morning. He ate the rest of the rice pudding and we drifted off.

The skies are thickening, the clouds lowering; not at all encouraging for tomorrow.

July 4, Wed

It rained on and off most of the night and continues this morning. The buckbrush is soaked and since it seems much thicker ahead of us we lie abed. I tossed and turned for hours last night. That early sleep, while nice, was probably the cause. I have since caught up though. The sun was out briefly for 15 minutes and the sky seemed to have promise with blue patches, but still it drizzles from the low lying clouds. If a person could be assured of a big roaring fire at our next camp, we could move on and get soaked. We will wait to see how the rest of the day develops.

Bird song abounds about us, just like spring. We are at 4,400 feet which is only 600 feet above Hole-in-the-Wall where bird song was pretty well over. Does 600' make that much difference? Yesterday we saw robins scrapping over territory on the moraine. They have been everywhere; up to 5500 feet.

A list of birds seen so far might be worthwhile. Without a bird book we have been unable to identify some positively. They have question marks after them.

Golden eagle, Bald eagle (N), Loon (heard only), Buffleheads (?), rouge sided duck (?), white sided duck (?), green wing teal (all lakes), Boneparte's Gull (?), Arctic Tern (?), Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper (N) (all lakes), Dipper, Junco (N), White crowned sparrow, Northern Phalaropes, Whiskey Jacks, Robins, Hermit &/or Veery Thrushes singing, Cliff Swallows (?), Raven, Ptarmigan spp. (?), Redpoll, flycatcher (?), + numerous unidentified bird songs. Oh yes, a snipe has been winnowing ever since we got to this knoll.

Just went out during a short sunny break and saw a sparrow hawk, myrtle warbler & tree sparrow (?).

What a slow agonizing day. We have been in the tent, out of the tent, in and out and so on as one heavy shower after another passed through. The diary is caught up, cameras cleaned, mending done etc. Oh, for a spell of good weather. Short of a full blown storm we will try moving on some tomorrow or we will never reach the Flat.

Our campsite has proved its worth today for there are lots of interesting little things close by that one can reach between showers. For the first time in years, I did some serious looking for birds today. Quite entertaining chasing down songs.

Thinking of you Wendy, Michy-moo and Kirsten sitting on a nice sand beach. Hope all is the best with you.

July 5, Thurs

Last evening held considerable promise with more and larger blue patches than in the past two days. A couple of very light showers last night didn't ruin the promise but the sky this morning put it in serious jeopardy. We packed with dispatch and were off. We were aiming for an open ridge at the base of a nice open tundra shale peak we want to hike. Some two miles later, after your average thrash through buckbrush on damp bottomland, we now sit in the tent on our designated site. The last faint whiff of promise evaporated as we pitched tent and readied for our hike. The wind continues steady from the south, as for the past two days, and rain boxes the compass – just a steady cold drizzle. We begin the waiting game at 9:30 am.

We saw one interesting thing this morning. We topped a small 20 foot high tongue of moraine sticking out into the bottomland of the valley we were hiking across. Five separate pieces of moose and caribou antler greeted us as well as two leg bones, all bleached white. A few old wolf scats were about. Up the ridge, a small spruce was rubbed to a bare pole where animals had been rubbing off velvet and polishing antlers. Further searching revealed an unusual number of vertebrae, probably all moose, scattered about. Then Jake took a walk to the bottom of the ridge where there were a few spruce trees. Finally, we had found a wolf den site but not a current one. It had been last used one or two years ago and from the number of holes about, it could have been used for as many as six years. More searching revealed yet more bones and antlers, perhaps as many as parts of 8-12 animals, most of them calf or yearling moose. What I don't understand is all the antlers. The wouldn't drag them home from very far, so many of the kills must have been made on animals browsing the willow brush very near the hill.

A break in the rain started us up the shale ridge above the medial moraine on which our camp sits. We huffed and puffed our way up, me with the pack. However bad that may sound, our stops get shorter and the interval between them longer with each passing day. About ¼ mile out, the drizzle resumed but we kept going, more out of disgust and defiance than anything else. We reached the first and lowest peak at 5100 feet (camp is at 4500) in a good wind with driving rain. There was no shelter anywhere so back down again. I was good and wet from rain, sweat and wet brush by the time we reached the tent. Of course, now that we were back at shelter the rain ceased. But that was only a ruse. We could see lots more just over the hills to the SW, just waiting to pounce on us. So, after standing in the wind to dry off a bit, we got into the tent for an hour's snooze, just to let it plan its next ploy.

An hour, or whatever, later I awoke to rather nice skies, relatively speaking of course. That's a euphemism for gray, dull, lots of rain potential, but no rain at the moment and somewhere one sunny spot as the come-on, the shill. I kicked Jake out and up we went for another try.

In fact, the trip up to 5600 feet was even half decent. We photographed heather and a wooly lousewort on the way under the semi-sunny skies of a broken patch. At the top, a sunny patch or two let us take some fair photos. At this altitude we could see the Nahanni valley clearly, Mt. Sidney Dobson (or is it Ida?), John Brucker's isolated sheep range (???) of the Sunblood Formation which parallels the Nahanni from Rabbitkettle, up past Brintnell Creek nearly to the Broken skull, and the huge valley in behind it. We could see the lake we want to camp at in the pass. Camping doesn't look good, but we'll camp there tomorrow anyway for the superb hiking potential in the hills above it.

We were really enjoying soaking up a view for the first time since the beginning of the trip. This despite a good strong cool wind. Suddenly, over the hill it came, a good rainstorm. Down we scurried for we didn't need a soaking and we had seen most of what we wanted, even if we didn't get to our hoped for altitude of 6500 – 7000 [feet]. It rankled getting chased from a view we were content to just sit and savor, but what we'd had was better than nothing by a very long shot. When we were most of the way down, only 15-20 minutes later, I suddenly became aware of a dramatic change. We hadn't been soaked by the storm and the clouds instead of streaming out of the SW were now charging from the west. Two minutes later we were in a big patch of sunny blue. It was one of the most dramatic weather shifts I have ever seen. The rain was literally turned back to the Yukon.

Our spirits soared, and we just plunked ourselves down right there and reveled in the sun, soaked it up, marveled at it – what a turnaround after three days. I suppose we sat there for an hour or more, our humour improving by the minute. Once again, we see that weather is unquestionably the most pervasive and dramatic influence on our lives away from civilization. From gloom to happiness by the sun, in five minutes. It is hard to imagine the extent of the change unless you have experienced it. Let's hope it stays for a few days.

When we got back to camp, we continued our reverie on the hillside as we rustled up enough wood for a fire. Probably our last for a few days. We dawdled as we gently and correctly cooked up a beef and rice stew. Pineapple tid-bits for desert. Yum-m-m-m. As the sun now sets casting its last yellow blaze through a hole in the clouds onto the hills behind the tent, we now go to sleep at 10 pm.

#### July 6 Friday

I believe it is 13 years ago today that Wendy and I flew with Chuck Hamilton of B.C. – Yukon Air Service into Brintnell Lake. What a gorgeous day that was. Today is once again clouded in solid here. How frustrating after last evening's hopeful signs.



We arose, cooked porridge on what is probably our last wood fire for a little while, then packed. Jake packs in about half the time it takes me, partly because he is quicker but partly because I have most of the bits and pieces of camp gear to wash, dry, pack, etc. He is carrying the food and rarely unpacks it, just taking off the top as needed.

As we noted, from the hilltop yesterday, we had a hard time finding a decent route up to "Hourglass Lake" in the pass. There is a lot of wet ground and with it a lot of willow buckbrush, which is much worse than birch. Basically, we cut from the east side of the valley to the west, crossing Pass Creek at the little gravel splits. We stayed up off the valley floor as much as possible, but still hit all kinds of wet spots. Our boots were pretty damp by the time we reached camp. It was a fine thrash through the brush, the kind one wants to do only once and preferable not that often.

"Hourglass Lake" or perhaps I should call it Sands of Time Lake, is pinched into two parts in the ratio of about 1/3 – 2/3. Not a good hourglass shape but it is there. There is a fair bit of feldspathic sand on the lake bottom and in a few places along the lake shore. The feldspar megacrysts in the granodiorite seem to be its most weather resistant constituent. The feldspar megacrysts stand out as bumps and knobs on loose boulders and it forms a very coarse sand to a fine gravel when weathered out of the rock. Hence Sands of Time as another name, also incorporating the hourglass idea. At the lake's narrows, it is probably too shallow to taxi an aircraft through. This probably precludes its use as a landing site to the good hiking around it. Certainly, it limits it to no-load takeoffs.

It is not a pretty lake and only has one possible campsite on it, on the east shore of the large section. The rest of the shoreline is very steep, very bouldery or wet. We are camped opposite the campsite in a little draw on a tiny patch of soil in a boulder pile because this is more accessible to the hiking we want to do west of the lake.

After setting up camp today, we were a bit weary, so we settled on a stroll around the lake. It was of interest for a few things. We came across 3 complete sets of caribou antlers still on skulls, indicating wolf kills, also three, likely four more kills as indicated by bits and pieces of bone. The most recent ones were at least one year old. We did see some fairly new wolf and caribou tracks in the sand along the shore at one spot. So far, we have seen no game this trip, which seems odd. Mind you, we have made no secret about our presence, yet I would have expected something because we have been travelling up wind much of the time.

We also discovered that the outlet to the lake is to the south as on the 1:250,000 maps, not to the north as on the 1:50,000. There is probably some seepage through the north outlet, especially if the water level ever gets a foot higher. Since it took us half an hour on the ground to determine all this, it is hardly surprising

that it gave the map-makers trouble. It could easily be a lake which drains both ways.

We also saw a new colour of Pedicularis, (lousewort), making three probable species so far. A magenta one on the tundra, a yellow one in lower, very wet areas and now a two-tone magenta one in wet areas.

The rain came over the hill just as we were returning to camp. Amazingly it was the first of the day. We just had time to get things under cover and ourselves in bed for a snooze before it hit in earnest.

We have decided to wait here no more than two days for weather. We want to hike, but not enough to stay cooped up more than that. Then we head straight for the canoe.

I believe now that it will be yet another poor summer for weather. While it is difficult to always tell, the weather seems to have been better over the Nahanni than where we are, here along the Flat. If so, it suggest[s] that the frontal zone is already established and we will be getting many a Pacific storm.

July 7, Sat

Quite exhausted. Very content. More about it tomorrow. I can't stay awake.

I awoke about 4 am, just in time to see the first sun tint a few fluffy clouds pink against a blue sky. Hooray! One and a half hours later I was awakened by drizzle on the tent. How hopes can be raised and dashed. The clouds were not terribly dark when we got up at 7, so we decided that we were going for our hike on the tundra west of camp, rain or not.

We were gone at 8 and along the creek coming out of the cirque we hoped to circumnavigate, there was a regular flower garden and, of all things, sun if one was willing to wait for it to poke through. I guess we spent an hour taking flower photos.

Then the work began. We had picked the south side to go up because it was further from camp, it was the freest of brush and the most gradual. A wise decision. We puffed and grunted our way up, but who wouldn't on 1500 vertical feet. I am starting to get in fair shape. The condition gap between Jake and me is definitely a lot narrower now.



The drizzle set in about half way up and continued to the top. No way short of a blizzard were we turning back. In fact, the drizzle was almost welcome for it kept us a bit cooler. Our route up took us along the edge of the cirque wall. The view of rain shrouded peaks to the east got better and better as did periodic glimpses into the cirque through great chimneys in the granite. Took a few photos despite the grayness. As a joke I threw in seven films for the day. I doubted we would use two. But there were still small sunny patches about, so there was hope.

We topped the ridge onto verdant south facing tundra and a whistler paradise. Great big fat whistlers seemed everywhere. Much of the vegetation was close-cropped accounting for what seems to me to be an early date for being fat. In actuality, there were probably only 3-5 whistlers in this area of a few acres. The sun came out and while they basked, we basked watching them.

We came to a lovely sun-baked slope with a rivulet emerging from a snow bank soon after. What a spot for lunch. Heavy showers were to the east and south of us, but we just couldn't pry ourselves away from basking in the sun and soaking up the views. South of us, in progression, lay a huge expanse of rolling tundra, culminating in a sharp peak overlooking the Flat valley, beyond which lay the snow streaked peaks of the granite boundary range. To the east, the creek we will go out dropped into an awesome hole, 500 feet to the mile in places. Beyond it lay two grand glaciated valleys, with their outside curves scoured near vertical. Dome Peak stood out, its north face chopped vertical like so many other peaks over that way.

A cloud finally sent us on our way. We had the cirque we were circling to the north and an even more spectacular one to the south. I kept criss-crossing the ridge we were on for photos of each. By now we were getting the odd quite fair sun patch. Still more cloud than sun though.

While heading west and while I was rushing to catch sun on a tarn, Jake scared up the first of five families of ptarmigan for the day, right against a snow bank. I returned to find Jake chasing chicks over rock piles and snowbanks as he photographed them. Whenever we would hit upon a family, the chicks would initially freeze while the hen ran off, pulling a semblance of the broken wing act all the while clucking madly. Then, if you approached the cluster of chicks, they exploded at a peeping run in all directions like a fireworks bomb against the night sky. It is really effective, for you can never keep track of more than about two, sometimes only one. The chicks ranged in size from that of a small egg (a day or two old?) to nearly twice that of a sparrow. The medium to larger ones could all fly short distances. All could run and cover ground at truly astonishing speeds.

I pulled ahead of Jake again in a race for sun in the most southerly cirque. As I came to the edge of the headwall, it dropped off into another lush, southerly alpine meadow with whistlers. What a sight. Alpine flowers including buttercups, avens,

moss campion, shiny bearberry leaves, white heather and others. Whistlers. Blue birds, Cliff (?) swallows. On three sides, spectacular granite cliffs. A grass covered cirque floor below. A rugged peak to the right. A ridge of granite stitched with symmetrical stone chutes ahead. And over top of it, a sea of white peaks along the boundary. Jake came onto me, dreaming and drinking all this in.

He had no sooner settled down when a rather mangy cow caribou came up the hill and downwind of us. I slowly waved my arms, while giving Jake instructions on setting up the camera. On it came, 100 yards, 50, 35, 25 until finally it must have been 10-15 yards away and still it hadn't our scent. It was so close I took acceptable photos with the normal lens. Finally, we stopped shooting and just watched. Suddenly it scented us and bounded off a short distance. Still curious, it slowly retreated in stages over the hill. Jake's first caribou and my closest, a fine experience for both of us.

With the day nearly 2/3 gone we still hadn't reached the back of the cirque. We now had sun nearly all the time but still plenty of clouds to provide fascinating skies. As we proceeded west we were getting constantly more impressive views of the rugged peaks across the Pass Creek valley and towards Hole-in-the-Wall Lake. You could saunter 100 yards over this gently undulating terrain and as long as you were near the drop off, you could look at the same feature as you had 100 yards back and see it as an entirely different scene. This was hard on film. Now seven rolls looked too few.

By the time we reached the back of the cirque, both of us were getting a bit weary. Just then, Jake sighted our second caribou, a slightly prettier one. It had wind of us, so despite arm waving and some curiosity on its part it never came close enough for photos. We last saw it on a rise about half a mile away as we munched gorp and dried meat to renew our energy.

By now, it was probably about 6 pm and the sun was getting low enough in the sky to cast fascinating shadows behind the huge blocks of granite scattered about the tundra. Stonehenge, Jake called it. And it was, in a way. But no Druid in his wildest drunken dream could have imagined anything on a scale as awesome as this, in a scene as wild and pristine as this. The satisfaction one gets in knowing that you are alone in hundreds of square miles, absorbing scenes like this, on days like this is extremely rare. Few in this world are ever blessed to know it.

Now that we had turned the bend and were headed home (east), we felt nearly euphoric. Suddenly we realized that we weren't headed home. We were out on a promontory between two arms of the cirque. Even this realization only elicited a comment like, 'the scenery was worth it. We should have come out here anyway.' As we turned west again, we suddenly realized how a couple of clouds had sprouted very respectable rainstorms up the Flat and over the Ragged Range. That only made us feel better, not because we wanted a wetting, we didn't, but

because the sun coming through them was spectacular. By now, I think we both believed that the day was ours anyway and the storms wouldn't hit us. They didn't, except the very edge of one spattered a few drops on us, just enough to make a rainbow in the cirque beside us.

As we proceeded east, we came upon a stretch of the most gorgeous light green lichen tundra set against the red metamorphosed shale hills along the contact zone across the head of the Pass Creek valley. Even if it took two very tired lads a mile out of their way, they were still going to see it. How fortunate. In itself, it was sufficient reward, but in going there we got whole new vistas down the Hole-in-the-Wall Creek valley, up the Nahanni, Mt. Sidney Dobson and the ranges north of Brintnell Lake and so on. By now the hills had turned light blue, cloaked in dark shadows facing us. Magnificent! One of the shale mountains showed mass wasting in the form of huge slumps arcing down its slopes. I had never expected to get photos of that.

Finally, we skirted the edge of the cliff for half a mile or more until we found the way down to our tent, a brown speck 2000 feet below. One last look over the plateau, across the tips of the Ragged Range partially clothed in sunlit storms, and we dropped over the edge into near darkness.

Three quarters of an hour later, we stood at the tent very, very wobbly kneed. The last mile down over steep, boulder strewn slopes and through buckbrush had finished us. I went straight to bed. Jake stayed up for a chili supper topped by rice pudding. I managed to wake for a bowl of the latter.

I dozed off, knowing full well that our plans for further hiking on the tundra in this area were doomed. We had seen nearly all the accessible areas from our viewpoints today. None could match the beauty of the areas we had walked today. Nor would we have weather like today's again. Anything else would be anticlimactic.

#### July 8, Sunday

Neither of us stirred until 6:30, something most unusual of late. Then it was to a cloudless sky. Jake put the boots out to dry, which stirred us both enough that we finally rose about 7:30. Straight to the lake for a light washing and a bath. It was a bit worse than usual for despite full sun it was still cool. In fact, it froze last night. I had scoffed at Jake over at Hole-in-the-Wall when he said it froze. He vowed that if it did so again, he would put ice from the pot on my head. He did just that.

After both, it was time for flower photos, camp clean up and this. Now we pack and start the trip down to Loon Lake. It is about 1 pm.

Two very, very tired lads reached the Flat just after sundown. We have crossed over half of a 1:50,000 map-sheet today. Not bad for a 40 year old pot belly. We couldn't have done it without a bit of luck though.

We stuck to our plan of coming down the north and east sides of the creek. Almost as soon as we left the lake, we picked up a game trail that was like a highway. The only thing that was disconcerting was how high above the creek it stayed. We started fairly close to the creek, but as the creek worked downhill we descended at a much slower rate. Finally, as we reached the forks where the tributary from the west, which we were on, joins the one from the east out of the spectacularly glaciated valley, we'd had enough.

Down through the bush we descended. We went through some magnificent white spruce on that steep south facing slope. Quite a number were 24" dbh, I would guess, and 60-80 feet high. Some were [?] or had fallen down. Goodness knows how old they were, but my bet is 200 years plus. Amongst them we met our first lupins and wild roses. Lovely!

Oh yes, we saw a few tiny trembling aspen higher on the same slope at about 4500 feet.

Suddenly, we broke onto the flat and there lay our creek. Not the torrent we had spotted from the hill yesterday, but a rather meek thing tumbling over small rocks and gravel bars. The granite is so light that at 5 miles or more we'd confused it with water. Not 150 feet from where we met it, two dead spruce lay side by side across the river. My immediate reaction was somebody has crossed before us. But no. On reaching them, a turned tree had blown across. How lucky can you get?

The mosquitoes, absolutely fierce ever since we'd entered the heavy buckbrush, drove us on. We crossed a bar only to discover another channel. But this one was easier yet. We waltzed across on stepping stones, barely getting our soles damp.

Before long, we picked up another highway of a game trail running fairly close to the creek. On we chugged, losing the trail near the first big creek from the east. Either that happened or the trail faded badly with every ravine we had to cross today. Soon we picked it up again, but now as the creek dropped, the trail stayed nearly level. We soon found why.

The creek bowed away from our straight line, then started its serious drop to the Flat. It was in a very steep walled valley, a gorge in places, while we were on relatively better going. Always trust the game!

We passed many a gorgeous but unphotographable lupin garden amongst the mature spruce. A nice stand of cotton grass was met on a tiny bar where a rivulet entered fairly high up. There was fairly fresh bear scat about containing both hair and cranberries as well as one grizzly track on a patch of sand. For the rest of the day, I would whoop whenever the going got dense or we came to a ravine. Whether it helped or not is quite unknown, but we didn't see any game.

We didn't stop for a blow very often because of the mosquitoes. We were getting very tired but by the time this happened, it was too steep to find a camping spot. On we plugged after filling up with gorp, dried meat and strong lemonade.

The game trail held over quite rough terrain until our creek valley started to widen at its entrance to the Flat. Angle downhill we thought and hit another trail the way we had all day. This time, no go. If anything, we should have angled up, for while we were entering the Flat valley, our creek was still raging in a gorge. Up we struggled through black spruce and sphagnum, interspersed with patches of young growth originating from a burn of about 25 years ago. We must have struggled on for 1 ½ miles of this and about 1 ½ hours. The sun had set behind the peak to the west. The clouds which had built up during the day were not evaporating. Finally we were far enough out into the Flat valley to get the last half hour of setting sun.

Still we plodded, stumbled and staggered on down and up ravines with slate bottoms, with muddy bottoms but all steep, through burn with bush so thick we could hardly push through, across springy swamp until we were too tired to care or be discouraged. We passed some truly lovely little waterfalls, patches of pyrola in flower, calypso orchids, roses but they were only casually noticed if at all. The forest seemed utterly devoid of life except for us, mosquitoes and three spruce hens.

Finally, I'd had enough of this. I thought we could risk heading for the valley bottom and not catch a gorge. Even if we did catch one, we would find a way down it. We descended 400-500 feet of extremely steep forested hill. The roar of the creek was getting no louder. Perhaps, just perhaps, we were OK. Suddenly there was flat land below us. We staggered onto it with a sense of relief. It didn't take long to find a game trail which promptly led us back to the hill we'd just descended. To hell with that. Off into the bush toward the Flat where we soon got another one leading through lichen floored black spruce. As soon as we hit a pool of water (filled with mosquito wrigglers), Jake very wisely suggested we camp rather than go for the Flat. We are on a good game trail ready to start down the valley in the morning.

July 9, Mon

Another sunny day. And HOT! Just what we needed up in the hills and didn't get. Now we could use a cool cloudy day for the hike down the Flat. I worked up some sweat yesterday but it will be nothing compared to today's

Sleep last night was sound but I still awoke several times due to leg pains. All that was needed was for me to shift position. This morning, I am fully recovered. Jake's feet were bothering him yesterday, but they are somewhat better, still not perfect this morning.

Last night, a chopper (Bell 206) went down the valley, then later back up it. Too bad we weren't sitting down on a bar. Five minutes in, it would have had us at Loon Lake.

Time to up now and be off for the day.

Two things about yesterday before I finish today. It was fascinating to descend through 2200 vertical feet and see not only the changes in life zones (tundra, buckbrush, krummholz, forest) but to see the changes in plants of a given species. We first met wild roses at about 4300 feet. They were just in bud. By 4000 they were in full fresh bloom and by 3700 they were past their best. Lupin were gorgeous at 4300 down to 3500 [feet], but below that were often mostly in seed.

The second thing is that shales (almost slate because it is nearly on the contact with the granite) occurs in all creek beds as bedrock, which we crossed along the Flat valley at elevations ranging from 2900 to 2500 feet.

This diary is being written a bare mile from last night's camp.

It was incredibly hot hiking, just as anticipated. From the camp we wandered past some sedge marshes, their usual vivid green. Then, into the bush and up the valley side a bit where we finally saw the Flat. By this time, both of us were in a lather. I was utterly soaked. We admired its utterly placid, nearly silent, irresistible movement down the valley. Onwards it plowed its gray-green path. Simultaneously, we looked at each other – raft? A bar was visible on the bend ahead. Large white spruce (24" dbh and 80+ feet in some cases) stood by the river. That settled the issue.

We spent the rest of the day variously sawing and chopping dry, dead spruce into 25 foot logs. The first two came from a tree snagged in a driftpile in the water. That was the easiest. The next came from a large broken butt on the river bank,



nearly 18 inches on the butt end. The last two had to be cut from trees 50-70 [feet] back from the bank, then wrestled in short jumps over the bank.

Once in the water, we tied our rope on them and variously pushed, prodded, and pulled them through or around a variety of snags [sp?] in the water or on the bank. It was work, but not as hot as hiking. Once we had all five logs (actually 6 but the last proved rotten) in our boat yard on the bar, we proceeded to saw notches into the top sides to take two good 4 inch spruce cross pieces. We also notched each log all the way round so the rope sits in, protected from stray rocks, snags etc. We probably started this escapade about 2 pm and we just finished at sundown (9:30 roughly).

At a fairly early stage, Jake walked out on a log in a driftpile with dead slippery bark. Before he knew what happened, he was up to his waist in black silt and water. Of course he was wet from then on. Once we started working on the logs on the bar, I had to get in the water also. It was cold work, very hard on the feet. Raft building is not easy. We left roping it together for tomorrow.

Just as we were cooking supper, a most peculiar yapping howl broke out on the hill north of camp. Wolves, was my first thought, but it didn't sound right. Then we heard it again. This time it sounded like voices yelling from the mountains north of us, to attract our attention. Finally, the issue was settled with a deep base howl from down river a piece. Soon the entire pack and ourselves were at it. The valley rang and echoed with their howls.

It sounded as though a pup had gotten separated from the rest and started to wail behind camp. At least one, possibly two more pups and one adult were down a bit. Further down river yet, with the bass howl were two more adults. Over a half hour, during which they intermittently howled for each other and answered our howls, they got together and faded downriver, probably put out at our howls, smell and campfire smoke. It was a lovely experience, with both the closeness of the howls and the way they rang and reverberated from valley wall to valley wall.

To top the evening off, we went to bed as a perfect full moon rose through the trees directly down the valley. The bugs had even eased off. A gorgeous evening.

Tomorrow, we lash together the Too-Naga (the Indian name for the Flat River, meaning white water) and hopefully make Loon Lake.

One P.S. The Dryas drummondi, the yellow avens of the bars, is almost through blooming here. A pity for I had hoped to catch the bars yellow. However, that may never be the case for they all don't seem to flower at once and the flowers are quite small.

July 10, Tues

We felt a bit more rested this morning but are still recuperating from the long hike as we didn't rise until about 8 am and then it took us a while to get going. It is another gorgeous day, but very hot. Even by 8 am the clouds are building.

I wandered about our bar after breakfast, photographing its flowers – the yellow dryas, grass of parnassus, two yellow unidentified composites, a pink pea and goodness knows what else. Not a large variety but nice splashes of colour in spots.

Finally, we could avoid the issue no longer. We had all the gear packed. The sleeping bags were especially wrapped and tied. Cameras, film, first aid kit and diaries rested inside the three separate plastic bags, just waiting to be tied at the last minute. Our logs lay on the bar at the ready.

The merits of notching the logs all the way round to receive the rope with a good notch on top for the crossbar were quickly obvious. The one end of the raft went together like as cleanly as a puzzle. We were extremely careful to get the rope as tight as possible. Just as soon as we had two logs lashed, the raft started becoming cohesive and solid. By the time one end was done, we were gaining confidence in Too-Naga. The other end was a bit more work in that the notches for the crossbar required a bit of adjusting with the axe to align them. Our ruler, the rope with a knot in it, was rather stretchy, hence the inaccuracy.

As soon as it was tied off, we christened it Too-Naga, with a great splash of Too-Naga water, and jumped on board. It didn't even settle perceptibly. We were rather pleased with ourselves, neither of us having built rafts before.

We took a few last minute photos, then sealed the camera bag and finished closing the packs. We tied the inflated air mattresses to them in case we went swimming.

I should mention that earlier in the morning, I wandered back of camp looking for trees for poles. I had spotted a nice stand of tall narrow spruce about ¼ mile back on the way in from the game trail. As it turned out, I had to go all the way there to get something suitable. They were lovely poles, the best looking ones turning out to be tamarack. I cut three dead, dry ones and two green ones, each 20-25 feet long. Why that long, I am not quite sure, except the river looked deep in spots.

Well, we loaded everything on and poled off for a free ride. The wisdom of long poles was evident in the first 100 yards. In the main channel on the first bend, we couldn't touch bottom with a 25 foot pole! I hadn't expected it to be that deep. It didn't take us the 100 yards to discover several more things. First, the raft, once



moving, has immense momentum. It probably weighs 1200 – 1500 pounds. Secondly, this momentum, coupled with the shape of the raft, makes it nearly impossible to maneuver except in the very crudest sense. In other words, the river takes you more or less where it pleases. Third, sweepers which stick out from the bank or a cross current present a very serious problem to the rafter. The raft is low enough to go under most [sweepers]. You and your gear are not. So, if you don't avoid them, you and your gear are cleaned off the raft just as surely and cleanly as someone brushing the toast crumbs off the breakfast table.

All this we learned in the first 100 yards as with herculean, uncoordinated effort, often working against each other, we just avoided a mid-stream sweeper.

Free ride? This was work!

After that, things soon settled down and we had time to experiment and learn. First thing is, pole in unison. Second, don't put the pole in on the downstream side of the raft. You lose the pole, although it is easily picked up as it comes up on the other side of the raft. Third, keep the raft aligned with the current. Fourth, don't try and pole it sideways. It is totally futile. jThe current prevents it. Fifth, watch about a quarter mile ahead and start maneuvers then to avoid anything. Sixth, paddling with the poles is often the most effective way of changing direction. Seventh, on sharp bends with heavy current, give up any hope of controlling where the raft will go. Just keep the poles handy to push on the bank or drift piles to stay out of harm's way.

Once those lessons are learned, you can sit back and watch the scenery go by. It is a very relaxing, effortless way to travel so long as you have the patience. The Flat probably didn't take us at more than 1.7 miles per hour, which, when translated into straight line travel probably equals 1.2 miles per hour. The view is constantly changing as you drift around meander after meander. Up the valley, down the valley, across to the SW side, then the NE side. Finally, you aren't sure which mountain is which. More than once, I would [have] liked to have had the cameras out, but we had no idea when we might hit a bad spot of water.

While flying in, I couldn't remember seeing any rapids between Loon Lake and our creek. However, I wasn't positive. So, the trip was never totally relaxing, despite drifting in nearly ideal conditions, for the ears were always straining for the sound of fast water, something we knew we couldn't handle. Two creeks, spilling into the Flat Valley got us excited by their noise, until we ascertained what the noise was from.

As evening approached, we heard fast water about 2.5 miles above Loon Lake, and just above a fair sized creek from the north. We steered for the right bank, for if we were to abandon ship, it had to be on the Loon Lake side of the river. We swept

about a bend in quickening water and stopped the raft in a drift pile at the head of standing waves. I went ashore and downstream to appraise the situation. It wasn't bad on our side, provided we stayed out of drift pile sweepers, but there was another bend just ahead of it with more quickening water. What was around it? We decided to raft down and see. We barely made it past the sweepers on the drift pile, but then it was clear sailing through the waves. Once downstream, the next set of waves was boulder free. On we went for another curve and so on for about 0.7 miles, whereupon the water slowed again.

Our next concern was about a mile ahead, where on map 95 E/6, the river is shown narrowing to a single line. Our fears proved groundless. It was a mapping error, not even a case of widening channel over the years.

Soon we were onto map-sheet 95 E/7 and Loon Lake was a mile away. We pulled tight to the right bank, ready to land at the bottom of a straight stretch on a right angle bend. We opted to land on the bend, but when we got there it was plugged tight with trees over the bank. It didn't look too bad 100 yards or less ahead, but the water was picking up speed fast. So much so that we missed that landing. I tried snagging an overhanging spruce with rope and before I knew what happened, I was in the Flat floundering behind the raft. We both realized we were in trouble now, Jake still unaware of where I was as he tried poling the raft in.

He turned around and saw me, dropped his pole before I had time to shout I was OK, then grabbed for a tree and was in the drink also. By this time, I was back on the raft and tried unsuccessfully to grab another tree as the roar of water grew louder. A few more trees flashed by, threatening to knock everything off. I grabbed one, only to be yanked off again, in as clean a jerk as you ever saw. Then Jake was knocked off again. Both of us were floundering for bottom. Since we were on the deep, outside of the curve, we often didn't find it. Suddenly as things were looking very desperate. Jake found bottom and somehow slowed the raft. What kind of strength that took I don't know. Then I got a foothold also. Suddenly, I spotted a bar ahead. "Run it up on that bar", I yelled. Even though it meant drifting another 50 yards, we did so.

At last we were aground. Two very wet, very upset lads. Jake was just shaking. As we discovered later, both of us had a few bruises and abrasions from colliding with trees, boulders and goodness knows what. Our wild ride had covered 200-300 yards, had taken maybe 3-4 minutes, but it had seemed like hours. We were very glad and thankful to be ashore with all our gear dry. Next time we will be more prudent in trying to save a few steps.

We headed south for Loon Lake and very quickly the moraine forming the west shore hove into view through the trees. We waded straight through a swamp being totally soaked anyway. After thrashing through all the deadfall at the north

end of the Lake where Turners had had the Indians slash down all the trees to get more takeoff length, we reached the camp.

The canoe was overturned, the two yellow barrels rolled about and a 1L and 4L can of naphtha gas was chewed by a bear. Inspection revealed no damage to anything but the gas. In a very real sense it was welcome, for the barrels have withstood at least one test successfully, although all indications are it wasn't a very severe test.

Next it was to the cache. Up Jake went since he wanted to see a cache. The first pack came down successfully, the rope only burning Jake's already sore and blistered hands a bit. The second he couldn't hold, and it dropped with a thump, Hasselblad and all. The rest of the gear, paddles, ropes, life jackets etc. were all OK.

Then we started opening things, even still in wet clothes. We were just like kids at Christmas. We jabbered over each item as it came out. How nice it will be to sleep on foamies again. Look at that nice pair of wool socks. How great to sleep in the blue Gerry tent with all its room. Hey, where is the Gerry tent? Frantic scrambling. No tent. "Wasn't it up on the cache?"

No.

I thought I put it there. Don't tell [me] somebody landed and stole it. By now, there were two rapidly sinking hearts. More than anything else I think we had looked forward to getting out of the very cramped hiking tent. What a day of ups and downs. Up while drifting, down and scared in the water, up again at finding everything intact and the anticipation of unpacking, now a new lower low. I slowly started up the hill to check the cache just in case Jake had missed it. How can you miss a blue 12' X 18" bundle of a flat floor of poles? I'd just put up the ladder and started up when Jake yelled "I found it".

What a relief! We both had thought two camera boxes were in the bottom of the pack. On removing them, Jake found the tent beneath. Spirits soared as the yo-yo climbed its string.

In a flash it went up, foamies came out. We grabbed for bird and plant books. Real reading matter for a change. Soon there was a mess scattered all about. Then and only then did we change. With it well after sunset, the only sense we showed in our gleeful plundering and scattering of goodies from the cache, was our refraining from opening a food barrel 'til' morning.

I was very glad to sink into the finest bed in three weeks, knowing full well we were in the land of plenty and that I had two pair of wool socks once again. Yes, I lost one pair. They weren't quite dry when we left Sands of Time Lake, so I stuffed them in the top of the pack. Somewhere, somehow in the hike down the creek, they fell out. I am more determined than ever to make or buy a pack like Jake's.

July 11, Wed

The bath of yesterday must have taken a lot more out of us than we thought. I don't think either of us was up before 9 despite it being another gorgeous hot day. Even on getting up both of us were totally lacking initiative. Jake made it up first, did a washing and got into the food barrel. I followed.

I forgot to mention yesterday that my first and immediate reaction on taking a drink of Loon Lake water was not its clarity or taste, but its warmth. This morning, I waded in and dawdled for two hours in it, washing everything in sight, then me. What fun enjoying the bath itself as well as its after effects.

We just lazed about today. Gradually things got sorted through, the things we don't need going into the number one barrel; ropes, kneeling pads etc. on the canoe; other things in the packs. By the time that was done, it was time for a lunch of Stoned Wheat Thins with peanut butter, buckwheat honey, raspberry jam, summer sausage and cheese. What luxury.

Then a swim, followed by a paddle completely around the lake. The shoreline consists of a narrow, shallow shelf of boulders and mud before a steep drop off. The shelf is usually lined with sedges and horsetails. It is neither a pretty nor ugly little lake. Its reflections are its biggest asset and they can be something.

Last night we dozed off to the sound of rapids east of Loon Lake. We talked of trying to portage SE out of Loon to the Flat to avoid them. But first we had to go and dismantle the raft. On the way out, we found the trail that Turners had to the Flat, more or less following the creek from Loon Lake, crossing it at its upper and lower end. The Indians had cut a fine trail to the river where Turner apparently kept a canoe which they used to go upriver to another outpost camp about 7 miles upstream which we passed yesterday. After retrieving our rope and leaving the raft in an eddy, we hiked the trail back. It is too good not to use. A walk downstream showed that as far as we could see, the rapids were quite tame.

Time for another swim.

Then I went ahead and started cleaning the fallen and sloping trees that have accumulated since Turner was last here. It was a bigger job than I thought.

Meanwhile, Jake put the bottom bar on his pack frame, tied on a barrel and brought it out to the Flat.

Time for another swim.

Then supper and a bit more organizing and dawdling before bed. Terrific thunderheads built up in today's heat. There were booms and grumblings this afternoon in the Granite Range behind camp. This evening was the best though. An incredibly massive set of heads built over the mountains at the headwaters of Bennett Creek. Lightning flashed from it that you could see clearly in daylight. The booms took minutes to reach us. During the evening, its clouds turned pink in spots and drifted slowly across to the Ragged Range. What reflections! What mass! What power!

It looks as though we get rain tomorrow for the clouds are gathering all about, now that it is dark. We have the camp all battened down and are awaiting its onslaught.

July 12, Thurs

What onslaught? Another hot sunny day that will produce big thunderheads again. After a restless night's sleep, I was awakened by an aircraft. A small twin engine job going over high. While writing diary, more noise. This time Okanagan's chopper from Simpson flying up river. And not 15 minutes later, the blue and white one came downriver, probably from Tungsten. I believe it is the one we saw in Simpson that someone said was being used in prospecting. Certainly, it flew around down by Borden Creek and back into the hills.

An hour and half later it came back up river, landing on a bar below Loon Lake, then flying low up the river to a bar just about at the Loon Lake Creek mouth, where it landed again. Then it took off up river. I hope our raft logs aren't the cause of concern.

Now it is time to pack, then three trips across the portage and finally the canoeing down to Seaplane.

Well, we are not camped at Seaplane tonight. Don't ask me how I got it into my head that the trip from Loon to Seaplane was a nice drift down the Flat. It isn't.

The portage of four trips from Loon L. to the Flat was hot, unexciting work, but not hard as portages go. Despite my having cleared it yesterday, last night a tamarack blew down across it. It must have done it to be perverse for there wasn't wind

enough to bring about such an event. Just before our last trip out, we stopped for our last swim in Loon L. How pleasant and refreshing. How we are going to miss them.

We decided to portage the gear up from the mouth of Loon Creek to near where Turner had their boat landing and where we left the raft. Two logs of the raft, with crossbars still in place, are stranded here out in the river. We saw one more about a mile downstream. I hope we didn't cause the helicopter people too much concern for the logs seem to account for their behaviour this morning. I doubt it did or they would have come over to check with us.

The first loading of the canoe was nearly correct except for the position of Jake's and my pack which we had to reverse so that the spray cover would go on. We probably didn't set out until about 5 or 6 pm, although it could have been as early as 4. We hadn't hurried ourselves unduly as we rested this morning, caught up the diaries, then figured out what to put in which pack. This latter task requires quite a realignment of thinking after backpacking. Now the main directing idea is what has to stay dry and how can we keep it so. Our ideas need some refining in light of this evening's experience. The portaging itself must have taken 2 ½ - 3 hours.

Anyway, off we set in calm water. We started by practicing back ferries, forward ferries, draws etc. where any mistakes wouldn't cost us anything. We seemed to be doing OK, so off we went. I was being very cautious because of Jake's and my lack of paddling experience together. Dave, you will be horrified to hear that we didn't run on the first rock we came to, nor the second or third. The rapids were at least kind enough to give us a break by being quite civilized for the first three miles. A few places required precise maneuvering which we did with flair. I was cautiously optimistic that were we to continue to exercise caution we might even handle this well.

I should know from last summer never to feel even the slightest optimism about one's ability. We swept around the bend to see a nice boulder patch above the island. "Back ferry left, Jake", which we did to get to the only realistic route through the mess. But then do you think I could straighten the canoe? It refused to do anything but travel broadside to the current, straight broadside, not even at some angle. Of course, we hit the first three boulders in line, and just underwater, and over we rolled. My first true dump in the Nahanni country.

The water was too turbulent to be swift, so as soon as we had the canoe under control, I grabbed the one spare paddle and the sponges which had floated free and we waded to shore. We rolled the canoe over, pulled the stern up on shore, let the water drain to the bow and bailed. Jake was obviously pretty shaken by all this. I doubt that he'd understood what I'd meant when I'd said we'd likely be

getting wet on the trip, although even I hadn't planned on a full dump. We didn't even bother to take the gear out of the canoe.

To give us time to calm down and regain perspective, we wandered downstream to see what else was in store for us. After examining it, we decided there was a feasible route. Into the canoe and off again. It turned out to be feasible and we were able to exercise with flair the kind of maneuvering required to get down this rapid. I was rather pleased that we had partially vindicated ourselves.

By now, it was nearly sunset and light was getting poor for reading the water, but we hoped to make at least Seaplane Creek tonight. We weren't that far away, but I wasn't sure how far, since I was concentrating on obstacles in the water, not the grand sweep of the river. We did several miles of class I and II rapids, when a particularly sharp bend hove into view. Now I knew where we were. About 1 ½ miles above Seaplane creek.

We did some nice maneuvering to get into the only route around the first part of the hairpin. In so doing, we passed a possible campsite on the right bank and a strange bit of grass on the left. As we swept to the apex of the hairpin bend, the river narrowed and an awesome stretch of what seemed about half a mile of narrow boulder garden, flourishing huge waves the entire way. Back ferry hard for shore was the command. No way we were starting into that with darkness coming on and us cool and wet.

We pulled back upstream a bit, along some of the bleakest looking campsite country since Desperation Camp last summer. After scuttling about in a bit of spruce, we found a spot for the tent. Neither the best nor worst. There is lots of good firewood, a tiny, tiny creeklet provides a superb water supply. The tent-food pack was dry. Up went the tent. The foamy – my sleeping bag – telephoto lens – gun pack was nearly dry, so close, yet no harm done. But the strangest things happened with the back packs. They were soaked, yet somehow my clothes were dry, the down sweater and Holubar nearly so and of all things, the toilet paper. Jake's story was much the same. Other things were wet and bushes were soon draped.

Supper of spaghetti and applesauce was dispersed with about 10-10:30 pm at which time the fire was built up. We dried a lot of stuff to worsening skies and booming thunder. Finally, at what was probably midnight, we threw all the damp stuff in the little tent, crawled into the big one and were out like lights.



July 13, Friday

It showered last night, quite hard at times, so the bush was wet when we awoke. Heavy cloud is still about as well as the occasional tiny blue patch. We spread more things out to dry while we slowly organized and wrote diaries.

Finally, with most of the stuff packed, we wandered down to have a look at this rapids. The banks were boulder lined. The waves were huge, but quite boulder free. It was quite obvious there was no route down the west bank, the one we were on, either by land or water. The opposite bank looked a lot more promising by land at least. We walked upstream to check the little clearing I had noticed. Only a spot of grass under a spruce. No sign of a portage.

By now, the only clear course of action was to cross the river, staying just below a bar also stretching most of the way across. Easier said than done for the water was very swift and I had visions of being swept downstream toward the maelstrom around the corner. We walked back to camp to finish packing when a shower hit hard. We sat that out for half an hour then packed and loaded the canoe.

We pulled on overhanging alders and poled with paddles about 50 yards upstream, about as far as we could go, until we were even with the bottom of the bar. Now it poured, so we sat under a spruce until that ended. Finally, we got in the canoe, lined ourselves up, and hit the paddles. We shot into the current, across the worst chute and before we realized it, had the bow tucked against the base of the bar amidst a roar of water. The surface water was turbulent but flowing fast downstream, yet the nose of the canoe stayed hard against the rocks with no effort on our part. There must have been an undertow working on the bottom of the canoe. We actually had to back-paddle downstream to get far enough back to line up for another forward ferry. It went as well as the first, as did the next three, putting us where we needed to be.

We walked the rapids and soon confirmed our suspicions. There was an almost reasonable route between this east shore and the huge waves in the middle. The waves were worst in a chute near the top of the half mile section and a stretch near the bottom, in both cases where the river curved slightly. The portaging would be fine with packs along a game trail on the bank, but nearly impossible with a canoe. Finally, after viewing everything from both upstream and down, we decided to portage the four packs and miscellaneous items, then run it with the canoe and two barrels down the left bank, very tight to it.

With the packs on a sand beach at the bottom of the rapids, we went back up, stopping to hang Jake's handkerchief on a tree just upstream of a very sharp rock just below the surface. On went the full spray covers. Off we went, backpaddling

vigorously and ducking under over hanging alder and spruce as we endeavored to stay as close as possible to the bank. It went as smoothly as poured oil. We went in to the bank where we were supposed to and likewise, out. We hit each tough spot exactly where we wanted. If we had left the spray cover off, we might have shipped a pint of water.

I really think now that I psyched myself out on this one. I let it scare me too much. With full spray covers we probably could still have run it fairly clearly. I just let those big waves in the middle scare me.

The rest of the day was anti-climactic although we did run some big waves on the next rapid without full spray covers. Our intended route suddenly sprouted a lot of boulders, so we had to go to mid-stream in the heavy water. We had three inches of water in the canoe at the bottom of that rapids, which we stopped to bail out of course.

Shortly after that, we pulled into the snye with Seaplane Lake creek. At the portage was a rough hewn paddle which I shall bring home, and nailed to the tree were some pieces of birch bark with recent names on them. Things like campsite cleared by D. Turner, and J. Binns & Robin Moorehead names. There was nothing of real historical interest. I now very strongly suspect that this is the paddle with notes on it that some geologist told Bill Clark about. The story just got a bit twisted in the process. We shall still keep our eyes open for a paddle with names.

We sorted out the gear a bit, taking only the large tent, two backpacks and one Duluth pack with foamies etc., and sufficient food for three days. We left the food pack suspended in an overhanging tree and the barrels, bailers etc. at the landing.

The portage is well blazed – on at least two routes in spots. The result is a swampy portage in places which isn't too bad with packs. However, it is too crooked for a canoe and one must constantly barge through. Fortunately, it is only about 0.3 miles long.

One's very first impression of the lake is its clarity and green water. Turquoise describes it better. As we loaded the canoe after the second trip, Jake commented that he hadn't noticed that log there on the first trip. Indeed he probably hadn't, for as soon as we were on the water, it resolved itself into a pike of rather significant size. As we paddled over to the island landing – campsite – registration point, we saw several more suspended in green space. We could see clearly down to at least 20 feet. There were other smaller fish, which I at first thought were probably pike, but subsequently proved to be lake whitefish, identification courtesy Cas Lindsey. Seems he was here Aug 13-15/77, sampling the Lake. He notes in the visitors' book "Seaplane Lake – maximum depth 155 feet, 3 kinds of fish present – Lake Whitefish (small), + Northern Pike (large), + slimy sculpin." He was in with a

Chris Foote. I think it is part of their entry when they conclude "1440 Flew to Mosquito Lake." Is that the one over by the North Karst?

At any rate, it only took 5-10 minutes to paddle to the island to be greeted by plenty of evidence of man – about 15 X 45 gal drums, a Parks Canada registration booth and two of their signs tossed on the hill beneath and behind it. Scouting about revealed a veritable paucity of campsites. The only level spot is among the drums and we are now parked there. Supper was well after sunset again. The reflections and light this evening are truly wondrous.

July 14, Sat

We arose to perfect calm and reflections but the morning light is far less pretty than evening. We hopped in the canoe and proceeded to paddle about the lake. Just east of the island is an extensive shallow area. You could see pike scattered here and there all over it and all were 8 pounds or over. Jake nearly exceeded himself trying to hook every one in sight. Actually, he landed about six in the 8-13 pound range (22 – 30 inches T.L.). I even caught one and released it, but mostly I just paddled Jake about. We were trying to find and catch one small enough for a meal but couldn't do it. It was just unbelievable fishing.

At the east end of the lake we found yet two more ten gallon gas kegs, perhaps remnants of the 1971 fire which burned the eastern 2/3 of the lake and all the country east of here as far as you can see. The lake is a lot less pretty down that way, and not only because of the fire.

On the way back, when we couldn't catch any small fish, we finally kept about a 12 pounder. It made breakfast and supper. We couldn't catch any whitefish. We saw lots, but besides being small, they are extremely scary. Who can blame them with all these "logs" around as we call the pike here. We took the remains of a 12-14 inch whitefish from the stomach of the pike we kept.

When Gus told me about the pike in Seaplane, I didn't believe him. When he said they lay there like logs, I thought it was just another Gus story. But no, that is exactly what they remind one of. Mind you we haven't seen any of the five foot variety Gus talked about. That would be a small alligator.

Jake cut ours into steaks and fried them for breakfast. They were good, my they were good, despite having been caught in quite warm water.

I wandered about the island exploring it. People have been cutting trees all over it for years. Probably the first and main cuttings were by Gus for the cabin he built on the west side of the island. It is quite clearly his style of building on the

corners, etc. it isn't at all like the probable Faille cabin below Flood Creek, so I think Patterson is wrong in assigning it to Faille, as I believe he did in 'Far Pastures'. It was quite a solid one and even today half the logs are still standing and more would be if it hadn't been so heavily vandalized. There seem to have been two bunks in it at the south end, the west one being narrower and less substantial. A bench-table seems to have filled the north portion of the west wall. The door is on the north end, windows on the east and west. The south wall facing towards bay's end and bush is blank. There may have been a hewn floor in it, but at this stage it is impossible to tell without digging, for the dirt roof has caved in and the place is scattered with garbage. Some rough hewn boards may be the remains of the door.

The country about here is extremely rolling, with small local hills up to 500 feet elevation above base. I marvel and wonder at Bill Clark, Carl Falcon and Jean Dumont(?) carrying those ton(s?) of supplies over to Bennett creek. When you see the country, it is much easier to understand their faith in the gold and their commitment to its discovery and extraction. They gave about all they had to the enterprise.

This afternoon I sat down and wrote letters to each of my girls. What a heart rending experience it was. Put straight, I am homesick, quite a bad dose of it. How I would like to see them, be with them and play with them. Never in any other trip have I got myself like this. Towards the end of trips I have yearned to get home, but then there was the knowledge I could do so quickly. Now the trip isn't even half done. We are leaving our letters in the guest book with sending directions and notice on the board above which will hopefully attract the attention of any pilots or parks people who land. How I do hope the letters reach them quickly.

Also had a snooze this afternoon. Had pike stew for supper and once again first class stuff.

July 15, Sun

What with a snooze yesterday, I was able to rise early today, yet well rested. I got up about 5 am to yet more bright sun. the weather is being very kind to us indeed of late. I hope not too kind. After a few chores like washing socks and breakfast, we headed for the east end of the lake.

The land use information maps tell of an aqua marine lake with mineral springs and fragile interesting vegetation just east of Seaplane. The writing sounds like George Scotters. Whomever, the description is enough to whet appetites. The short 0.4 mile hike over was very easy up the valley. The burn hasn't started to blowdown badly yet.

The lake was something of a disappointment after the build up. It was undoubtedly more scenic before the burn, but as far as we can see, Seaplane is far more aquamarine coloured. The burn may have altered the lake chemistry but even this seems unlikely for it was a light burn. At any rate, we climbed the 200 foot hill SE of it, just to be sure we weren't missing anything. Nothing we could see was out of the ordinary. The vegetation seemed quite typical. The mineral springs mentioned seem to consist of a slow seepage along the north and east shores plus the island of 'rusty' water. Just what one would expect from the pyritic Road River shales which comprise the area. Like the 'iron spring' at Brintnell Lake and similar springs from the Rove shales at home.

Quite a flock of ducks, likely common goldeneye, took off from the pond. One stayed behind.

The shallow areas of the pond, especially between the island and mainland were littered with moose tracks and trails.

A fairly spectacular small shale cliff lies NE of the pond.

The view from the hill was quite enough reward for hiking in there. We crossed the hill to the SW side to see if the small lake south of the east end of Seaplane was the lake in question. Not at all. It seemed quite uninteresting. But again the view was ample reward. We got fine views of the boundary mountains westwards, the Borden and Bennett Creek areas and the mountain massifs about them, and over east to and past McLeod Creek to the north.

Finally, we came to the west end of the hill and got a good view down Seaplane and to the boundary ranges up towards Loon Lake. How different those hills look when you see the expanse of land leading up to the peaks themselves as seen from Seaplane.

As we paddled back to camp, Jake decided to fish over Pike Shoal east of the main island. While he was playing one out, I decided to flip my line out. A big pike came over to watch Jake's thrash about. We didn't pay much attention to it other than note its presence. As my line came in, it started cruising towards it, then, bang, it took it. Suddenly there was a loud snap and I was sitting with only the butt of my rod in my hand. The rest of the rod was strung in three pieces down the line towards bottom where the pike had gone. I started to reel in, already composing the story about the one that got away and broke the rod to boot. Jake was laughing heartily from the bow and it seemed equally funny to me as I joined in. It would have hurt if I'd been an ardent fisherman but it mattered little to me so long as we had one rod along.

As I reeled in, the line became taut. Only then did I realize I still had a fish on. The brake on my reel had worked just as it should, even if the rod hadn't. I played it and played it. It didn't put up much fight and seemed to be bleeding a bit. As I brought it to the boat, it took back off again several times. Finally, I was able to grab the leader and hoist an 18-20 pounder aboard. The hook had cut a gill arch and it was bleeding, but I didn't think mortally. The hook actually fell out. So I held it up while Jake photographed fish and rod as evidence for a real fish story.

When placed back in the water it went belly up and stayed there. We kept wiggling it to get water through its gills. Then after a few half hearted attempts at righting itself and swimming off, it headed deep in convincing fashion. I do hope it lives, for a fish that big shouldn't be wasted. We could never have eaten it all by tomorrow morning.

Back at camp, we had a general wash day. Everything is clean again, not that it was very dirty anyway.

The diary is now caught up.

A snooze has been had.

The boots are dry and Sno-Sealed for the first time in weeks.

I've photographed all I want to about here.

Plans are made for the rest of the Flat R. trip. We will reach the mouth no later than July 30, hopefully by July 26 or 27. That will leave us one month on the Nahanni.

I still have to go through Ford's report to identify any features we should be making a note of to look at. First though, I think I will write a PS to Wendy. I am just as homesick today as yesterday, if not more.

Tomorrow we go to Borden Creek and if all goes well in the rapids between here and there, we should have time to do our poking about it tomorrow, thus saving a day. I hope the water in the Flat is dropping to more civilized levels.

Before I leave, I should bring the bird list up to date. Yesterday we saw a white winged scoter. Nighthawks are flying day & night about here. We saw herring gulls, a new Nahanni bird for me as well as Mew and Bonapartes gulls. Common loons are on the lake. Today besides the goldeyes, we confirmed Bohemian Waxwings and Tree swallows. Our eagle hasn't been back since the first day and

the two nests over on the small island aren't very convincing eagle nests so I don't know what's going on there.

Another note. We seem to be the second tourist type travelers down the Flat since 1977. The only other one is Stephen Ford who got in here after three attempts on July 20/77 and apparently poked about this country until Aug. 5 whence he leaves a note saying he is leaving for Irvine Creek. Oh yes, Wally Schaber on Aug 23/77 was looking at the river for tours, but has never been back so I guess he didn't like it.

Parks Canada personnel have made 2 trips. Chris Hammond and a Jeff Bradshaw, Lou Comin [sp?] and a Frisch(?) started July 13/77 and are also the first entries in the book. Then Ron Hooper of Calgary office and Steve Cooper started Aug 28/78, last year.

Any other entries are pilots, at least two parties appearing to be tourists in their own planes. The first four pages in the book have been cut out. Obviously this is not a heavily used entry point.

July 16, Mon

This morning, as yesterday, I got us up about 5 am. The intent was to get a good start on the day so we could arrive at Borden Creek before noon hour and hopefully finish our poking about today. Then we would have a full day nearly at Bennett tomorrow.

We left Seaplane lake under ideal conditions, full sun and light breeze. I found the leaving hard, because I have been associating the lake with home for some reason. Perhaps it is because I knew that in going on the only way out is to complete the trip. A long process which I want to do but don't, if you know what I mean.

Five mew gulls escorted us from the campsite, and I now think the two tufts of twigs on the small island are mew gull nests. They certainly aren't eagle nests as I first thought. The sticks are too fine and they aren't quite big enough. And why two eagle nests?

The loon surfaced silently here and there.

At portage head, the shallow water was occupied by a school of whitefish. One larger than the others may have weighed a pound. Last night for nearly an hour after sunset, the lake surface was being constantly broken by small fish after



insects. They had to be whitefish. A large pike leapt clear of the water behind the little island last evening also. Quite a sight. This morning we saw nary a one.

The portage out was, if anything, poorer than on the way in. It just has too many twists and bends between closely spaced trees. The canoe needs constant ramming through. The welcoming committee was out in force, so we loaded as quickly as possible. I went the old paddle under the tree. It should be saved for posterity. I now have a few doubts about it being Albert Faille's workmanship. It seems a bit too crude. And yet, who else's could it be? Bill's or Gus'? A Yukoner who hiked out?

The trip down to Borden Creek was a pleasure. We are finding that Ron Hooper's idea of a Class II rapids agrees with ours fairly well, in fact his might be a bit easier which we don't mind. Most of the rapids required little maneuvering. You could pick a line at the top and with minor adjustments stay on it. As is usually the case, the inside of curves were best for rapids in those situations. One rapids required a bit of dodging which we did flawlessly using the back ferry. Somehow, we seem to be doing better than Dave and I last summer although, quite admittedly, the going is easier in here than in the Boulder Garden. There are nowhere near as many boulders sticking up and therefore the maneuvering from side to side is much less pronounced and can be more relaxed. The water level seems to be dropping and there are some signs that there could be a lot more boulders to dodge later in the summer. We find the new park booklet with its mapped rapids by Ron Hooper most helpful.

We were on the water at 9:30 and I think at Borden Creek by 10:30. Coming to the creek, I noticed a couple of cut stumps just upstream of it. So, we stopped on the upstream side and started nosing about. I vaguely remembered Milt Campbell say something about Faille's cabin being on the upstream side. He walked from Bennett creek over to it one winter day when it was lower than -60°F. I was determined to find it since nobody but Milt mentioned it. Right near the creek mouth, I ran onto a dog-sled with iron runners lying on the ground. That was interesting enough in itself.

Maybe 200 yards further up Borden creek and back in a spruce grove about 100 – 150 yards from the creek. I was coming across an increasing frequency of small cut stumps. I was so busy looking at these that I practically bumped into the cabin before I saw it.

It was about 10 X 13 feet inside dimensions, the long side oriented more or less N-S. It was a beautifully built cabin of unpeeled spruce logs which were still in amazingly good shape. The walls were about 4.5 feet high at the eaves, 6 feet under the ridgepole. The door is in the north end, and one such as I would certainly have stooped to get in it. There was one tiny window about 14 X 17 inches on the centre of the east wall. The south and west walls were solid. The

stove had been in the northeast corner of the cabin and here the roof of split logs covered in moss then 5-6 inches of river silt, seems to have failed first. Most of the roof had caved in, aided and abetted no doubt by a large spruce which had blown over onto the ridgepole overhanging the door. Surprisingly it hadn't broken.

The quality of workmanship was of a high caliber. The notching tight and neat. The door frame was amazingly flat, all hewn with an axe. In fact, even a number of the large trees for the cabin (12-14 inch diameter) had been cut solely with an axe. Others were sawn.

The cabin floor had likely been dug down a bit, but I couldn't be sure because of the caved-in roof. There were two pits about 3 X 4 X 3 feet, one each on the south and west sides where soil had been removed for the roof. The one on the south side may have served some purpose such as food storage for there was the remains of one, possibly two logs across it. Excavation would be required to prove that. There was no sign of a cache anywhere. - Continued in book 2.









NAHANNI 1979

Book 2

July 16 – August 4

W.D. Addison

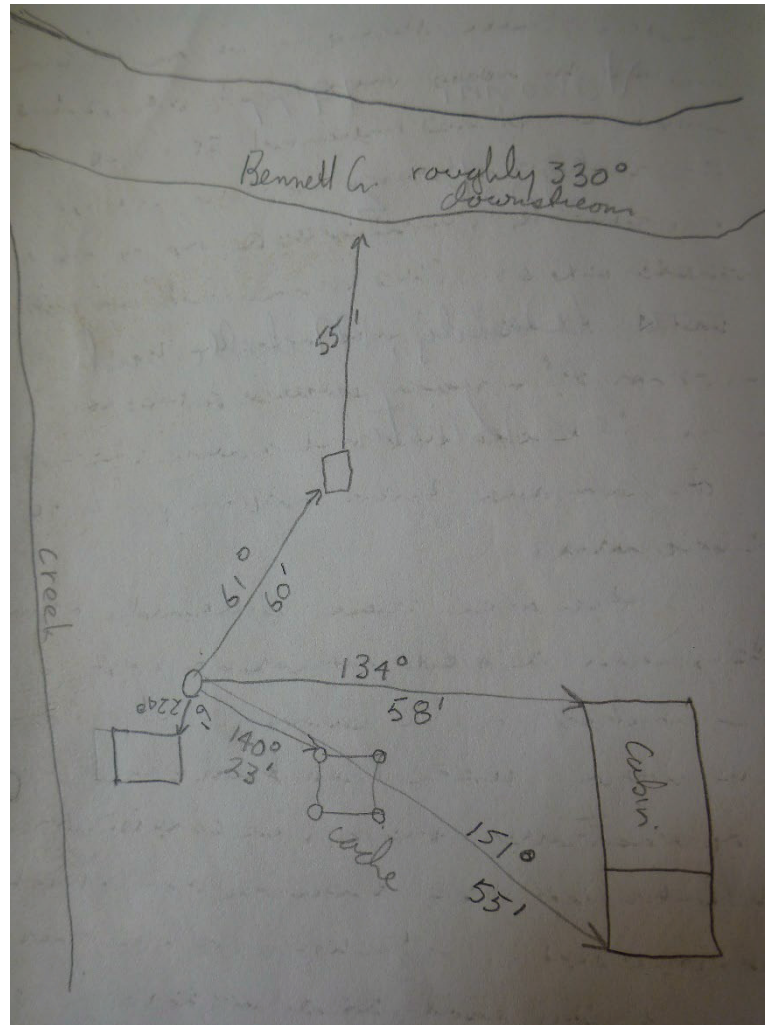
For Wendy, Michelle and Kirsten



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Kraus Cabin Area – Bennett Cr., July 18/79.



July 16, Mon

Continued from Book 1.

Despite there being no cache there were two curious teepee shaped piles of wood laid up against stumps. Were they firewood left slanted on end to keep dry? Finally, there was a biffy log propped up on two forked sticks lying against trees. There was a foot platform of small spruce poles in front. The spruce trees were the roof. It too seemed built awfully low to the ground.

There were trees, generally small ones, but a few larger ones up to 10-12 inches on the butt that were cut for a good couple hundred yards up and downstream from

the cabin. Had they been cut for firewood and hauled in with dogs? It seems to me that Faille rarely had dogs, which leaves me wondering about the sled's owner.

We wandered up Borden creek for another mile looking for any signs of human workings. The only thing was cut stumps which decreased in frequency the further we went from the cabin. Borden Creek flows across a gradually steepening flood plain for 0.6-0.7 miles. In this stretch its bed is composed of coarse gravels with the odd boulder and towards the upper end, the odd boulder patch. As soon as its valley gets squeezed between the low rolling hills, the creek gradient steepens and the creek bed consists of boulders, some of them huge. It isn't hard to understand how discouraging this must have been to lone prospectors trying to work with hand tools. Whatever gravel lies between these boulders could only be obtained with the aid of heavy machinery. Having seen this, we didn't go further, for the map indicates canyons even further up. As far as we went, the west side of the creek had escaped the 1971 fire except for one small patch of about 0.5 acres. The east side had been burned to the bank in most places.

After seeing all this, we walked back to the canoe for cameras and photographed the cabin and sled. We even walked upstream again to photograph the creek.

Finally, at about 2:30 we had lunch on the Borden Creek bar. The water issues clear and slightly brown into the dirty gray Flat. Although even it is starting to get a hint of green, another sign of falling water levels. Borden creek water is also surprisingly warm, considering it is coming from the mountains.

A quick look around the small unburned east side of Borden Creek revealed a few cut stumps, but nothing else.

We decided to push on for Bennett Creek. It is a short pleasant run from Borden with only one short rapids where the river narrows, producing some fair standing waves. We were able to sneak down a narrow corridor between the waves and boulders on the right bank.

Both sides of the Flat are burned along here, in contrast to the stretch from Seaplane to Borden where only the east side is burned. There is shale cliff on the south (right) bank between Borden and Bennett Creeks, which contains a lot of white material, which from the river looks like quartz. We also found large quantities of quartz float east of Seaplane Lake the other day, which is consistent with Bill Clark's description of the Quartz Creek area. If it was quartz in the shale, then the origin of the quartz in the area must be as a hot water precipitate emanating from the granite plutons through cracks in the Road River shales.

We couldn't believe we were at Bennett Creek when we reached its mouth. I had envisaged something much larger after working with the Falcon photos. My

navigating and map reading indicated it had to be Bennett Creek. On going ashore, we found a current claim post on the edge of the burn about 100 yards upstream. Some of Dick Turner's work, I believe. Later on, we found a blazed tree with what appears to be some of Gus' writing. So, we are here. Any hike up the creek will be unpleasant through the burn but more than any other creek, I feel I should see this one.

We have a very nice bar camp on the small bar at its mouth. One sandy level spot for the tent. All kinds of dry driftwood and clear water. A curious thing about the water though. There is green algae growing on the rocks and gravel at the current water levels on the bottom of the creek, despite there obviously having been a tremendous flood this spring which reworked sand and gravels 3-4 feet above present water levels. The algae obviously has grown just in the past week or two. It must relate to nutrients. Is it caused by the fire? Or something peculiar to the rock and soils of Bennett creek? We haven't seen this on the few other creeks we have passed. Shall have to keep our eyes open. Also, Bennett Creek water is slightly murkier than Borden Creek.

Jake produced a nice stew supper topped by superb white cake by any standard. This time he baked it in two pot lids in the reflector oven.

The sky clouded heavily and quickly this evening. Looks like rain for sure. In fact, there are a few light drops now. But we can't complain. However, there is slight hope. It is still blue to the east.

#### July 17, Tues

Up to blue sky and very muggy weather this morning. We slept in 'til 8, then two minds as one, we simultaneously decided on Patterson porridge for breakfast. We are taking enough food for two days, no spare clothes and all the cameras. I threw in the tent at the last minute, my pack was so empty.

Today is a day we seem to be having trouble doing things right. Jake started by washing a shirt just before were to leave and hanging it in the tent so that it dripped all over my Holubar, sleeping bag, air mattress and pyjamas. We had to delay while they dried. Then he picked up my pack to see if it weighed the same as his with the intent of him taking more weight. The plastic closures for the pack top broke. On the way in, I led us down a wrong valley. We got our boots wet crossing the creek. When we got to the cabin, we were so tired that we ate lunch first and I lost the sun for photos. We left Jake's pack, the tent and sleeping bag out in the open while we went up to see the falls. It rained on the way back, soaking us but no real harm to the pack, tent or sleeping bag. Quite a day of ineptitude on both our parts.

The map indicates it is about three miles from the Flat up to the cabin providing one doesn't follow every meander of the creek. Well, what a three miles it is. The creek drops nearly 500 feet in that distance and another 150 feet from the cabin to the falls which [is] 0.7 miles. It is virtually the same size at the falls as at the mouth.

We started thrashing through the burn on the river plain which was a hopeless proposition for the huge burned trees had criss-crossed over one another to a height where you couldn't step over them, but there weren't enough of them to get up and walk on for any distance. As soon as we came to a ridge we went up on it where the trees were much smaller and most hadn't fallen yet. The hiking through this for nearly a mile was quite nice except for our clothes getting well blackened.

Then the valley steepened and with live forest along the creek, it seemed the place to go. I suppose it was, but it sure wasn't easy. In places the valley bottom was burned, in others it was tangled tag alder and often it was steep, steep shale or gravel cut banks to creek's edge. Up and down, twist and turn was the order of the day. What a chore it must have been packing things in there. It only increases my admiration for the determination and faith they had in the creek.

Once we got hiking along the creek, we began to see signs of work. Cut stumps, bits of board and logs that were notched which could only have come from the flume and several claim posts. Only one had anything decipherable still on it. Ironically it was the claim that Gus and Bill staked for Albert, and which they had to do the assessment work on, only to have him unwilling to sell it for a reasonable price to the company.

Finally, long after we figured we should be there, we came to the cabin clearing at the confluence of a tiny rivulet from the SE with Bennett Creek. I thought somebody had told me the cabin had been re-roofed and that it was in useable shape. Not so. The cabin roof and part of the walls are caved in. A well constructed toilet is the same way. The cache which doesn't seem quite up to Gus' usual standards of sturdiness is totally collapsed except for two of the four posts. Judging from screening and framing about the base of the cache, there appears to have been either a meat house or mosquito proof work area beneath it. Finally, right beside the little creek is a small 6 X 8 foot (interior) log shack which still has a sound roof. What its function was, I don't know. Tool shed. Since it was built, someone else has punched a hole in the roof, pushed through a stove pipe and fashioned a crude stove from a washtub and pail. My guess is that it was whomever was in staking in April 1975 and they used it to sleep in. Inside it is an assortment of nails, a roll of 1/16" diam. steel wire, a dynamite box, a short piece of wire cable, a bow saw, all of which appear to date from the late '30's, although the bow saw may not. Obviously newer, are a 1 gal metal gas can, a punctured

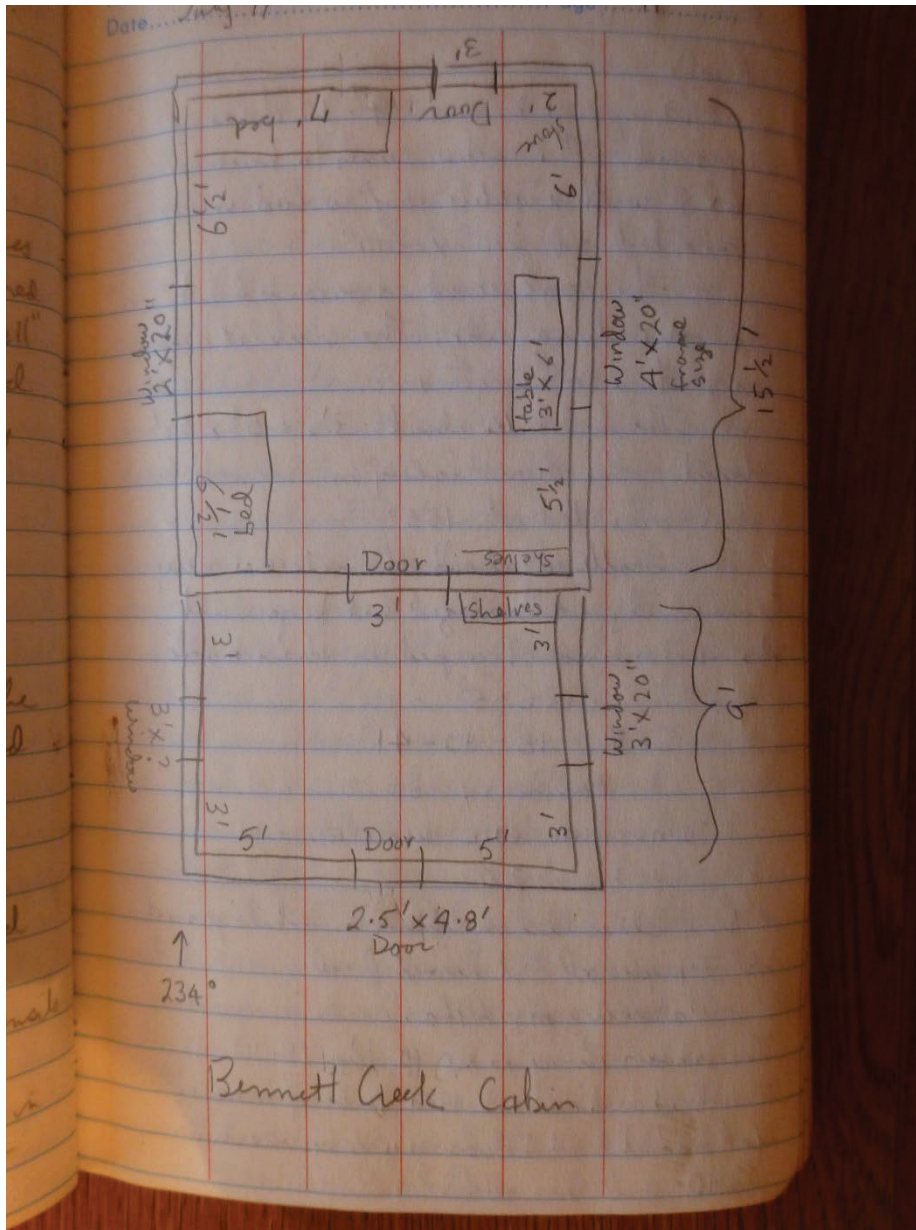
spray can of orange paint, a nylon-down sleeping bag and assorted tin cans. There are also some older cans, and an enamel dipper & wash basin probably are original. A hammer could be either old or new. The interior has been whitewashed and a heavy duty shelf of a split log rests on two pegs at the back. A screened over 2" diam. vent hole is drilled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> top log at the back. On the door are a few names, "Ray Hatt, Dave Malnycatk" (this name blurred and spelling quite uncertain), "John McConnell" all of "August 25 (?)/72". "B. Newstead 1978 Aug" then apparently separately Bruce Reilly, Lou Cormin and D. Dube all of Aug 30, 1978.

Outside this shack are two older looking long handled shovels, one with a broken handle, a newer looking one with orange and green paint spilled on the handle; a pick-mattock and 2 ½ pound axe and a 4 pound splitting axe all seemingly from the '30's; a small bow saw probably of that period hangs on the wall and a newer short handle shovel leans near it. Assorted old and new cans, bottles, stovepipe elbows and utensils are scattered about outside.

The cabin seems to have been built in two distinct parts, probably at different times. On page 11 of this diary, a diagram of the cabin has been drawn. See picture following.



Bennett Cr



### Cache

The uprights are 9' – 10' clear of ground. The cache seems to have been 6' X 6' with a gable roof covered in canvas oriented at 210° X 300°



The tool shed is oriented at 300° on the long side. The creeklet behind is at 230° upstream.

The toilet is about 3 ½ X 5' x 5 ½' high, the front facing up Bennett Creek and oriented at 155°

Scattered about the site are very heavy duty galvanized oil kegs with the following stamped on their bottom

CRC-5  
S-R 18-10-41  
PROPERTY OF  
IMPERIAL OIL LIMITED  
20

Then stenciled on them in white paint is

"Imperial Oil Limited  
Waterways, Alta."

The curious thing to me is the 18-10-41 which I believe indicates a 1941 date of manufacture, yet Clark and Falcon say they were in here in 1940 and Gus not at all after 1939.

In the cabin was a bench beneath the table which I was able to fish out. On it was written in pencil Val Spring (I believe that is it for the writing is faint) June 11, 1958. Also the initials SA are carved in it.

After having lunch and poking around a bit we headed up to see what was left of the flume. Initially the trail was as clear as it must have been in the summer of 1940. As the gorge closed in, it gradually disappeared. Then we thrashed mightily through brush and up and down near cliffs. Finally, the gorge made a right angle bend and a low falls 4-5 feet high lay in it. Then we noticed a wheelbarrow hung in a tree up the bank, some sluice riffles and a board. This was it. Most certainly not what I expected after seeing Carl's photos of their work. I expected a much higher falls and deeper plunge pool. My, how cameras can lie or is it me interpreting what I want to see?

The creek comes down through an S-shaped canyon it has carved in heavily folded and fractured Sunblood limestones. It is a boulder bed, mainly of granitic boulders all the way except where the falls drops over the limestone ledge. Very heavy white water would be produced over the boulders in flood – Grade VI at least. As it is now, it is still a steady roar produced by water foaming between boulders.

There is a gorgeous pool extending some 50-60 feet below the falls, turbulent in parts, quiet and smooth in others. We could see 6-8 fish drifting about in it; probably more, but we would lose track of them in the turbulent areas. They turned out to be lovely grayling. Jake tried everything in the tackle box on them. He caught one but it got away as he was removing the hook. After that, nothing could interest them. Then I noticed two lovely ones right at shore, their huge dorsal fins fully extended out of the water, going through what seemed a very desultory courting behaviour side by side. The spots on the fins were a most gorgeous turquoise in the water. I snuck up very slowly, being careful not to scare them. Their slow motion antics were too much temptation. My hand slid into the water and ever so slowly cuddled one until I found they don't have enough tail to grab that way. Further forward my hand went almost to the gills. Snap! It was out of the water and on the bank. The other one had barely moved off at the disappearance of its pal. Back in went the hand and with only slightly more difficulty, out came the second. I held it up for Jake's benefit, just to let him know that fish could be caught here using the right techniques. Just as he saw it, it wiggled from my grasp, fell amongst the boulders and before I could recover it, was in the water and off down the rapids like a rocket. Oh well, a .500 batting average isn't bad. Finally, I managed to get the one more needed for supper using bait.

On cleaning them, we found why they weren't interested in our lures. The one was absolutely stuffed with moths which have been all over the place, air and water, for the past several days. The other was equally stuffed with flying ants, which have just come out in the last day, mayflies, also just out, and stoneflies, in about that order of abundance.

We came up here with minimum gear so had no frying pan or grease. We pulled an old piece of screening off the gazebo wreckage from the cache, stretched it between two oil drums over the fire, and baked the two grayling and 1 dolly varden on that. The dolly, Jake's first, was caught down in the Bennett Creek canyons below the cabin during a rest break on the way in. A mighty fine meal!

What with paying so much attention to fish and the enchanting scenery of this sequestered spot, we hadn't been looking up. Suddenly the little hole overhead that was sky was taking a very forbidding stance. And not a photo taken yet! The shutters hummed as we tried capturing everything before it got even darker. We only partly succeeded. Not the first error today by any means. We had just climbed the hill above the canyon to a knob overlooking it, when the rain started. Quick shots up and downstream, then off back to the cabin site.

We hadn't gone 200 yards before we were soaked, and the rain continued to the cabin. It didn't feel at all pleasant but at least it was fairly warm. It quit just as we reached the clearing. Now I was thankful we had the tent along. Up it went. A fire was on in a jiffy and soon the world seemed a pretty good place again as we

steamed by the fire. An hour later, full of fish and dry we were content to tumble to bed with the sun. If all the rain we get the rest of this trip is like that, then we won't complain.

July 18, Wed

Blue sky and a few clouds this morning. Our luck holds. I spent most of this morning writing up diary, poking about the place, making the diagrams in yesterday's section and photographing it all in both colour and black and white. The amount of material that had to be packed in here is incredible, the wheelbarrow and the huge washtubs being some of the more amazing. Even the gas kegs must have weighed 100 lbs each. And the tools. Is there anything more awkward to pack than long handled shovels in the bush? How much was landed on Mickey Lake and how much on Seaplane, I don't know. Certainly, they had a better trail to go on than we did on the way in here.

Yesterday we found a number of modern day claims which I shall now list except for Post numbers.

At the mouth of Bennett Creek

N84116

Windfall 11 (?)

G.P.J (?) Turner

3237 (?)

May 2 1974 11:30

Between the cabin and the falls but nearer the falls.

A87532 & A87533

GFX

April 7, 1975

11 am

WP

N42577, 78 and 79

Benn #17

Feb 22/62

10 am

J. Mulholland

T37833

U90 #1

J. Melnychuk

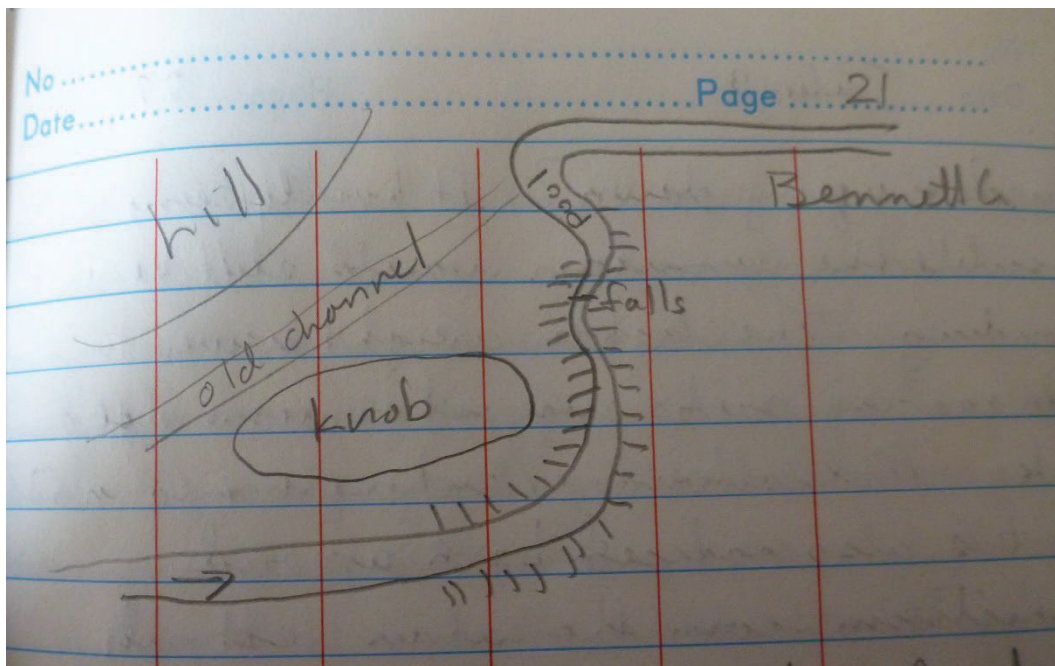
June 7/72

← 500 ft. (post 2)

By noon hour we had everything packed and decided to go back up to the falls to see it in sunlight. On the way back yesterday, we had stayed higher on the hillside instead of down by the creek and had had much better going than on the way up. Operating on the theory that if partway was good, higher yet would be better. From the walking point of view it probably wasn't any better today, but Jake's route certainly got us high enough to get some magnificent views down the Bennett Creek valley and over towards the boundary with its peaks as well as up the Flat valley.

We came in above the canyon where the falls is, dropped down to cross Bennett Creek and then up a high scree slope above the falls, all in hope of getting a view downstream through the short canyon. To no avail. It wiggles a bit too much. But now we had superb views up the Bennett Creek valley and over to the boundary. We sat up there quite a while soaking it all in under the sun.

Finally, we crossed the creek, up over the knob and down to the pool. Incidentally the knob above the canyon seems to have the same origin as Pulpit Rock. It marks the high point between an abandoned channel behind it and the present one going around it.



Today, we took the photos first. There seemed to be only one or two fish in the pool today. I wonder if the excitement we created yesterday caused the dispersal of the last remnants of the spawning run.

With the afternoon getting on, we headed back to the cabin for lunch at about 4 pm. Then downstream. With Jake leading, we followed the trail until we reached the burn. I forgot to mention yesterday that here there is a pit amongst a log of cut trees. Overtop is a windlass affair on two upright supports either side of the pit. Spruce poles cover much of the pit. The remains of a ladder stand nearby, and lying about are pieces of newer lighter weight oil drums, including one cut in half and wired and roped to make a basket. Does this mark the spot where Bill & Gus tried freezing down? It hardly seems possible the windlass would still be standing. The lighter weight newer 10 gal. gas keg pails suggest someone else's work. Mulholland, Mackenzie & Co. in 62?

We also noticed both up and downstream from the cabin test pits dug in the river bank and two cases, test trenches dug back into the bank 15-20 feet and 2-5 feet wide and up to 4 feet deep. A lot of work when shoveling coarse gravel.

Anyway, at the windlass we began angling up the hill through the burn. What a smart move that turned out to be, for most of the burn was still standing small black spruce with excellent walking. At times we were 400 feet above the creek, well above the canyon walls and out of the brush by the creek. At times we had fine views of the country as we waded through patch after patch of fireweed. The regeneration ranges from fair to good despite the moss cover not getting burned off. It will, however be another stunted forest. Perhaps because of the lack of bare soil there are almost no blueberries or raspberries on this burn. Wild rose is fairly common though. We saw the odd bush of lush goose berries which are just turning red, still not ripe enough to eat.

About a mile from the mouth of Bennett Creek, I let out a whoop. One blueberry bush with ripe berries. We split the 30 or 20 berries. A few hundred yards further on Jake let out a whoop. A blueberry patch with ripe berries. Despite the hour, we stopped to pick a litre bottle full and to fill our faces. The picking wasn't good, but the eating was. Shortly after we were back at the tent, everything safe and sound.

As the sun set, we finished supper with blueberry dessert. A superb way to end a superb day.

With the ripening of blueberries and the golden rod in bloom in the odd place, summer must be ending. Certainly, it is getting harder to find flowers. We did find lots and lots of *Boschniakia* up Bennett Cr. though.

July 19, Thurs

During the night I had got up to find the sky a most ominous hue. Oh well, we are due a soaking, I thought as I crawled back in. Today dawned still threatening but less so than it had been in the midnight twilight. After diary and a partial packing, we threw all in the tent and for the first time in two days put the canoe in the water. We tracked and poled across the Bennett Creek bar and up [to] an island just above it, before ferrying across the Flat to a little snye.

Then we hit the trail for the turquoise lake we had seen yesterday from the hilltop. I had concluded from its colour and Scotter's sloppy lot & long information, that this, in fact might be the lake with springs on it that the Land Use Information Map said was beautiful. Our way was once again through burn; our clothes get grayer by the day in this country. We travelled a fine line between a blowdown ridge on the NE and a very wet swamp to the SW. The going wasn't too bad, but the springy moss does use up energy walking. There were a few blueberries and the first ripe ground raspberries (*R. acoulis*). Both were yummy refreshers as we sweated through the bog.

As we rounded the point of a ridge, a stony edge appeared ahead. A stony edged bog? It was the springs we were looking for. They turned out to be calcareous but with no tufa deposit. The ponds were very marly and the springlets draining down the few feet of gentle slope to the ponds had tufa-sludge bottoms. There was no sign of the monkey flower Scotter lists for here. The area is quite small, so I don't see how I could miss it. Perhaps the fire has played a role in its apparent disappearance or perhaps we just haven't found all the springs hereabout.

The vegetation about the springs was very ordinary except for butterwort, another signal of calcareous waters. There wasn't a sign of even one of the key indicator plants which I believe to signify warm springs. These include the cow parsnip, water hemlock, wild mint, monkey flower, lobelia as main ones. In fact, the spring temperature was probably 6-8°C, which technically is warmer than normal but not much. I forgot the thermometer so don't have a reading.

From the springs we pushed on under ever clearing skies, to the lake. Indeed, it is turquoise. As magnificent [a] set of colours as we ever saw in the Caribbean. The sun came out to show off the lake to maximum advantage as a gale howled from the west into our faces whipping up whitecaps to accent the back drop of the dark green spruce peaks of the "Coal River Range" of the old timers. Utterly magnificent. We sat and etched[it] into [our] minds for a good long time, while a gorgeous red wing blackbird entertained us (the first of the trip).



Reluctantly we left, returning by the same route to get photos of the, by now, sunlight [sunlit?] springs. An examination of the lakeshore which we could see with binoculars showed no other springs.

Back at Bennett Creek, we finished packing, and today for the first time this trip we have a truly superb pack to the canoe. Everything is low, nicely nestled in an appropriate spot. We hope to be at the portage tonight, water willing.

The water was very willing down to McLeod Creek with calm water to Class I rapids the entire way. We pulled in at its mouth. What a contrast to all other creeks so far. No bar. No brawling riffles. Just a lovely quiet little brown water creek ambling through white spruce forest that somehow escaped the fire. Even the few riffles it has are quiet, gentle ones. In a way, looking back now, it would have been nice to hike up it, but we are starting to feel the pressure of time. We would have to hike it for its scenery, which is through the burn and we have seen enough of that now. If we went up it for historical reasons, we would be chasing will-o-the wisps. Soon we went.

Below McLeod the Flat enters low canyons and has the odd mountain right to the river. One shale exposure against the river is tilted spectacularly back from it. The river is rapids all the way to the portage but mostly Class I. Even then one must stay alert, for rocks are barely submerged in many places. In contrast to where we rafted, the river here is quite shallow. Except for the current, one could probably walk across it most places.

About 1.5 miles above the portage we pulled ashore on the left bank to chase a possible hot spring site marked on the map by Gabrielse. The symbol is neither clear nor typical on the map and what it signifies, goodness knows, for we chased nothing but hot air. A quarter mile below it, there is a real symbol on the right bank. We were nearly in to land there when I said, "Jake, paddle hard for the left bank". We laboured mightily and managed to pull [in] just above a peculiar white deposit on the river bank.

This was something I recognized as frost-shattered tufa deposits. I grabbed the camera and was up the bank like a shot. Jake must have thought I had taken leave of my senses. Up on top, I started to wander about in ever growing awe. I climbed 250 vertical feet above the river, I walked over a quarter mile along the river and everywhere was frost-shattered tufa. No fresh stuff and not until I started back down to the river did I find a seep. There had been forest on most of it, but now it was nearly bare with the odd charred spar still standing. To me it was quite clear. I was standing on the largest tufa deposits I was aware of in the Park and nobody I knew of even gave it a casual mention, not even Ford.

It is a springs area which seems in senescence. There are no high walled dams as at Rabbitkettle, but there is evidence they may have once been here and certainly there is plenty of evidence of tiny rimstone dams. As we scrambled about, we found several pools, the largest about 60 feet by 12 feet at widest. None overflow their dams, and all show evidence of lowered water levels at the moment. Fresh seepage apparently doesn't keep up with leakage and evaporation in dry periods. In other places down along the river, seepage spills slowly down tufa slopes adhering to the hillside.

What is even more interesting, I think, is the vegetation. Whole areas are blue with Lobelia. No cow parsnips but water hemlock is common. Monkey flower and mint rim and are in one pool. The water temperature ranges from 66.5°F to 77°F. It is obviously warm, but not very. All kinds of other flowers grow in profusion. Zygadenus is everywhere with 2-3 times as many flowers per head as it has in its normal dry habitats. Lady slippers (in seed) abound as do the white orchids found around the hot springs – the small ones. Goldenrod is in bloom. Wild strawberries are ripe. Asters (*Aster nahanniensis*?) abound. Goodness knows what else I have forgotten or haven't seen yet. We stomped about until the sun went behind the hill above. I was thoroughly excited by this find. Nothing for it but to stay here and see it.

Searching revealed a fairly level spot near a spring pool. We brought the canoe down to it and set up camp in sight of the portage and where we will land to go up to Wild Mint Springs.

As we prepared supper, the rush of the Flat filled the air. We went to sleep with its soporific rhythm. But before doing so, I couldn't help but wonder at the sheer guts and determination of that very select few who had chosen to track up past here against this never relenting current, through the boulder patches, usually with little or no decent tracking ground. I can't even conceive of me or anyone else today contemplating it, let alone doing it.

Then there is Patterson's trek up the Flat along the steep east side. How many mountains he had to scramble up and down to avoid the cliffs dropping to the river. What labour. What motivation. What keeps people fighting such odds as these? Surely gold isn't enough.

July 20, Fri

I was awake with a cloudless sky at about 5:30 this morning and writing diary. We were up by 6 am. What weather we have been having. Things are getting dry in the bush, but I hope the weather keeps up for the rest of the summer the way it has the past two weeks.



We decided to head for Wild Mint Springs with the good weather. One morning, jet aircraft went over on a bearing of 85° and its vapour trail was closely followed by a few mares tails which thickened little by little over the hills to the south. By the time we had ferried to the shore opposite camp and stored the canoe safely on a shale slide, it was looking like it might cloud up.

A scramble and thrash for a couple of hundred yards down the steep shale slope of the Flat, alternately in and out of the burn, brought us out onto an open flat, swept clean by the fire. The top of Flat Canyon invited curiosity. Over we went to it. What a seething mass of white water with the odd pool! Patterson talks of people lining down it. I don't believe it, unless perhaps just before freeze-up when water volumes are a third of what they are now. It is nearly as vicious a piece of water as the Sluice Box above Virginia Falls. Certainly, it commands awe and respect in watching it but more importantly in approaching it by canoe. Parks have constructed a zig-zag rail up the gravel slope which blocks an obvious former river channel. Today's channel deflects off it, whirls downward through a torturous S bend in a fairly straight, extremely rugged canyon in Road River shales on the west, Sunblood limestone on the east. A lovely sand beach and bay, fringed with fireweed lies at the bottom of the second step (or is it the first?)\_where the S sweeps into the straight.

At this spot Mint Creek bounces in over a coarse gravel bed of granite, shale and limestone. We followed its course from up on the level burned patch, an old delta I think. It soon became obvious from the steep banks and several canyons visible ahead, that the sensible route to the springs lay up on the burned hillsides, just as at Bennett Creek. There are some high gravel slopes up this creek valley. That plus the present underfit stream strongly suggests a glacial spillway of some sort. Much of this sort of thing seems so obvious with area cleared of forest by the fire. How different it would be with the forest in place. Then we would probably have thrashed up the creek valley, and what a sweat that would have been. As it was, the jaunt in was almost a breeze. As soon as we rounded the shoulder of the first hill, the lush green oasis of the springs was in sight the rest of the way.

We more or less lost the sun at the top of the Thirteen Steps. A brief patch spurred us to the top of a hill about half a mile west of the springs for a location shot. The binoculars revealed a black spot in the spring's area to be a large bull moose ambling about grazing. He still only has knobs for horns which seems late. The wind isn't in our favour, so we won't get close. In fact, while we watched for 20 or so minutes from the ridge, a change in his alertness and an increase in his ambling rate suggested he already had got wind of us.

Just below us on the ridge is a small spring pool and lush green area beside Mint Creek. Then there is a couple of hundred yard gap before the main spring area begins. Across Mint Creek to the north there is a stretch of at least half a mile along the base of the hall and up its side for nearly 100 vertical feet that is a lush

green and contains at least one small pool, perhaps more. Above that for as much as another 200 vertical feet are bare rock patches, some of which appear to be tufa when examined through the binoculars. It seems quite like the slope where we are camped. It seems possible that the area of warm spring flow has switched over the years, probably thousands of years. The area where we are camped seems to have been more active at one time. So does the area across the valley from Wild Mint. Today Wild Mint is the most active. Are the three areas linked in any way? If so, is it possible to determine if the area receiving maximum [moisture?] has changed over the years?

It seems to me that these areas warrant diamond drilling for several reasons. First, and most importantly, I think ages and therefore rates of deposition could be established for the different areas. This could be done using carbon dating since these areas are all forested to a degree. Tree trunks lie cemented all over the surface and undoubtedly do also at depth. There is that source of carbon. Then there is the large volume of charcoal produced every time a fire sweeps the area. The spring periphery would produce more since the centre area of Wild Mint was too open to burn in this last fire. Not so at the other areas. Fires probably swept the area every 100-200 years. Drilling would also reveal any changes in chemical composition and the depth distribution of tufa. It could be done inoffensively and unobtrusively here whereas it would be much more difficult at Rabbitkettle.

We entered Wild Mint at its bottom west corner and were immediately impressed. The tufa has formed in sheets on a very gentle slope. There are old frost shattered patches and current active patches. Dams and pools are very rare. The sheets form in gently rounded humps, the streams flowing on the highest part of the hump! The buildup of tufa is most rapid along the stream edges, causing a levée to be built. Water spills gently over the levée losing minerals as it goes, thus causing the deposit to thin as it gets further from the stream, thus accounting for the stream staying in the highest parts. This can be seen in the current flow area and in older, now unused ones.

Just as at Rabbitkettle, frost is busily shattering older areas. They are surfaced in a medium to fine gravelly soil which is only poorly frost sorted and then only into little wavy ridges in a few places and in one or two spots, poor stone stripes on very gentle slope yet. Frost sorting or patterned ground may well be an active process here but the evidence of it is probably being destroyed almost as fast as it forms by, of all things, moose.

Judging from the tracks all about the area and the trails in the surrounding bush, half the moose in the Nahanni country live here. The trails are like the cow trails in Vaclav's pasture. I exaggerate not! The calcareous mud as well as the gravels are churned by tracks. The wolves seem to know this for the few spruce patches show signs of beds and being used as lookout sites. Wolf scats abound in these areas, but most were bleached white suggesting they are old, however chemical

reactions with spring water and tufa could also have an affect. I should add that the shallower of the two big ponds is laced with what appear to be moose trails through the mint in the bottom.

From bottom tufa to top pond, the springs rise a vertical distance of 25-35 feet. The bottom area is least active in terms of flow, but none-the-less has at least four flow sites plus a few seeps. As noted, it is mainly sheet flow but there is evidence of old rim dams in its surface and there are depressions in the sheet today both dry and containing pools. Above the sheet flows are two large pools impounded by well formed rimstone dams. In clear contrast to the north mound at Rabbitkettle, these dams are as much formed by vegetation initiating and abetting the process, as the tufa. Between the top and lower big ponds are some recently abandoned and, now, dry dams from the top pond. It was large then. The dams all angle quite steeply (15-30°) in towards the pond, thus on the underside [small sketch present] is a fibrous mass of vertical hanging tufa strands formed around roots and dead vegetation fallen in the water. Of course, the tops of past and current dams are thick in vegetation – violets, mint, grass of parnassus, fleabane, daisies, water hemlock and so on. So, there is a great source of material for tufa to begin accreting on. The process is particularly evident in these abandoned dams where the inside or pool wall is not obscured by living vegetation.

As we approached the hot spring area, a yellowlegs picked us up and started flying about us screaming as only they can. It went at it until we left, except for a short break for lunch and while we had a swim. How I wished I'd had the gun along. There are few things more persistent with a more detestable sound than one of those. Other yellowlegs in the area, perhaps its family, had the good sense to keep quiet, otherwise life would have been unbearable. A female g.w. [green winged] teal with four ducklings went and hid them and herself in the bush shortly after our arrival. Three other ducklings, probably also hers, for they looked the same as the others were on the top pond and continued to swim about as long as we were there, even when we were in swimming. The only other bird we saw was an unidentified sparrow.

Flowers grow in profusion about the spring area. Water hemlock is the prominent indicator flower, but Heracleum lanatum is present on the hill above the top pond. Monkey flower is common. The lobelia is more purple than at our campsite and from a distance casts a blue haze over the areas where it is growing. The violets and lady slippers must be something in June. There is a lovely yellow daisy out now, a fleabane which is white to purple, a yellow thing that is probably a hawksbeard, and goldenrod just coming out. The mint is spectacular. It grows as well or better in the water as out. I hadn't realized it was an aquatic plant. The bottom of the two large ponds is covered in it. Most of it would never seem to break water's surface so presumably it doesn't flower. In places it reaches 5-6 feet out of the bottom. It also is occasionally found on very dry tufa sites. What adaptability! Its odour is gorgeous as you walk. The light until at least midday

was a very, very soft sunlight that really didn't cast shadows. It was a very fine light for flower photos but a bit of sun would have been appreciated as well.

I waltzed into the first hornets nest of the trip and got off lucky – only one stab on the wrist. For a long time I have been wondering when it would happen for we have been in good wasp territory.

After lunch, the sky thickened to the point where we couldn't understand why we didn't get rained on. Some clouds were black. We decided to get out but not before a swim and bath. I had been measuring water temperatures all about the place. They ranged from 68°F to 86°F, the hottest being in the highest pool on its south side where bubbles indicated an active flow. The opposite side of the pond, a more average temperature, came in at 78°F. While swimming about, we found real hot spots where I would guess the temperature at 95-100°, but it was impossible to measure it at the point of emergence, several feet down.

It was interesting swimming for the hottest water was at the surface and the very sensitive face area picked up small temperature changes very promptly. None of the outlets proved too hot to put the feet over. Rarely have either of [us] enjoyed a swim as much. Warm crystal clear green water with a bottom floored in weeds not in the least slimy but ranging from crispy through to slightly sandpapery in lovely hues of green. We desperately needed the bath after four days of sweating through burns. We didn't do a washing but my clothes have never been dirtier.

The swimming was so nice that we may have been in the water an hour. What a pool. Perfect ledges for climbing out on – undercut low to the water, soft vegetation, rimmed in flowers. No swimming pool was ever so pretty, free of bugs yet nor much more needed. We swam from end to end and back and forth coming out to the cool air reluctantly at best. A unique spot, a very rare treat.

Just as we dressed, the sun came out for a short period. This sparked another round of photos as well as a black and white sequence on the Hasselblad. The skies soon darkened again, more ominous than ever so we headed for camp having accomplished all we could today. The walk back was short and easy with pauses for a few small, rather sour patches of blueberries. It is a bit early for them yet.

We had no trouble ferrying the river in the light canoe. Too bad it isn't that light all the time. How responsive it is then.

Supper was prepared fairly hastily for we didn't want to get rained on. Wild onions flavoured our fish dish and Jake concocted a soup of chopped onion and Bovril. The bulbs range in size from small to minute, the largest being half an inch in diameter. We soon found that one shouldn't proceed above the neck of the bulb

for they become quite woody there. Prunes topped off the meal. One of the finest days of the trip and well worth whatever sweat was expended.

What I would have given for the underwater camera today.

July 21, Sat

It began raining during the night and continues today. We are tent bound. We could have got away this morning after a very long sleep but just as well we didn't take advantage of the lull. It started to pour after that and has rained very steadily since. No point in making oneself miserable. Misery though is matter of choice. If it lasts more than one day the tent, even this big one, begins to look the more miserable.

We really can't complain for it is nearly three weeks since the last storm. In that time we have had a few showers but even they were rarely more than a mild inconvenience. The sun has shone at least some of nearly every day and much of many days. We have had a few occasions where good photos were stopped by a lack of sun but even that department hasn't been as bad as last summer.

In the break in the rain we headed out for a change of scenery, some exercise and to get a feel for the extent of tufa deposit on this hillside. The first thing I stumbled on was a patch of wild strawberries. The trip halted before it was barely underway. What a treat. Jake said it truly that nothing could beat wild strawberry jam. He could have said the same about the fresh berries. I don't like picking favourites from among the many fruits I enjoy but I had to agree with him there. We each picked about a cup before the patch was clean.

This tufa deposit is huge. At various times it has covered nearly the entire basin on the hill on which we are camped. It finally peters out in a sharp little draw some 250-400 vertical feet above the river. From this location, it spreads in roughly fan fashion until at the river it covers a distance of a third of a mile or thereabouts. It goes back from the river at least a quarter mile at the furthest point. The top end fades into a stony material, likely till. Just to the north of the draw at the top is an exposure of fine grained granitic rock not shown on Gabrielse's map. To the south of that are numerous rock exposures, all of a modified shale nature. One appears to be a shale-granite solution. Two at least have shales that are metamorphosed with some gneissic and/or schistose features, however the basic shale structure is usually present. Gab. [Gabrielse] shows the steeply dipping nature of these shales on the map but none of the metamorphism. Near the tufa top boundary, the tufa takes the form of a fine coating on some of the loose rocks but in most cases 50 feet or so below that it has formed extensive masses. Many glacier-rounded boulders, granite and others exist near and above this boundary. The distribution of the meta-shale material

suggests the ice moved up the hill here, although that is only a casual observation made as I was being distracted by trickles of water coming through the seams of my rain suit in a renewed deluge.

We found our first ripe raspberries of this trip near the top. Enough for a couple of handfuls. Then another strawberry patch. What a day to flatter the olfactory nerves and taste buds. Too bad the rain drove us in.

Before coming in though, I washed my utterly filthy shirt and underwear. The shirt and elastic band of the underwear are now a light gray instead of dark gray. Soap and scrubbing could do no better than that.

Jake made mint tea, flowers stems and leaves. He didn't like it, even with sugar and it didn't come up to my recollections of mint jelly, but none-the-less was refreshing. Are you just supposed to use the leaves?

Now that the diary is caught up, I shall turn to our library. I have reread most of D.R. [Dangerous River] today and have been busy identifying birds, flowers etc. I see from the bird book that I have thoroughly avoided trying to identify thrushes, vireos, flycatchers, sparrows and warblers. I shall try and do better in the future. I also find that for many flowers, I can't get along without Hulten.

Evening. The rain patters on and on. The Flat has started its rise and will rise more for by now it has rained well over an inch. I have just finished the D.R. and of the many times I've read it, never have I done so in a more fitting and appropriate place. Nor has a rainy day ever passed more readily. Of course, I am impressed by Patterson as a person and a writer. Despite this bias, the book has to have merit to still hold my attention the way it does, to bring chuckles repeatedly and even tears of laughter on the umpteenth reading of the Greathouse pancake episode. A damn fine book by a damn fine man who is 81 and on July 4 celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Quite a character. Too bad there aren't a few more like him.

July 22, Sun

This morning is still peppered with showers. I awoke at first light in a lull in the rain to take a peek out. The water has risen five inches since last evening. Awakened an hour or so later, when it was starting to get light enough to see, by another lull, to find the odd wave splashing over the top of the rock. Up another inch and a half. An hour and a half later I decided to get up after it hadn't rained for nearly half an hour. It is still terribly gray but the sky is slightly mottled. Is there hope of the rain ceasing? The water is up another inch with water splashing



over it [the rock] continuously. Up, up, up it comes almost imperceptibly but quite relentlessly. Where will it stop. How is this going to affect canoeing.

A dead standing spruce sliced open provided the wood needed for a fire. Nothing else in sight had a hope of burning. Breakfast was over quickly, porridge sans milk. We need to open the second food barrel but not in this weather with most [of] our possessions damp or soaked. It still hadn't rained, in fact it seemed lighter in the north. With a bellyful of lying in a damp tent with a leaky floor atop a warm spring covered in moss, we decided to head out. A few things got dried and smoked before we packed. By then the rock was totally submerged with barely a ripple over it. Up another two inches.

We loaded the canoe and since we are getting down in food, the one packsack is fairly empty, so we got an excellent packing of the canoe with little miscellaneous gear left loose. It is only a half mile down to the portage, if that and surprisingly the waves look smaller. However, I know from two days ago that there are drops we can't see from here so on went the full spray cover. Off we pushed.

Talk about a ride! The river is moving with great speed and awesome momentum now, but thankfully the high water has covered all kinds of rocks, and even smoothed out many of the waves. We started in centre river but moved to the left shore as soon as we were by a drop over a shale ledge at the base of the shale cliff. I wanted to be quite close to shore for we really only had one decent chance at landing at the landing. If that was missed and we were quick, we might get a second very poor chance at the top of the shale cliffs before the chute into the canyon, but that was only maybe. In other words, be damn sure the first attempt succeeded. I was over anxious and kept us so close to shore that I didn't see a sweeper that was just on the surface and angle[d] well downstream, until too late. We hit it parallel with a thud. The canoe wobbled, water boiled all round then our weight submerged [it] as we bumped over it. Lesson learned, I pulled out to where we should have been. We pulled a lovely turn in the current just where we wanted to and made a high velocity landing at the top end of the landing area just the way we were supposed to.

Parks has built a campsite on the little beach at the landing. Quite nice considering the area they had to work with. Then they had cleared a switchbacked portage trail into the very steep gravel bank leading to the top and dug into the hill to make a trail. It is quite obvious that this 150 vertical foot embankment is the remains of the Flat river delta where it entered Lake Nahanni. When the lake drained, the Flat cut itself a new channel into the shales a bit further east, forming the Cascade-of-the-Thirteen-Steps of today in the process. It cleared away the delta in the valley below the 13 steps and most of it above. However, a remnant is left across the river from the top end of the portage and lower than it. Further upstream around the first bend, the tufa has cemented a tiny remnant of it together which is exposed on the left bank at river level. Higher up in the tufa area there are many



boulder patches which almost certainly are also remnants of the delta. It seems to have provided the medium of proper porosity for the warm water to issue from, and flow down over. In so doing the gravel was probably cemented and sealed from top downwards, so much so that the springs are gradually sealing off their exits. The flow points of today are all in the bottom half, at least 150 vertical feet below the top exposure of tufa. The one thing that will probably save them from being sealed off completely is the rapid breakdown of tufa by frost, which probably creates new opportunities for water to seep out in previously sealed areas.

With four trips over the portage, I had time to think about these things and look at them anew at each trip. The portage went very smoothly. A slow measured pace gets one to the top puffing but not tired and the nice flat top portion lets one recuperate before starting down the longer hill to the river at the lower end. Parks have also dug switchbacks there. All in all, a fine portage which is there only because a lone, young fellow, probably wanting to emulate Patterson and Faille to a degree and do some prospecting, disappeared on the Flat, never to be found. His very smashed wood canoe was found below the Cascade near Irvine Creek, I think.

The Cascade is at least as awesome from the bottom end as the top. Today at the top end, the river sweeps into the S bend in a huge ridge of waves at least five-six feet high. Surprisingly the ridge stays near mid-river, never bouncing off the shale cliffs. This sinuous, writhing ridge of water sweeps into the bends, banking itself like a high speed bicycle track. At the lower end it booms and thunders down over ledge after shale ledge between canyon walls, to flatten out a bit as the river splits into three fingers between two elongated shale islands. The portage ends just above the islands, just below the last cascade. White water and waves foam and prance into the distance right from the foot of the portage. Spray cover country for sure.

We almost had the canoe loaded when the rain began again. There was no point in stopping and no worthy place to stop. We were damp now and judging from what we could see of the river, going to get damper. So what is a little rain?

The trip downstream was actually fun. The waves were big at times, but the high water had submerged all bars and beaches and most rocks. One could usually pick a nearly straight course down a rapids and do a minimum of rock dodging. Much of the water is a full class III in terms of waves and boils, and the worst rapids were nearly always on curves. Being a confirmed inside of the bend man, we nearly always managed to find a nice route down with very reasonable waves. Often we were squeezed right against shore or threading a narrow gut between a barely submerged bar and huge waves, neither being more than 2-3 feet away.

When I am out in country this wild with one canoe, I must confess that I don't like white water. Too much can go wrong too easily, too quickly. I have been tense ever since Loon Lake. But today, I just relaxed and enjoyed bounding down chutes, cutting across the flurry of waves at the bottom to be on the inside for the next bend. Dave and Nancy, this is the first time the spray cover has really been used. It came through flying, for we were slopping water most of the way. We stopped to bail twice and would have had to do so a third time if we hadn't reached Irvine Creek. The water gets in through the Velcro joints and the joints between pieces, but it works like a charm none-the-less.

Having got started and now being wet and the rain continuing and weather worsening, I felt it best to head for Irvine Creek, a twelve mile trip, our longest day so far on the river. We passed to supposed warm spring sites but saw nothing. We were in burn the entire way, often beneath shale banks. It wasn't interesting looking country. Half way down we passed Quartz creek which just before its mouth, I think joins another big creek off the Ragged Range. The map shows two creek mouths almost together. We saw only one black torrent coming in almost parallel to the Flat to be quickly gobbled up by it. It was utterly filthy. It must drain a lot of shale.

Approaching a shale bank, we saw quite a large chunk of rock slide down a chute into the river with a roar and splash. Just as we were beside it another one let go. Exciting stuff. And all last night the shale bank across from camp kept sending down rock showers.

At another shale bank there was still a big patch of blue ice adhering to the rock.

The last three and a half miles above Irvine Creek are interesting. There are fine views of the terraces Ford talks about. At least three levels are evident. Then on the right shore a mountain flank contains a fine marginal channel quite high up. Another flank contains a series of steps high up which may be but probably aren't of water origin. It would have been nice to have decent weather on this stretch, for here I wanted photos.

We pulled in on the east shore of Irvine Creek where a few big spruce were left by the fire of about 20 years ago. It is nice level and sheltered. Jake was cold, so as soon as the canoe was unloaded and put away and the tent up, I turned to firewood. A bit of small stuff but basically big stuff 6-7 inches which is about all the Sven saw handles. Dead, dry standing spruce. Then I proceeded to make a fire that was worthy of the name. An hour later we were warm and nearly dry and there was still lots of the day left. Jake opened the second food barrel and searched it until he found a package of biscuit mix. He has been just itching to try them. A feed of them browned to perfection topped with jam or honey, plus fried corned beef put me right to bed. Happy that the worst of the rapids are over.

July 23, Mon

Sometime last night without the slightest of whispers of wind, the low pressure system moved out, taking the cloud with it. This morning we awoke to a weak sun fighting its way through one of the heaviest, bluest water hazes ever. No wonder. After 42-46 hours of rain, it's a wonder the whole damn country isn't under the stuff. Were we glad to see the return of fair weather. In no time, Jake had a clothesline up and we had it and every spruce tree in sight festooned with gear. Everything is damp and most of it is wet. Even one barrel has some water in it. Presumably that got in through my homemade seal while lying on its side in water in the canoe.

There are still clouds on the Ragged Range and the humidity must be very high for things dry slowly, especially the bush. What can you expect though when it feels this muggy. And yet, the clouds coming off the Ragged Range evaporate by the time they reach us here.

This is going to be a camp day and local exploration day. With things in the second barrel sorted, I felt free to do a little nosing about. Everything around here was burned in a fire of about 15-20 years ago except for a few spruce along the rivers and the odd swampy bit. Finding cabin remains in here is going to be very difficult unless they are in the unburned patches.

I walked as far down the Flat as the first of the raised terraces. No cabin sign there, although most of it has been burned. Then I went up Irvine Creek – the same thing. I can't see anyone building a cabin anywhere on this side except where we are camped, for just behind us is a swamp of tiny spruce, none of which would have ever been cabin size. There are a few large cabin size tiles[?] cut where we have camped but nowhere nearly enough to make a cabin. There is also a very substantial collapsed pole-platform cache in here. This has clearly been a favoured campsite for some years, certainly since the fire, probably much longer. Tent poles have been left against a tree. There is a fire hearth of ringed stones and trails about. Just 50 yards upstream on the bar on the inside of the first bend is fairly recent camping sign – two large fires complete with aluminum foil and tin can garbage. Probably two years old, no more than three for a flood hasn't cleared it off the bar yet. Finally, carved in a two foot high blaze behind the tent are the names of the army twits who came in here to 'name' Mount Hamilton Gault. Of all the asinine names to give a mountain in the Nahanni country that name and the way it was done nearly take the cake.

I continued on up Irvine Creek onto and along the highest terrace just above the creek. Quite a view. You can see up the Flat to the Quartz Creek valley, then on up it. The beautiful meanders of Irvine Creek curve gracefully across the flood plain below to enter the Flat causing it to change course. Beyond the Flat are the mountains including the one with the marginal channel. Across Irvine Creek is the

Ragged Range split by a huge glacial valley, up which lies peak flank after peak flank until finally at skyline there are the backs of the peaks at the head of Pass Creek – nearly back to where we were about a month ago. There is a full summer, or more of rooting around that one valley were one so inclined. Then striking off right from it is the immense gap of the Irvine Trough, replete with terrace after terrace. It looks to me as though a huge delta some miles across was formed here and then as the Lake Nahanni levels dropped it was very thoroughly incised, reworked and lowered throughout most of its extent. Now Irvine Creek is reworking and cutting away on one of its higher terraces, at the second bend above the mouth. The lower two thirds of the terrace is bedded sands and silts with remarkably little cross bedding. It was probably laid down when the river was well back up the Flat or Irvine Valleys, or else during a period of lesser flow. The top third is suddenly very coarse gravels, indicating either an increased flow (warmer, wetter climate?) or that the delta had infilled to the point where this was now the leading edge.

The sand area of the bank is littered with bank swallow nests. Some have young perched at burrow entrances nearly ready to fly. Whether because of my presence or not, I am not sure, but there was a fair bit of synchrony to the entrances and exits of adults. The speed with which they fly into a tiny hole is incredible. How they do it without killing themselves is quite beyond me. Some enter from low down and lose a lot of speed on the up swoop. These birds usually have holes heavily deepened and sloped below the entrance but the ones I am talking of have small entrances and bore straight in.

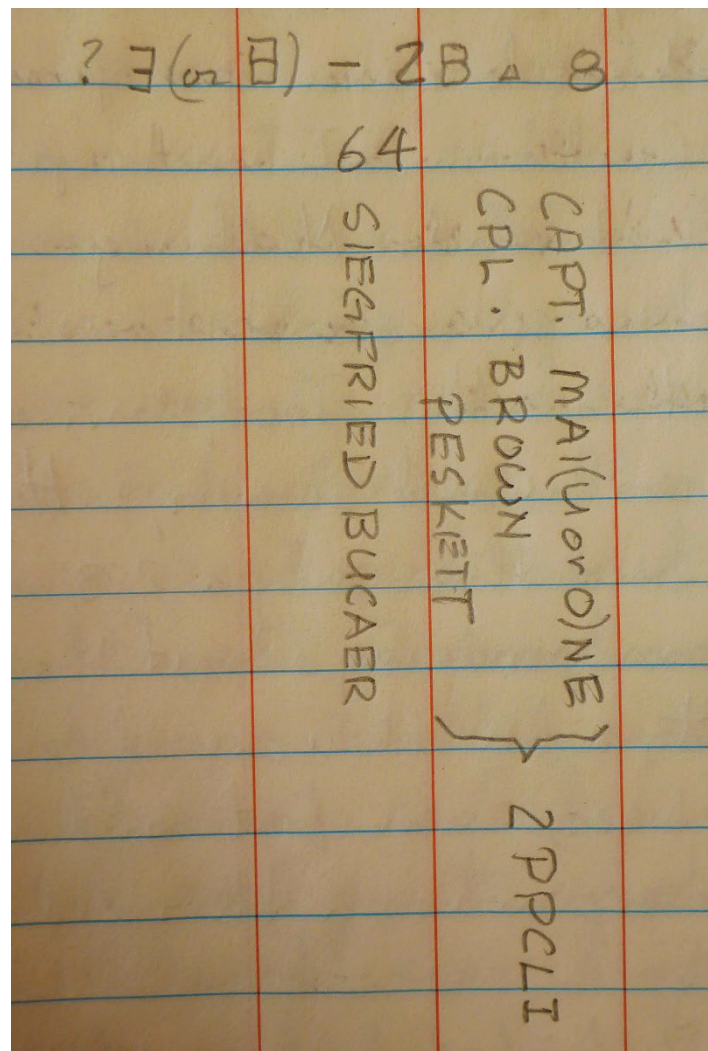
The leading edge of much of the terrace is nearly solid bearberry. Jack pine or a hybrid lies behind that, then spruce. It was a gorgeous spot to sit and dry out after my thrash through unbelievably thick, at times impenetrable, wet white spruce regeneration 6-12 feet high. I watched an eagle and quite uncharacteristically, a marsh hawk soar high above the valley. A smaller bird of some sort was chasing the eagle, likely golden, so it was forced to flap a bit. How it lifts my spirits to see those birds search out thermals and take advantage of them. The hawk went lower and lower until I thought it would have to land, but no, it crossed the valley and gained hundreds of feet in a minute, never once flapping. No wonder people do the next best thing they can and get into gliders or hang gliders.

Back at camp, we did a bit of cleanup then headed across Irvine Creek to where Faille's cabin is supposed to be according to Gus. I searched up the Flat River 200 yards beyond a small creek coming in just above Irvine Creek and I went up Irvine Creek past the first bend. Nothing, and I can't see where there ever could have been in that area. All of it is either floodplain or stunted spruce, unburned swamp. Hardly a cut tree in sight and then only a 2-3 inch stump. Now I am wondering about the opposite shore of the Flat, where there are at least some decent size trees, even if it isn't convenient to the expanses on this side of the river for trapping.

A benefit of the trip was a 12-14 inch grayling out of the little creek and 2.5-3 quarts of blueberries. The grayling was as delectable an entrée as could be imagined, followed by a so, so freeze dried stew topped by the hugest, best cooked cobbler ever. It took  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the blueberries and a white cake mix to make. After that I staggered about camp putting things away and repairing them before sitting by the fire to read by the yellow light of a minor sunset.

Two P.S.'s.

The carved blaze behind the tent reads as follows. Question marks indicate letters or numerals which the bark has grown over.



There are a lot of blown over spruce on top of the highest terrace where Irvine Creek is cutting it away. They are coated with varying amounts of what looks like



flood silt. Some are nearly buried in it, others with almost none. This same area has almost no vegetation. This totally puzzled me for it can't be flood 150 feet above the creek and not lower down. Finally, I realized it was an aeolian deposit swept uphill off the dried out silt zone on the cut bank below. Judging from the thickness it must happen at least several times a year when the wind blows strongly from the southwest down the Flat River valley. The deposit tapers out the further back in the bush you go. It and the fallen trees have left quite a mess along 150-200 feet of the highest part of the hill.

July 24, Tues

After a rather poor sleep, caused by getting into a terrible sweat in the sleeping bag, I awoke to sun and cloudless sky about 7 am. Didn't feel like much breakfast after our big blowout last night, so just had granola doused in fresh blueberries. Not Bad.

Then it was off up the terraces to retake some of yesterday's very hazy photos and to take some new ones. Jake came along today. It was just as nice as yesterday. At the end of the ridge a hen grouse stayed to detract us while her young flew off. They were a good size. There was something odd about her and after consulting the bird book, it was the fact she was a sharp-tail. I don't believe I have ever seen one before. It was in the open jack pine area along the edge of the ridge which itself is totally open and covered in bearberry. Just typical sharp-tail habitat I believe.

Back at camp we proceeded to pack up. Everything is dry. How nice that feels and how different from our arrival. As we left, we paddled across the Flat and checked out the bush for cabins. It too has been a popular camping area. It is littered with cans and small spruce cuttings as well as a few large ones. Some certainly date back to the 30's and the odd one perhaps earlier still. But no cabin or even stumps to indicate there ever had been one. So now there is a mystery. Nothing makes sense to me at the moment. I shall have to ask some more questions.

Very quickly today's journey turned into a very lackadaisical paddle. The water was calm generally but moving quickly. Where there were waves one could usually avoid them, and if not a bit of back paddling solved the problem. Just like the Nahanni. Shirts, life jackets and emergency packs came off. It was as much a drift trip as a paddle trip. Thoroughly relaxing, utterly delightful. What a change from the trip so far where one always had to be on edge. May there be many more days like today.

About four miles below Irvine Creek, a nice clear little stream came in off the limestone to the west. I suggested to Jake that we stop and fish. His first two casts each produced two pounders. It took another six or so casts to get the third

one we needed to make a real grayling feed. With supper in hand we proceeded to really rubberneck at the hills about, which are now exclusively Sunblood limestone. The very first exposure of it in low cliffs at river level is thinly bedded, looking like a shale except it is quite pink in spots. The next exposure is dark gray. There are also orange-yellowish exposures as it gives the traveler an idea of how the peaks above get to be the colour they are and why the name Sunblood. At one spot the limestone is folded gently and undulates. At another, it dips at 5-7° parallel to the river. This stretch is very reminiscent of the stretch above Virginia Falls but not quite as spectacularly developed. The valley sides are composed of truncated spurs. The peaks have been glaciated as well as the side valleys, some quite recently, others some time ago, for their cirques are gentle and smoothed, incised with V-shaped valleys. The first good exposure of dark gray lake silt at river level is on the first big U bend about four miles below Irvine Creek. From there on, lake sediments show up at river level with fair frequency, some of them having permafrost and slumping, others just slumping. All slumps are minor.

Marginal channels occur in at least two spots which are visible from the river. The first isn't that deeply notched, but there are a series of four steps on the side of a mountain about four miles below Irvine Creek. It is visible from Irvine creek and even above on the left side of the river. On the mountain south of the mouth of Irvine Creek, a much more prominent hump sticks up that is visible from the terraces at Irvine Creek but which shows up much better from a mile or more up the Flat. There is another fair one south of the Flat about 11 miles below Irvine Creek by river.

As we came downstream we were continually impressed by the colour of the Sunblood Formation. The colours are intense, far prettier than along the Nahanni. It was nice to sit back and drift or lily-dip the paddle and watch one mountain of colour after another reveal itself. We kept on in this fashion until about 7 pm, when a reasonable camping bar hove into view. We relaxed over our huge grayling feast, which Jake topped with rice-date pudding. I had to forego vegetables with the fish in order to save a spot for pudding. The second night in a row for blowout. I shall be putting on weight, not losing it. And on that topic, I seem to have lost little or no weight in the past week. I am in the last notch of the belt and loose to boot, yet there is still a good plump coating all over me. My waist is now thinner than last year, but I doubt that I weigh less. Hopefully, some hard hiking in the canyons will shed some more.

There was a lovely reflection of a mountain downstream in a pond on the bar. As the sun set it came out under a cloud deck upstream and lit it up. I sat and watched it fade, turning just as the sun slid behind a peak upstream, the clouds yellow. It was another  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1 hour before the sun set for good, erasing the last pink from hills south of the river.



July 25, [Wed]

For Some reason I awoke, fully wide eyed sometime between 4:30 and 5 am. How can I get by on 6-6.5 hours sleep out here and yet need 7.5-8 at home? I stayed awake, for the scattered cloud deck at the furthest point up valley seemed to have spread, thickened and moved our way. It sure looked like another two day rain brewing. I mulled that over, started diary and thought the better of it. We can't afford another day sitting about just now. So, I got up and started the day with Jake following closely once he realized the situation.

We breakfasted and were on the river by no later than 6:30, perhaps earlier. That has to be something of a record for us. The first showers were just coming over the hill from the south as we left but they seemed to evaporate over the valley. Just fine. We would like a few miles behind us before we get soaked, if that has to be it. We laid on the paddle and really made time for about five miles. The showers held off. In fact, if anything, things improved a bit.

We rounded a bend, hitting a northeast facing straight stretch and ahead lay a tremendously steep alluvial fan issuing from a small canyon lined with hoodoos in what appeared to be gravel. It was spectacular. Downstream just a bit and on the hillside above were the hoodoos in limestone that Ford talks about, although I always thought hoodoos developed in sediments only, not bedrock. At any rate, cloudy or not, promise of rain or not, this little canyon of real hoodoos with a spectacular fan leading to it practically from the river was too alluring. We collected cameras and up we headed. It was worth the effort of every step and a lot more. We climbed about 400 feet up, half of it on the creek and the rest up a treacherous bank of what was like concrete. Actually, it was a paleo-delta from the creek when the lake was here. It was a mixture of huge boulders, lots of gravel and all cemented by buff clays and silts. The slopes were beyond the angle of repose and with next to nothing to get foot or hand holds on, if you started sliding you stopped only when you hit bottom after a very bumpy ride.

The hoodoos were erosional remnants carved in this stuff. From the bottom many looked like the pointed variety protected by a caprock, except these lacked cap rocks. From the top, however, the plan became clear. They were the ridges left standing up from the valleys of a dendritic drainage pattern. Some were 30 feet high and quite spectacular.

While clambering along to get a better view, Jake dropped the leather lens case and rear cap for the wide angle lens which fortunately was on [off?] his camera. Down it bounded, banged and tumbled towards the creek below, cap following. We lost sight of it just before the creek. When we reached bottom we started a search, Jake along the creek, me clambering up a gully. I heard Jake whoop. He had found it lodged by rock in the creek, wet but otherwise OK. I continued up and lo, there lay the lens cap in a patch of scree just where we'd lost sight of it on the

last bounce. A happy ending, for without either, the lens mightn't have survived the trip.

We got back in the canoe after a good long drink in what we subsequently learned was the last clear creek we were to see from here to the Nahanni. Oh, I forgot to mention that the sun came out and stayed out despite clouds in every direction, while we were at the hoodoos.

A mile downstream, what looked like the last patch of rock hoodoos proved too tempting. I dragged Jake ashore and up we went for 1200-1400 vertical feet under a blazing, humid sun. Talk about sweat. The sun blasted back off the scree at us and to top it off we were racing the sun to hoodoos for it appeared a cloud was to reach them about the time we did. It's a good thing we didn't have to try that 4 weeks ago. We would never have made it.

This too was worth the effort. The pattern eroded in the thinly bedded limestone was the same as in the paleo-delta Dendritic ridges. In many cases the stone was so badly weathered that a zephyr could have blown over the entire thing but for the huge mass of rock in them. We had to be extremely careful where we stepped. The limestone pillars were weathered gray on top, but the sides and bases were a bright buff to yellow. Far more spectacular when seen from downhill than up.

From the hoodoos we had tremendous views back up the Flat to Irvine Creek and the Ragged Range well beyond and up the Caribou River. Up the Flat we could see terraces, both fluvial and, I believe, glacial. Spectacular examples. Below us were slumps and a permafrost slump in lake sediments as well as a truncated fan. Across the Caribou and up it was terrace after terrace and huge slumps. By now it was fairly cloudy, but not where we were nor on much of the rivers. They were silver ribbons wound through dark patches of clouded forest. Magnificent. The clouds were becoming real anvils and shedding showers but, again, not on us.

The trip down from the hoodoos was not as bad as on the way up. The scree was quite horrible – not loose enough to ski down but too fine to provide decent footing. It was stumble, slip, stumble, slip until we hit the trees. We no sooner got in the canoe than we were paddling hard for the far shore to photograph the steep truncated alluvial fan we had seen from on high. It was quite spectacular, maybe the best in the park, certainly the most unique. The Flat had sliced off the front of the upper modern portion of the fan into a steep face. But downstream, butted against the modern portion was a higher paleo-fan laid down when the lake was in here. It is composed of gravels cemented with buff lake sediments. It is forested but its fan shape is very clear seen from downstream about a quarter mile. It is truncated by the Flat on the front edge and one side has been lopped off by the present creek which has then partially back filled against it with modern debris.

A short distance downstream the uppermost channel of Caribou River enters to be followed half a mile later by the main channel fanning out over bars. From up high, the Caribou seemed a small stream wandering in braided fashion over a wide flood plain. Down here it properly carries the name river, being nearly as big as the Flat. I don't know where one could find room to wander up its bars and floodplain for they seem nearly non-existent at the mouth. We didn't see the mouth from the Hoodoos so maybe it improves upstream, in the walking line that is.

The slumps line the south side of the Caribou and on down the Flat. Their lake sediment supposedly is an important mineral lick but it just didn't look attractive enough for us to thrash through the bush to them. Perhaps we missed something in not going in but now we'll never know.

The Flat develops an even more braided character with the flood of debris brought in by the Caribou, which is even slightly dirtier than the Flat at the moment. This continues for some miles downstream on and off. In places it is a real splits.

On one of the bars, just below the Caribou, Jake said, 'there's a bear with a cub – a grizzly.' Sure enough. Out she wandered on the bar, a fairly small sow, quite unaware of us. It was cute. The cub ambling behind generally following the old lady but covering twice as much country in a world all of its own. Then it spotted us, darted over to Ma, putting her between us and it, standing on its hind legs and peering over Mom's back. Of course, that alerted her as we were frantically paddling for the bank to get out the camera. Probably about then, the upstream wind carried our scent to her. Off she went into the bush, slowly but purposefully. She wanted nothing to do with us. What amazed us both was the large size of the cub compared to her.

And that brings up the subject of game or I should say the lack of it. We have seen almost nothing this trip, which is a big disappointment. Mind you, we haven't gone out of our way to be stealthy, especially when hiking in dense brush and upwind, yet we should have done better than this. One moose, two caribou and now one grizzly, a few beaver on the Flat above Seaplane, four or five hares fleetingly, squirrels, chipmunks and that's about it. No sheep or goat, no black bear, wolves, otter, mink, weasel and so few of all other things. Yet lots of tracks on bars. It is the biggest let down of the trip. Not even a single beaver in this supposed beaver paradise from the Caribou on down to the mouth, despite plenty of sign. Hope it improves.

Oh yes, I forgot to mention it yesterday, but we came down one side of an island-bar just in time to see geese running off the lower end and swimming for the far shore. As we got downstream of the island, some headed back to the island to join a few of their comrades who hadn't left yet. Could they ever run. I would have had a hard time catching any, however fast that is. There were about 25 of

them, presumably in moult judging from their behavior. A nice change and pleasant surprise from the dearth of animals.

At the mouth of the Caribou, the Sunblood strata in the mountains north of the Flat start to tilt upwards and continue to do so ever more steeply for the next two miles, continuing vertical for another two or so. Obviously, a fault and the map later showed this to be the intersection of the Dall Fault and Caribou thrust faults.

Four miles or so below the Caribou the country really opened up. The mountains fell back from the river becoming hills, with exposures of lake silt in places. I had intended to camp somewhere in here, but it was so uninteresting that we kept going. We stopped or looked at a number of creek mouths hoping to repeat yesterday's grayling feast. The creeks are all tiny, very muddy from flowing over lake silts and not at [all] pretty.

Almost before we knew it, we were approaching low cliffs and hills closing in again. It was the start of the lower Flat Canyon. It is certainly a welcome scenic change. The low shale cliffs are coloured gorgeous shades of rust, orange, dark brown and black. In several places waterfalls, very tiny, sprinkle and splash their way down, providing moisture for clumps of vivid green moss or ferns. Very much like the cliff above Mary River but different colours. These cliffs stretch intermittently on either side of the river for three miles, but mainly on the south side.

Two big bends just before then, around Direction Mountain, provide cliffs and in the first case a spectacular exposure of the buff lake sediments, one of the best and highest in the Park. At the base of it sits a most peculiar round lump of coloured shale bedrock, perhaps 100 feet high. A strange sight. It reminds one of a giant gargoyle.

As one comes out of this first bend, the thinly bedded limestone takes a graceful curved dive into the river, the sign of the Arnica Thrust Fault around the second bend ahead. The Canyon, while a welcome scenic change as it curves around Direction Mountain is not spectacular. The low shale cliffs above are prettier in my opinion. Just before the river swings east to join the Nahanni, a small steel building on the bank marks the Water Resources river gauge. Why it doesn't get swept away by ice, I don't know.

A short distance below it, at the head of an island, a large gray wooden box sits in the bush, presumably Water Resources. The Sibbeston cabin supposedly around here can't be seen from the river at all.

Another mile downstream brought us to the Parks cabin. A small neat brown cabin set very neatly amongst a grove of spruce in a nice deep eddy where boats or planes can be landed.

The first thing we did was look for our two barrels Mansell was to have left. We searched the bush, then the cache, then the cabin with ever growing depression. No barrels. Finally, we set up camp and had supper. I searched the bush all about – still no barrels. After supper, just as the sun set, we hiked up to Sibbeston cabin in the bush, just behind the foot of the island. No barrels anywhere along the way and there was virtually no likelihood of it due to very, very poor aircraft landing sites. Then I searched downstream from the warden cabin to the bars below. No barrels. Now I was upset to say the least.

Suddenly our plans for the last half of the summer are in chaos. There are many possible explanations for their absence, but only one really holds water – Mansell has forgotten to bring them in. At any rate it was such a long day that I still fell asleep without too much trouble.

July 26 [Thurs]

I awoke about four and dozed very fitfully for another hour. Then I proceeded to fuss and stew. We are going to try radioing Parks to see if they can fix things up. Using their radio is definitely a no-no but we are fairly desperate. First, we checked our food supply. We have 12 days left at full rations plus our emergency packs which might as well be eaten or else the food in them will have to be thrown out before they are needed next. We are good until Aug 6 in other words, plus a bit.

We turned the radio on at 4010 where they had left it and waited for their morning sched. [schedule]. We waited in vain until noon and still nothing. We even tried the other frequency. About 1 pm I tried calling the Butte and Simpson. No response. Everything suggests their system is broken down again.

More food for thought. Then we decided that a note on the door could work in the time available. They would almost certainly be here by boat or chopper within a week. Incidentally our hopes got a huge boost then dashed when a chopper came downstream last night but flew straight on downriver, never approaching the cabin.

All morning we washed and aired tings under cloudless skies and in scorching heat. It feels so good to be clean again. I had reached my absolute limit for dirtiness. While things were drying I tried writing diary but couldn't concentrate.

Jake caught a nice 3-pound Dolly up in the clear snye where we washed. It made a fine lunch. He was fishing by standing in the water barefoot in front of the cabin when a fish started nibbling his toes. He dragged the lure by his toes in the muddy water and hooked as big or bigger a Dolly. It got away though. Another good fish story.

As soon as the clothes were dry, we packed up and headed for the Nahanni. We hope to catch some tourists and send notes out with them similar to the one we left at the cabin. Essentially, it is asking Parks to phone Mousell and have him fly the stuff to the Forestry cabin at Deadmen's Valley. If the notes get out in time, we can still get our food there before we run out and finish the summer's journey the way we planned. I feel much better and certainly more relaxed that there is now a plan of action that might work. If it doesn't, we paddle out from Deadmen to the Butte without wasting much time. Once there we can straighten things out and decide whether or not we want to fly back to Deadmen for the last 2-3 weeks.

We are camped just below the Flat – Nahanni confluence. A nice spot on a beach showing succession well and having lovely sand patterns to photograph. Jake tried fishing here in the water and again had something at his feet which fled when the lure he dragged by, hit it. It is unbelievably hot. As the sun set, the huge anvils up the Flat began to look less threatening. By the time I went to bed after sunset, they had pretty well evaporated. Hope a canoe passes by tomorrow.

July 27, [Fri]

Another sunny day. My but the weather is kind to us. It looks like a good summer to be here. The Nahanni dropped four inches overnight and is already a gray-green instead of brown. In fact, very surprising to me the Flat is dirtier than the Nahanni. If the weather holds dry, the Nahanni might just be green by mid-August, something of a record I bet. Already we can see down 8-10 inches to bottom.

This morning has finally got the diary caught up after the past two upsetting days. We are pretty well resigned to fate. One way or another we will make things work out. I will write Wendy a note to send out if we meet someone and then we should be ready to leave here by 1 pm for Mary River with a couple of short climbs on the way.

Our first climb was up the hill south of the Flat Nahanni junction to get a photo of the two rivers meeting. The Nahanni flows into the Flat here, not the reverse as one would expect. We got up just in time. All morning the thunderheads have been building on a monstrous scale. Two hours ago they started grumbling in the distance. Now they are getting quite dark and booming nearby. While we took photos by the last sun, a tremendous wind started blowing upriver, lifting dust



devils off the bar below. When we reached the canoe, it was black overhead and blowing to beat the band.

We pushed out into the river and the wind was almost strong enough to hold us steady against the current. We paddled hard to make progress. Between the wind and current, the canoe went every which way despite my efforts to steer a reasonable course. It would have been impossible were it not low in the water.

We made it to La Vera creek, through dust storms, waves but no rain! It is very different this year. There are almost no waves at all. The bar is arranged differently, yet Vera itself tumbles in as clear as ever. Jake wanted to fish, so I quite gladly set out to explore its fan. It is nothing unusual with its Dryas, sand, boulder, shrub and forest patches, its wolf, caribou, moose and man tracks and its clear swift stream without pools. Just as I reached the Low canyon at the head of the fan, there were a couple of gorgeous pools. Jake caught a small Dolly just as we were leaving Vera, so there was nothing for it but to go ashore and take him up to the pools to see if we could get enough for supper. No way.

Shortly after leaving Vera Creek for good, the sun came out and we continued under the only patch anywhere in sight to Mary River. The trip was mainly a drift and I got sun on [an] unconformity wall for the first time. From a distance it looks like an unconformity. Up close it doesn't. I now think not.

It was quite something to see the shale wall that was so spectacular last fall. It still is, but in a different way. It is drab and filthy. It is mostly wet which has removed the colour from the rock. The pretty waterfall dripping onto the rocks is now a muddy roaring torrent. It is accompanied by at least six others along the cliff – all muddy. One actually is mud, with its entry to the river marked by great plops and splashes. Obviously, there is lake silt on top of the cliff and perhaps some permafrost. It was almost impossible to see being the same spot as that incredible day last fall, when everything was yellow and in sun. The river was 3-4 feet lower then also.

We pulled in, as I did last fall at the very foot of the cliff, the very top end of the bar. The sand bank in the snye was there again, washed clean now, but still very damp, so we went up on the bank overlooking the bar. First thing we stumbled over was two 10 gal. gas kegs. Don't know how I missed them last fall, but I did. It is a fine campsite.

Mary River has really swept its bar clean this year and confined itself to one main channel instead of two as well as the small channel again along its west side.



After supper I took Jake in and showed him the mound that is the Campbell-Vandale cabin remains. It brought back many memories of Milt and a curiosity about his health.

We went to bed still under the only blue patch in sight. It bodes ill for the morrow when we hope to climb the high mountain east of Mary River for its views down into Third Canyon.

Letter written in an attempt to solve food problem

Addressed:

To Lou Comin,  
Chief Warden

or Steve Cooper  
Warden

or other Parks  
Personnel at  
Nahanni Butte

July 27/79

Dear Lou, Steve or other Parks Personnel

We have a big problem and would like to ask a favour of you. Mansell Patterson of Simpson Air was to leave two of my yellow steel food barrels at the Flat cabin, or make arrangements to have them left there. We searched two miles of shoreline and back in the bush and can't find them anywhere so presumably he forgot to get them here. Incidentally a bear had a go at our stuff at Loon Lake but the barrels survived without even a scratch, so I doubt the famous Flat Cabin grizzly did the barrels in if Patterson left them. Anyway, we will be totally out of food by Aug 6 and we don't want to abort our trip. We have found a number of new and old features and historical sites and have hopes for more, given the time. So that is the problem.

Could we ask you to call Mansell collect on our behalf and ask him to deliver the barrels to the Deadmen Valley Forestry Cabin? If he has delivered them, could you find out where, and if at all possible, make arrangements to have them delivered to Deadmen before Aug 6? We will reach there then after doing some hiking back off the river. I apologize for asking you to do all this for it is not a problem of your making at all, but I hope you will understand the predicament

we are in. If you are flying over in the chopper and see us, and can spare the time to drop in and let us know if the situation has been solved, it surely would ease our minds a bit or let us make alternate plans. We are in the 18' Grumman, with painted yellow seats and deck, with red centre tarp over the gear again.

Whenever we see you, we look forward to bringing you up to date on our finds and having a chat once again.

All the best

Bill Addison, Jake Turland

P.S. We left a note similar to this on the Flat Cabin door but we are sending this and one more if possible in the hopes that at least one reaches you by the end of July.

July 28 [Sat]

I awakened about 6:30 to the light patter of a shower on the tent – very light. A peek out revealed a sky of varying shades of gray but hardly ominous – not yet anyway. Obviously, it isn't the day to tackle the 5200 foot peak and we would be smart to get to The Gate before it pours, to a good rainy day campsite, with lots of diversions to take between squalls. I aroused Jake and hit him with the idea.

An hour later we hit the river, stopping before we started to throw the line in at the mouth of Mary River. No luck. On we went, sizing up the best route up the big peak. There are several possibilities. The upstream end is rugged but direct. The middle one up a mossy slope past a secondary peak seems most appealing. The long gentle route up the downstream spur involves bush travel and seems too long but may offer some views up and down river either side of the spur.

Across the middle route is a nice side canyon up a little creek which looked as though it could be appealing and I noted it last year. Today we tested it and it came up pure gold. It has nice walls in various shades of gray, brown and oranges. The creek has at least two lovely pools and waterfalls of a few feet. The view down canyon into the big walls of the peak across the Nahanni are something. The rock is generally limestone but judging from boulders in the creek bed, a few of the orange layers are sandstone. I hadn't realized the Sunblood Formation contained any sandstone, but apparently it does. What photos one could get here with good sunlight. The ones today will be fairly pallid. Somebody may have passed us while we were up the canyon. We'll never know but I sure hope not.

We drifted most of the rest of the way to The Gate. Jake has been totally silent about the mountains and canyons since we started down the Nahanni. I don't know whether that indicates awe or boredom. Probably the former for his neck was craning about a fair bit.

I spotted chalcocite, a copper stain on the right bank in the first bedrock outcrop on both sides of the river in the Third Canyon coming downstream. Edwin Lindberg showed us a sample he said he found on a scree slope on the left bank a mile or so above The Gate. I couldn't spot his showing. It's a damn good thing this was made a park when it was.

We pulled into the big eddy edged by sand on the left shore above The Gate. Nary a track in sight. Above the high water flotsam line, my tracks from last fall were still indistinctly visible. The last person last year and the first this year to use this most desirable of campsites. I had expected to find it trampled for it is marked in the new guide book. Thank goodness it is well hidden from the river. And speaking of trampling, it is amazing how little evidence there is of people having used the river this year. Sand banks remain untrampled and free of slogans, creek mouths show evidence of one or two people at most and there has only been one campfire on the rocks at Gate Creek.

First thing after camp was set up, I remembered Kirsten's birthday. Immediately sat down and made her a birthday card by tearing a brown cover off Amsden's archaeological report. I drew a picture of momma grizzly with baby bear peeking over her back. Fortunately, the Bear Country pamphlet put out by Parks helped my inept drawing skills. I took the drawing of the Gate on the Parks pamphlet and glued it inside with a short letter.

I put it inside the plastic bag with the letter for all the girls and the note for the wardens about our food problem. Basically, I have explained the situation and asked them to phone Simpson Air to get the food to us at Deadmen by Aug 6. Last night I made a sign on the back page of the waterproof paper of the Parks pamphlet with a big HELP and a note of explanation. It now sits taped to a Grumman cushion attached to a stick stuck in the sand by the river's edge. Not very big from a distance, but hopefully it will attract someone's curiosity. Nobody has come by today either.

After lunch we climbed to the very top of The Gate, east side. I had only gone two thirds the way up previously last year. It is well worth the effort, the view onto Pulpit Rock and around the big curved wall below The Gate being spectacular. If the sun is out tomorrow, we will go up it for photos before we start up Gate Creek to retrace Cameron's trek with Poole Field in 1935.

The cloud is breaking a bit this evening which hopefully means a good day tomorrow.

A few things I forgot to mention. While climbing The Gate yesterday we had the finest blueberry picking of the trip so far. Nice big, fat, juicy ones. We ate our fill and then some. We contemplated another cobbler but only have a chocolate cake mix left, although I suppose our biscuit mix would do.

Back at camp this afternoon we were standing under the spruce trees when suddenly we were bombarded by green, white spruce cones from above. Two squirrels were overhead and decided the cones were ripe enough to harvest. It is a fairly good cone year and there was a cone coming down every 3-5 seconds. Only in the last day or two have they really started eating them.

This evening while sitting waiting for a canoe to show and writing diary, I began to fuss about our predicament and look at options. I am missing the family, especially after making Kirsten's card. If the food isn't there, we can easily paddle to the Butte and get it and us flown back up to Deadmen Valley but I don't know what that would cost and I am not sure I want to spend it anyway. Then there is the varnishing at home and sabbatical report to do. I had it figured that the food probably wouldn't be there and we should move on now, using our food to show Jake the rest of the river and then go home, getting there by mid-August. I was feeling quite low about it all, but Jake came to the rescue and I discussed the idea with him. He wisely pointed out I was crossing bridges we hadn't reached yet and the best thing to do was to stick to the schedule and burn our bridges as we go. If there is no food at Deadmen, then we can worry about what to do next. In no time he had me all cheered up with his devil be-damned attitude.

July 29 [Sun]

We arose to broken cloud and high humidity this morning. It was still dark as dungeon in under the spruce but up we got. We are a bit short on breakfast so we cooked up a rice pudding this morning as a substitute. It was probably the best one of the trip and it will certainly fuel us until noon hour easily. We are both bloated.

We are going fairly light with just enough food for two days plus an extra lunch. We hung the food pack in a tree and before leaving made another HELP sign in very bold black letters 4-5 inches high on two pieces of paper taped to a paddle. It is easily read from 100 feet. We stuck the paddle upright in the wet sand. Now that should get attention from any passers by. The last thing I did just as we rounded the bend of Gate Creek as [it] changes from east to north, was look back up the Nahanni to see if anyone was coming. Not just then.

The first  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile up Gate Creek isn't too bad travelling. The valley, while still a canyon doesn't have the steep sides right down to the creek. Even then we were initially tempted into crossing the creek each time the bar ran out on the inside of the curve we were walking on. Very quickly (the first crossing) we realized that if we were to cross the extremely slippery rocks efficiently we were going to need support. Thought immediately of Colin Fletcher and his walking stick. A couple of dead, debarked, dry spruce of appropriate size were lying on the bank. Very quickly we had walking sticks. The first crossing also proved, for Jake's boots at least, that staying dry was going to be difficult if there was to be much back and forth nonsense.

Our technique very quickly evolved to stay on the east or left bank and take to the bush when necessary. For some reason, it was nearly always better walking than the right bank. We thrashed on, the valley narrowing as we went, the cliffs of Sunblood limestone closing on us in ever more scenic fashion. Suddenly, about 1.5 miles up, a cliff which appeared to have the creek flowing along its base, had the creek issuing from it. A real canyon with a lovely set of waterfalls and its inevitable dipper bird shrieking its shrill rattle at us.

At the base of the falls a pool contained a nice grayling (Jake says Dolly) which was quite a surprise. If it wants to survive, it will have to do a lot of flopping down over shallow riffles to reach the Nahanni. On the west side, the falls have a lovely bit of green moss topped by yellow limestone. On the east it splits, flowing over two shelves. The canyon itself is deep and dark, containing one more falls visible from the bottom and two others plunging into gorgeous rounded pools, visible only from the top. The narrow ridge forming the canyon is crossed on the west side of the creek.

While viewing the canyon from the ridge, I thought I heard an aircraft. A minute or so later, the Simpson Air Beaver, piloted no doubt by Mansell, flew low over the peaks. I waved, and low and behold, the aircraft circled immediately and headed over the hill. Had he really seen me camouflaged as I must have been in khaki against rocks of nearly the same colour? The aircraft circled The Gate area once more before disappearing. I think they were just sightseeing with somebody but I sure hope if he has our grub he sees the sign on the Flat cabin door and takes it to Deadmen instead.

Above the little canyon, the main canyon in which Gate Creek flows began to lose its vertical walls and assume more of a V shape. The walking didn't improve much, if any, until half a mile after the first main fork heading east up which we turned for roughly another mile. Criss-crossing the creek became a matter of necessity now for the valley narrowed markedly and the stream was much smaller and shallower. Suddenly the stream dried up and we hadn't filled our canteens. I was worried. We found a tiny pool, half an inch deep and if I drank slowly enough

I could get a drink without taking in the bottom. I tanked up anyway even if the canteens weren't. It is probably no coincidence that the water dries up just where the map shows Gate Fault crossing the creek.

Up until now we hadn't enjoyed the constant roar of the creek. Suddenly we found its silence even less enjoyable. It was with great relief that we heard trickles just before the next forks heading northeast. The trickle soon increased to a healthy roar. We filled the canteens anyway. Water we, especially me, must have. The creek ran dry at least twice more always to reappear when bedrock came close to the surface.

After the northeast stretch, we took an east stretch to the next forks, where we decided to camp with water, wood and a barely passable tent site all together. After crossing Gate Fault, the hiking was downright good despite the ever steepening gradient. There were fewer boulders and the gravel was laid down fairly evenly in the creek bottom. We stopped where we did because it seemed the best place to start and end a circle hike tomorrow up on some nice looking tundra ridges.

Others had certainly camped here for other reasons. Tent poles lay in the creek bed and tin cans were scattered all about, the only recognizable one being a Burns luncheon meat can. All others were badly rusted. I would guess the age of camp at between five and ten years. Many rocks in the area had been cracked and some had been brought to the area. My guess is it dates to the staking of the area in the latter half of the '60's. This is also probably close to the site, if not the actual site of the first camp of Cameron and Poole Field in 1935. A fire went through the area about 15 years ago (coincident with prospecting and staking?) so nothing can predate that.

There is a very dark, nearly black limestone (?) which litters the creek beds up around here and is packed with fossils. Ostracods and crinoids, I think. I will have to check. It is probably the Arnica Formation dolomite. Some of it is gorgeous. Also, the amount of calcite stringer in the rocks is quite unbelievable in some cases. One wonders how rock could get so finely fractured.

It took us about six hours to get here. The going is tough and much of it not very pretty once the Sunblood cliffs are left behind. In the tough places where we had to take to the bush, it seemed as though it would take days to get here. The appropriate unit of travel time seemed hours per mile, not miles per hour. In fact, we didn't do too badly and we have just been filling in time since three o'clock.

July 30 [Mon]

If today is to have a name, it must be FRUSTRATION! The Nahanni country did its utmost to be mercurial, deceiving, unpleasant and plain bad tempered. We got up at 3;30 – 4am so as to get to the top before the sun hit us full. I stuck my head out to a totally clear sky, got up, lit the fire and started porridge. Twenty minutes later, when porridge was cooked, I had time to look up again to find the sky clouded solid. Hopes plummeted right there. But we came up here to retrace footsteps and to get on top. Cameras and clothes went into Jake's pack and without delay we started.

As noted yesterday, the closer to the head-waters we get, the steeper the creek gets. I am sure if you plotted a graph of altitude vs distance for a creek or river, you would produce an asymptotic curve for big rivers and at least the upper half of one for creeks. This was no exception. The pitch steepened and steepened the closer we got to its source. Difficult as it was to climb in on its last stretch, it was still the best going available until it petered out, whence we took to the bush – open bush that is, near treeline.

Up we climbed, puffing and sweating. The sky raced by above but nary a whisp of a breeze down on the mountains. A few blue patches appeared, the sun hit the highest peaks, all just as I topped the steepest part to hit a bulldozed trail. Yes, that is what I said, a bulldozed trail.

We had seen them yesterday on the tops of ridges. It seems that the most efficient way for Cadillac to do its exploration is to bulldoze trails all over the hillsides, seeing what they uncover and periodically, really dig out a pit as deep as bedrock permits a dozer to go. The have ripped up a series of ridges stretching from here to at least five miles the other side of Prairie Creek. That is at least 10 miles and the width of all this varies from about 1 mile to several. Quite a mess but anything goes up in this country, even if you don't have much more than a hot speculative property. Fifteen years, a lot of money and work later and still no mine. At least 50 years since it was first staked. It may never amount to more than scarred hillsides unless government offers some very attractive subsidies like a road and a few tax breaks. Even then, it is too spotty a deposit to make much.

There is, however, a hidden benefit of the disruption. Bare mineral soil is turned up. A host of flowers line the sides of the trails taking advantage of a favourable seed bed, more nutrients or whatever. Fireweed, lousewort a blue open flower with a pea-like leaf, asters and a yellow daisy were among those seen.

It was while hiking along a trail on the ridge, viewing the damage, exploration or development, depending on your point of view, that we noticed the weather to the south and west. A cloud deck of monumental proportions, in three layers was



moving in. Peaks were evaporating from view like a puddle of alcohol on a hot day. The weather had been terribly hazy and muggy all morning. Now it got worse. The mosquitoes let us know unequivocally that weather was brewing. With no wind, we collected an ever larger, howling following as we started climbing to the top of our ridge.

We topped the ridge and into the sun. It was 7:30 and we had already hiked about three miles and climbed 2500 feet. The extreme haze successively paled one ridge or peak after another into the sun. It is a rugged, nearly impassible country to someone on foot, even when you only see the gross outline this way. It isn't hard to understand why mountainous countries have historically been small; why even small countries are divided into tribes or even smaller local groups in each valley and; why they can be as insular as the tiniest island: not at all hard to understand when you try traversing them on foot. I found my thoughts wandering to Maj. A.B. Rogers and his quest for a pass through the Selkirks, a much worse range than this. He didn't have the advantage of maps or knowing where he was going except in the grossest sense. However miserable, bigoted, arrogant, an SOB he was, he had guts, courage and perseverance to find Rogers Pass. By contrast, the first whites into Galena Creek had it easy here. The Indians took them in. And we, following in their footsteps, even easier yet as we traced Cameron's notes on a 1:50,000 map. Mind you, we still sweated as hard as anyone else.

Down the ridge, nearly north, the valley was filled with morning mist, glowing in the sun, ridges spiked by trees standing out against it. Northeast to east into the sun lay the haze – delineated peaks to the horizon. It was so bright you couldn't have seen a herd of 500 Dall Sheep looking into that glare. Below us lay the headwaters of the creek draining into the Little Valley. Off to the south the peaks faded quickly into a gray void. West the same, only the void was black and the fading more rapid. Seldom have I seen a more ominous sky. It was not coming at us directly, thank goodness. It was angling west to east with a slight northerly drift. We figured we had a bit of time before it hit and even if we didn't we had expended a lot of energy to get up here and now, by gum, we were going to take at least a quick look around. We headed southeast towards the next peak hoping to catch it before the sun left us for good. Didn't make it.

The hints of views from this peak were just enough to let us know we were really missing something. Southeast we could see right down the Little Valley, the Nahanni, Frying Pan Peak and just barely make out the head of Second Canyon. To the south we could see the outline of the large abandoned meander as defined by its ridges. The remainder was as before except that to the east with the sun gone, we could now make out details on the first two ridges, the rest still fading in the haze and westwards visibility was down to a maximum of seven miles with almost no detail beyond one. If anything it was blacker.

We stopped only for a few minutes and to change the pack before heading for the peak to the southwest off which the west trending ridge ran by which we meant to go along and descend to the tent. The hike to there took no time for we were almost at a trot. The peak provided a better view down into the abandoned meander, or I should say would have if the haze hadn't deepened even further. It was just possible to distinguish the Nahanni four miles away. There would be a fine view into the meander on a clear day from a ridge running about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile south of the peak we were on. The view down Little Valley had essentially vanished although we could still see light on the Nahanni. A sheet of rain lay to the west so little time was wasted in heading down the west ridge.

The rain caught us within half a mile and before the rain suits were on we were almost soaked. We hiked the descending ridge for a good mile, getting into heavy buckbrush at times then new forest coming up after the burn of about 15 years ago, before dropping off it into the valley. Half way down in a little unburned section of black spruce stood a well blazed tree. The blaze was probably 15-30 years old and we couldn't see any others, although we didn't waste any time looking in the rain. What someone was doing up that hillside thrashing about in that bit of near vertical swamp is beyond me. It would have to be prospecting.

By the time we reached the creek the rain had stopped. Frustration is going to all that effort to get to the top to take photos and to come back with almost none, soaking wet and the time only nine am. But wait. That's nothing. By the time we reached camp a few hundred yards on, the sun was out! Up on top we could see nothing but black and at least a one day rain. Now just a shower and sun. Where that hole came from, only God knows, for most assuredly it wasn't visible to us. Thoroughly disgusted we packed camp. At least we didn't have to walk to The Gate in rain. We ate lunch, or should I say breakfast, before we left.

By the time we reached the first forks going downstream, the sky was essentially blue and even more galling the haze was reduced by 75 percent. That is frustration! As Jake said, we must be getting chicken, running before the tiniest shower, but damn, damn, damn, that was no shower heading for us on top. No way. That was an all day storm.

The trip down to where Gate fault crosses was easy going. It probably only took an hour. After that we hit the heavier going through big boulder patches, narrow valleys and cliff forcing us into the bush. Here my wobbly knees, already tired, began to give me trouble. Fortunately I had my walking stick, which helped immensely, three legs, one of them a good stiff one, are infinitely safer than two shaky ones.

On the trip down, I reflected a lot on the possible glacial history of the area. Gate Creek above the Little canyon seems glaciated although not recently. The headwaters seem to [be] cirques, now much rounded, with V shaped valleys

eroded into them. The majority of the Gate creek valley we hiked in is strongly V shaped. However, the ridge running N-S just west of where we camped has what appears to be a prominent trimline on it, just where Douglas and Norris show a change from the lower Funeral Formation to the higher Arnica Formation. It may be a terrace and trimline but then again just a difference in the erosion properties of the two. I am inclined to think the latter for the feature is too prominent and the valley too V-shaped to be caused by what must have been a small glacier based on evidence at the canyon.

The little canyon formed when a pre-existing valley was filled by either a moraine or a mixture of lacustrine sediments and deltaic material to the extent that when the stream renewed itself it was forced against the east wall and began to cut a new bed into bedrock, the canyon of today – à la Prairie creek, Bennett creek, Hole-in-the-Wall Creek, Virginia Falls etc. The material forming the plug in the former channel looks like till on the surface but the rocks all have fairly sharp edges suggesting to me that it might be a bit like some of the deltaic deposits we saw up Flat River and at Oxbow Lake last year in which there was quite a mixture of fine and coarse material. Here again I lean away from glaciation and therefore moraine. I wish we'd had something to dig with. Certainly, the Sunblood cliffs forming both walls of Gate Creek in this its initial N-S straight stretch show as much evidence of being glaciated as do the walls of First Canyon, which is to say, none. Thus, the issue remains confused. It probably was glaciated once by continental glaciers, perhaps before most of this uplift had occurred. The pink granite below Virginia Falls certainly suggests that. Also, several pink granite boulders on the bar across from where we saw Dall sheep on July 31. (Yes, I am behind a day in this.). It probably hasn't been glaciated since then, thus erasing most evidence of glaciation.

We arrived back at The Gate by 1:30, by which time big fluffies which had been building for some time were becoming black uglies. Just 200 yards before The Gate, while we were in the bush, Okanagan's chopper went over high and in [a] hurry. Probably trying to beat the storms. Even had we been on the beach he might have missed us, he was so high. We found the paddle down and the letters gone when we got back. Very nice, but no note as to who took it.

The air fairly shook for almost one hour as one black one after another railed over or around us with nary a drop. I had time to wash my shirt and socks before it finally started raining. By then I just crawled into the sleeping bag for a much needed snooze. After all, we had hiked about 10 miles, climbed about 3500 feet total and descended 5000 feet all by 1:30 pm. Not bad for a morning I'd say. Just the thing to warrant a snooze.

The rain must have lasted one to two hours. I awoke to bright sun, all blue sky and lovely fresh air. I puttered about camp doing chores and writing diary while Jake went after some grayling we had seen up Gate Creek. Later, he arrived back

fishless but with his hat full of big blueberries we had seen around the base of The Gate two days ago. We had a blueberry chocolate-nut cake cobbler tonight. They are better made with white cakes but this was still yummy.

Now pile all that together and perhaps you will agree on today's name. There were three good points though – a dry walk to The Gate, letters on their way and the cobbler. So not totally frustrating.

July 31 [Tues]

I arose around 6:30 to a bright blue sky with the odd wispy mares tail. A good porridge breakfast out [of] the way, the sun was half way across the river towards our campsite and getting weaker. The mares tails were ever so gradually thickening into overcast. The reason for not hitting the river right away was that I wanted to take photos of "Arcuate Wall" on the other side of The Gate from atop The Gate. About the only thing I hadn't photographed well at The Gate. I had figured about noon hour to be a good time to do it for I hoped there would be shadows on it then, but now it looked as though I had better get up there and do it now or I wasn't going to have anything.

Up I went. The view was fine but the direct sun was a very flat lighting that gave no sense of depth. A couple of the photos could be pretty fair were it not for that. It was also obvious that 3 or 4 pm is the time to catch photos of it at this time of year. We don't have time to wait 'til then. Anyway, the sun faded just as I finished. Very considerate of it I'd say.

On the way down, I took my time and stayed more easterly, back from the edge and the worn trails. This area has great interpretive potential, quite aside from The Gate itself. It has a hillside or 'vertical swamp' as I call them jokingly, with stunted black spruce. A more conventional forest of spruce rests on top with a variety of plants for understory and floor cover. There is impressive evidence of frost action on the rough talus slope and several lovely 20-30 foot towers wedged out from the cliff face. The talus has been in place long enough to show fair evidence of solution weathering both along bedding planes and joints in the form of round edged indented cracks. It would be nice if Parks would take advantage of this since a fair number of people obviously climb part way up at least.

Back at camp, we packed up. This is now one of those places on the Nahanni that it hurts a bit to leave. There are many fine memories here from last fall. By the time we were ready to hit the river the sun was out through a blue patch that somehow stayed with us most of the way through lower Third canyon.

Jake craned his neck through The Gate while I paddled. The current is quite strong now and I certainly couldn't get too close to the walls in most spots to hold in eddies, so we sailed right through, pulling in at the picnic site where Jake took a photo or two. He has a good eye for photos. He went right to the best spot for a picture walking upstream. Judging from tracks, he is the first one to do so this year. I just spent my time gorging my mind on the views in this most impressive spot. How nice not to feel a compulsion to scurry around taking photos.

We drifted the entire section from The Gate to Little Valley, paddling only to avoid the odd set of waves, a bar or a cliff. We turned circles and just sat, bare backed taking it all in. I took photos but of little things on cliff faces, or in one spot, flowers. I took a couple downriver into the sun but other than that I had fun just ignoring the big view photos of which I already have scores. This is the prettiest of all sections of the river in my opinion and I just plain enjoyed it.

I pointed out to Jake where we saw the lone sheep last year on the shale cliff just below the second abandoned meander. We had seen it when we looked back for some reason. This year, for some silly reason, I kept looking back expecting there to be one. About 300 yards below last year's sighting and below the creek mouth I looked back and damn it, there was one lying on [the] ledge behind a tree. Then there was a second walking along the ledge from the creek. We pulled hard for the left shore and just caught the shore above a rapid. I guess the one walking the ledge didn't like our antics because it had disappeared. But the closer one, a ewe, just sat there watching us, quite unperturbed as we walked back up the bar towards her. We had a nice look with the binoculars before leaving her as quietly as we'd come.

We were just drifting beneath the last cliffs of Third Canyon, through the last bend towards the Little Valley straight stretch when we heard what sounded like an aircraft. The noise grew louder and louder but too slowly for an aircraft, until around the bend came two jet boats. Three men in one called Lucky Lady and a family in the other. They very considerably slowed down to a crawl for us and waved. Our first human contact in 5 ½ weeks. We waved back. Despite their totally overpowering, offensive noise it was nice to meet someone else. Just at this point the sun also disappeared.

We pulled into the Little Valley campsite with huge thunderheads billowing over the Headless Range to the east and south. Camp was set up in a leisurely fashion, and things put out to air, then we hit the diaries at a table for a change. The weather got more and more ominous. I put my stuff away before the first drops hit. There was a mad scramble for the rest as it began. It was just a quick shower – nothing much. I decided to have a snooze. I awoke an hour later to the sound of Jake running for a camera to catch a rainbow over the peaks.

We just got supper out of the way, in fact didn't even have time for dishes before it hit harder this time. Into the tent to work on the diary until I couldn't see. How nice it would be to get the rain past tonight and have a gorgeous clear day for the Second Canyon tomorrow. I want to hike to the top of [the] peak opposite the spur to get views of the big meander, Deadmen Valley, the Tlogotsho and back up here. It is the best viewing peak around if the climbing isn't too rough.

#### Aug 1 [Wed]

It showered during the night and began to rain in earnest this morning just about daybreak. Did it rain? It let up for us to get a yummy pancake breakfast but hit again before the dishes could get done. I did diary on and off all morning and snoozed to light and heavy rain. It cleared for about an hour at noon. The sun came out for 20 or 30 minutes and we went for a walk up the bar. I found more Precambrian granite. It is almost as common as the Ragged Range granodiorite down here. Jake started a fire to warm dish water and that, of course, was the signal for the rain to start. He put on his rainsuit and this time the dishes finally got done. It is now late afternoon and still pouring. The river hasn't started its inevitable jump yet, but since we have had at least an inch [of] rain so far it is just a question of when. The diary is all done. Now maybe I will read Ford again.

Evening. Still raining but fairly lightly. The river has started to rise at about 1.5 inches per hour. We had a big fire tonight and stood or sat by for several hours. Jake is still by it. I am off to bed.

#### Aug 2 [Thurs]

Rained lightly all night stopping for 2-3 hours just at daybreak. Now it is back at it again with light and heavy showers. The river is up 18 inches so far. Hope it clears soon for 36 hours is about enough.

It seemed to finally stop about 10 am. We lit a fire first thing this morning, throwing on sound spruce roots and whatever else was both a decent size to more or less fit one of the culvert fireplaces and stood a chance of being half dry. It sure felt marvellous in the rain. Once the rain stopped and we warmed up, the fire's significance seemed to fade from an essential to something decorative. Again, how the weather affects perceptions, attitudes and moods.

Both yesterday and this morning I have noticed an unusual quantity of mist rise from the trees and drift along the base of the hill, yet [not?] on the flat of the spur sticking into Little Valley. The only explanation I could offer was a warm spring. Yet nobody to my knowledge has ever mentioned one and surely Parks people would have spotted anything from the chopper if not in summer then fall and



winter. Goose chase or not then, I had to satisfy my curiosity. We tracked upstream and crossed the river to find many cold seepages along the bank, many evidently just started by the rain, judging from their cuts in the sand. The bush was soaked, water in pools and trickles everywhere. It was white spruce on the better drained sites, black spruce in the wetter, thicker mossy areas with some of it probably underlain by permafrost. We wandered about for some time with nary a hint of a spring.

I got quite distracted from springs when we hit three blazes in a straight line which we followed hitting one after the other. The only reasonable explanation I could offer was claims, yet to me claims didn't seem reasonable either in the location. I checked one of the blazes and it seemed to be between 17 and 20 years old. Finally we hit a claim post with two tags T98304 and T98305 or possibly 6. No writing whatsoever. We traced the line running at 10°, to a snye on the point of the spur without turning up another post.

For several minutes I had been hearing a faint hum sounding like a motor. Suddenly I realized that was what it was and judging from its rate of approach from downstream it was a jet boat, probably Parks. I made at a fair clip for the bank, expecting them to turn into the campsite. No such luck and when I realized we might miss them I ran to the bank just as they drew abreast in midstream. They had the canopy up and looking ahead, I suppose, for they never slowed despite our waving and the canoe on the bank upstream. Damn, double damn for we dearly would like the scoop on the drums.

Now back at camp, dried out, the weather improves very very slowly. We need clear weather tomorrow to climb Second Canyon for photos. We can't wait any longer. The river still rises but much slower, obviously having gotten its big rise over last night, about 18 hours after the heaviest rain.

7:30 pm. The sun has gone behind the peak. Yes, the sun! The cloud blanket rolled back totally without breeze as it so often does in this country, with the edge of the cloud as sharp as a sheet. Only the peaks have the odd low remnant sticking to them. The rest is blue. May it stay that way for the rest of summer.

It just occurred to me that the three-legged triangular pale cache at this campsite, with nails driven in the uprights pointing down, probably dates to the staking just across the river. We'll have to try and find out.

Aug 3 [Fri]

The valley is draped in heavy, cold mist but the sun shines through trying to burn it off. We lay abed quite a while unwilling to face the chill. Suddenly I awoke to



find the mist nearly gone. That brought us to life. Stuff was hung out to air for the first time in three days even though it was still damp. Breakfast and camp were disposed of in the most cheerful fashion in days. The day held much promise.

The first stop was at the creek mouth coming into the valley. An old fairly extensive campsite was on the east side at the mouth. There was a privy, one bed frame at least, a few poles, one 10 gallon galvanized steel barrel with NAP crudely painted on its top, one length of flattened stove pipe, and a number of cut stumps over quite an area. Everything about the place spelled mineral or oil exploration or government survey types camped there for some time. A nice campsite beside a clear roaring creek. In 200 yards the creek became confined between lake sediment walls so that there was no walking in the bed. I proceeded no further.

I reexamined some of the linear streams from the east. They intrigue me but not enough to want them high on my list of priorities. The creeks from the west are quite muddy to mildly muddy and not too interesting except the most northerly big one which might make a nice short canyon hike of a mile or two in [a] drier season.

In four trips, I have yet to get the light the way I wanted on the Frying Pan. We would have done so today but for the mist holding us back. As it is, I got the best ones so far.

We continued drifting on down to Scow creek where we pulled ashore. It is another fairly dirty stream from the west off the shales but nothing like Ford describes. He must have [seen] it just after a mud flow fell into the creek. The Second Canyon fire has burnt most of the area but a small patch of unburnt stuff revealed an amazing array of different aged cut stumps of all sizes. My guess is that they range in age from 6 or 7 years to 35+ years. There were no other signs of human activity.

On leaving Scow Creek, I paddled just enough to keep us closely tucked to the right bank in anticipation of the big event planned for today, the one we stayed cooped up in the tent for two days for. Could it possibly be worth that wait? The weather certainly was what we waited for. Cool and clear.

We pulled in just above the creek in the big meander of Second Canyon which heads SW. Hiking boots went on, cameras into a light pack and we were off. The hiking up the boulder bed was steep but really quite good. The rocks were generally of a decent size and we were making what I thought was good time up to the forks from the south. Water accompanied us all the way. I had proposed going up this south fork based on the map and its being shorter. We climbed a rock pillar on the forks to look things over. The south fork looked possible but had difficult cliffs at the top. Jake wanted the southwest fork because the gradient

seemed a bit gentler on the map and it would take us into different country coming & going, the rationale being we would come down the hard route. I liked his reasoning.

As we dropped off the pillar we crossed a tiny remnant of lake silt lodged behind it. Ford predicted such small patches in the canyons, but this is the first we've found.

Jake's choice turned into an absolute dream. The gradient was steep but good hiking. The forest shown on the map never materialized. We got more and more excited as a gorgeous moss and tundra covered Amphitheatre opened as we rounded the curve to the south. Not even any buckbrush zone! As we rounded the final stretch of curve to get a view of the ridge, we had the feeling that today was to be one of those magical days. For instance, the creek continued as a pathway to within a few hundred feet of the ridge. We were still beside water, perfectly clear now that we had passed a short half mile stretch of shale. Previously it had been slightly muddied. When Jake caught sight of the ridge he took off like a shot. He had the pack but even then I couldn't keep up. What strength and agility he exhibits at times. He is a natural hiker.

He carried the pack until the trickle ran out. We stopped and filled canteens, fairly certain that we would find water on top but fairly certain isn't certain enough in the case of water. I carried the pack over the steepest tundra stretch to the top, having to stop and puff frequently. I seem to have lost some of my altitude acclimation. Half way up the vistas started opening over a pretty ridge to the west. Now we knew the day was ours, but we didn't yet know it was in spades and a lay down in seven straight.

The world that opened as I topped the ridge, after picking blueberries at each breather, was as good as you could wish. The Tlogotsho & Deadmen Valley to the east, magnificent rolling tundra and krummholz to the south, a never ending parade of peaks to the west plus the Little Valley and to the north an absolutely enticing ridge which I suspected was hiding the best of all from us. The first chore was a stop for lunch though. It was 3:30 pm. It had probably taken us about three hours to get up. As we sat munching lunch and digesting the panorama, I wished for three days up here but vowed for next best of staying up until 7:30 which was about all we could afford. Even then that was cutting it pretty fine for getting down, paddling out of the Second Canyon and setting up camp at Headless Creek, but this was too good to miss.

The view south over the tundra and up the Meilleur was so beautiful that it played on the emotions mercilessly. The sunlight cast ever changing shadows from trees and hummocks. I took a photo from where we topped the ridge and despite the desperate film shortage I must have shot another 7-8 of it for the scene kept changing and improving as we climbed higher and higher up the ridge. The view

SW up Scow creek was much the same. As we climbed higher, the sun swung directly over the creek and it crept in view over an intervening ridge as a silver ribbon threaded through a trough of blue hazed peaks. That inevitable swing of the sun was pressing through and pressing hard for I knew there was something good over the ridge.

I crossed a magnificent stone stripe field after getting engrossed in a huge patch of monkshood for half an hour. The best of the entire trip by a long shot and here it was at 4500 feet and August yet. Jake had got lost in a world of his own far behind me, where I didn't know. A holler was answered by a faint far off response, so he was somewhere in the alpine fir krummholz below me. A huge brown porcupine was entertaining him it turned out. I waited for him to catch up.

We topped the last short cliff together and yes, the best was last. The entire east side of Deadmen's Valley came into view, with the First Canyon, Dry Canyon, Prairie Creek Canyon and fan, the other canyons north of it, up Headless Creek, the splits of Deadmen, Meilleur River and far beyond the Silent Hills, Yohin Ridge, Jackfish Mountain, Ram Mountain, Nahanni Range and Lord knows what else. These latter were in haze but considering they are 30-40 miles away, that wasn't too bad. The only thing still hidden was Second Canyon.

We hiked along quite a line of cliffs looking west and down into the creek we'd come up. If anything, the view to the east improved with the ever lowering sun. Suddenly I hear Jake say "Bill" in a loud whisper. I looked at him and he pointed ahead. Two big white ram heads stuck up over a hummock 100 yards ahead. We crept closer and more came into view lying down. They had seen us, but the wind was blowing hard up over the ridge from the east. Being along the west cliffs they couldn't get wind of us. Suddenly they upped and ran off 100 yards desperately trying to get wind of us. We had crossed their approach zone. We should have stayed still and pulled the caribou trick of waving our arms slowly. There were nine rams. Two trophy class specimens, one other that was  $\frac{3}{4}$  curl, four that were in the half curl range and two spike horns, probably yearlings.

Jake stayed still and I crept ahead with the camera, screening myself behind a hillock. I topped the hill for a couple of more unsatisfactory shots from the 100 yard range I expect, before they ran off, white rumps bouncing across the tundra to stop 250 yards or more away. Their behaviour indicated some distress, or at the least uncertainty at not being able to scent us and at being forced out along the narrowing spur. We dropped behind another hillock to creep up again. As we did so, I said to Jake, 'two can play this game.' Sure enough we topped the hill and nothing [in] sight. I was sure they had gone down the cliff to get wind of us. Jake was equally sure they had taken the more open expansive escape east. He went his way, me mine. Sure enough, a clatter of stones told me I was correct. I rushed to the cliff edge to see them running south along the talus below us. The two big rams were in the lead and they had obviously been leading the group ever since

we spotted them. What a topping on the day. My first ram group and to see specimens like that in surroundings like that on a day like this. Wow!

Now all that remained was the Second Canyon meander. We continued along the spur, passing large and small pink granite boulders all along the way just as we had been doing all day, whether in the creek bed or on top. Some were six feet across. Also on top was the odd remnant of scoured limestone pavement, now solution etched along bedding planes and joints as well as into rills of various shapes on the top surface. Given more area and less dip this could have developed stronger karst features, for its glacial history seems common with the North Karst.

Finally, we hit the east end of our spur terminating in a cliff. The Second Canyon meander lay quite literally at our feet. There is absolutely nowhere else that one could stand to catch the immense grace of that great sweeping arc of water. Its proportions are awesome, its surroundings almost impossibly rugged and its curve so sweepingly but gently refined that it is hard to believe one's eyes. What a pity that the only way to photograph it is with a wide angle lens which totally destroys the plummeting sense of depth created by 4000 feet of vertical down cutting. We were perhaps a bit late for photos because shadow covered much of the east side of the meander, but it still looked fine to the eye. With the end of photos, we sat for about 20 minutes or more just absorbing views. We didn't want to leave but at 7 pm it was very obvious we should. Our proposed route down was looking a lot rougher than we had thought at first glance.

We dropped down a patch of scree near the east end of the cliffs and hit a wide scree leading to a forested ridge below. We headed for that, the going steep, a bit loose at times but not too bad. The ridge was fine until it seemed to end in cliff. The only apparent way down was to descend into the creek gulch south of the ridge. It had what appeared from above to be vertical drops which turned out to be just that. We got down into the gulch and past the first vertical when successive ones began to show. At the second we hit a gorgeous little waterfall sprayed over a 30 foot ledge. It had created a large frost pocket behind it. At this point we decided the lesser of evils lay in threading a line in scree just above the creek cliffs and below other cliffs above us. As it turned out it wasn't too bad so long as you didn't have too queasy a stomach, but it wouldn't be everyone's cup of tea. Half a mile of that, descending at a furious rate, brought us to the forks of the creek. I must have been insane to ever have considered ascending the way we came down. What work that would have been! Jake's route is so much more simple, gentle and beautiful.

Jake took off at an awful tear down the main creek. He seemed to be walking but at times I had to trot to keep up, leaping from rock to rock. How he does it so effortlessly, I don't know. All my attention is concentrated on my feet. It didn't take long to reach the canoe.

We just threw the gear and ourselves in and proceeded to paddle yet, down the rest of Second Canyon. It had fairly large swells in spots created by some of the large boulders which stick out of the water in the fall, but which are probably 5-10 under right now. As we rounded the bend into Deadmen Valley we caught the last sun turning the Tlogotsho pink, a 2/3 moon rising over top. We paddled hard for shore at headless Creek, leapt out and took photos. They could be good.

A small sand patch looked good enough to camp on so that was it for the night. Quite a day. Surely another for the memory book.

Just before we came down we gave the range east of Headless creek a very thorough scan. We were going to hike up Headless creek and over the range to look for sheep fences and such described by Bill Clark. After, for us, long and sober consideration we decided it is just too rough. Now that we are down at the creek, am I ever glad. It is a dirty creek with no walking bottom at all right here. From what we could see from up top, there wasn't much either further upstream. Obviously, it is an autumn trip at the best of times.

We fell asleep to the creek's roar and another cold, damp evening. But clear!

Aug 4 [Sat]

We arose with sun and fierce downstream wind, just the opposite of yesterday. An egg and corned beef breakfast set the world the right way up, blue sky and all. We didn't attempt to air things. There is little to attract one to this campsite. What a hell of a place to die, if in fact this is where the McLeod bodies were found. There are still worse places on this river though. The Bookshelf opposite, I do like though. It's amazing the way the river has eroded some layers and not others. We just pushed off, not even bothering to hike the few hundred yards upstream to see the sheep lookout on the corner of Fault Mountain.

We did our usual drift, turning lazy circles down to the big slumps. We put ashore first at the poplar covered upper stretch thinking that would be where the raspberries would be that Derek Ford mentions. There were a few but nothing to write about. It is very difficult to get a photo showing the nature and extent of the slumps here. But walking the ground gives an extremely vivid impression of the impermanency of anything here, of the upheaval that is continually going on, and of the sticky yet firm impervious nature of the silt. Actually, it is quite clayey in some spots ranging through to a silty sand in others. Gravel patches on top in some areas indicate river alluvium rests on top of the silts in places.

Ponds of water rest behind many of the small slump ridges. Some contain bulrushes, bur-reed and large sedges. Much of the area is bare, being too active for plants to colonize. Rain, freezing and thawing soften up the silt surface so that one can walk most anywhere but beneath it is almost as firm as rock.

We drifted downstream to where the patches of tilted conifer were. This proved to be a smart move in more ways than one. We stepped ashore into a sea of red. Pictures were forgotten immediately, and we spent the next hour stuffing ourselves with the finest of raspberries. I couldn't handle more than somewhere between two and three quarts before I had to quit. The finest berry picking I have seen in years.

I then climbed the slope for photos and got some that really do show the nature and extent of the slumping, I think. While there I spotted a jet boat coming upstream. I went down to the bank to flag it down if it was Parks. I didn't have to flag it down. It turned out to be Lou Comin with his entire family on board including his mom and dad, heading upstream. We had a nice chat. It transpired that our barrels are at the Forestry Cabin but just how he got the message isn't clear for he didn't get the letters to mail. Probably a radio message from Steve Cooper who is cabin building at Deadmen Valley. At any rate, did that ever make our day, knowing we had food again. Lou wants to go hiking with us up on the Tlogotsho if he can make it. I arranged for Aug. 11. In the meantime, we can hit the Nahanni Plateau.

So with all that out of the way he took off and we came on down to Deadmen Forestry Cabin. Parks has cleaned the place up but in the process of taking out all the garbage also took all the useful tools and utensils. Boy had I ever planned on putting the washtubs and pails to use. Now there is only one pail and one homemade small square rusty tub. In no time water was heating in them for clothes and baths. Then we got into the barrels and started sorting.

We have too many meals, especially suppers, and we want to send out at least two barrels which we can't carry. So, meals were dutifully counted and sorted for our remaining 24 days. All the unnecessary food, gear, used films and maps and so on were packed away. The washing was done and I was having a bath when a canoe rounded the bend. When they saw me from a distance they headed for the Prairie creek fan and pulled ashore. I was well finished bathing when they drifted past with a 'hi' and kept on going. A young couple.

That was no sooner done than a jet boat, like Parks, came downstream and pulled ashore where we had earlier seen a Parks scow pull in about a quarter mile downstream. That must be the new cabin site. Later they came upstream and camped here. We mistook them for Parks two days ago. He made his own copy of the Red Deer jet boats like Parks, hence the confusion. He is a welder from Fort S. John and is obviously pretty good for the entire boat is aluminum. They seemed a

couple of nice guys and we had our first real social chat with someone other than ourselves in six weeks. (One can hardly count a prolonged shouting match with Lou overtop the running jet boat engine a social chat.)

We went to bed with things still quite a mess around here but resolved to get things cleaned up and organized by tomorrow.

This diary ends here and goes to Volume 3 since only one more day will fit here and I don't want to carry two books backpacking.







NAHANNI 1979

Book 3

July 16 – August 4

W.D. Addison

For Wendy, Michelle and Kirsten

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Aug 5 [Sun]

This morning was a continuation of yesterday, both weather wise and in what we had to do. Sort and pack, sort and pack. We have about one week's extra food, especially in suppers, which I want to send out. Jake thinks otherwise. He clearly has visions of gorging himself, having gotten a good start on the pounds and pounds of raisins we seem to have left. He says he ate about two pounds yesterday. It is quite incredible how much he can eat and yet remain as trim as can be. At any rate, we kept anything extra that is sweet and Jake snuck in a couple of extra suppers at the last minute. Most is in a barrel however to go downriver in a Parks boat. I want the canoe as light as possible with the high water in George's Riffle.

By mid-afternoon we had everything shuffled, reshuffled and packed despite heat, humidity and ferocious mosquitoes. Yesterday's wash was dry and everything in fine shape. Jake was heading down to the canoe when he spotted a large black stick moving downriver and across. Closer examination revealed rounded ears and a black bear. It swam steadily but drifted a long way downstream in its crossing. It pulled out on the Prairie Creek fan, gave itself a good shake and ambled off across the fan. When they are wet you can see what long legs they have. Twice it broke into a trot and then did it cover ground.

We stood everything up in the canoe which made it a bit unstable but it allowed us to get it all in. We paddled close to shore about half a mile downstream to where Parks is building a log patrol cabin about 125 feet back in a stand of spruce. A generator and chain saw were running and everyone was busy as we arrived. I poked my head over a six foot log wall and Steve Cooper and I exchanged greetings, the first since last year.

We chatted a short while when Steve asked us if we wanted to go on a trip down to Kraus Hotsprings and back. He was to meet a boatload of supplies coming up and to let off his sister, Sue, who was heading back out after a three week holiday in here, one week being spent cooking for the crew of five here – John Vital, his son Raymond, Philip(?) and a very shy fellow, Jonas(?). It didn't take us long to say yes. We all piled into the jet boat and roared off. Steve got Raymond to drive for he wanted to talk to me. He and I chatted all the way down and believe it or not I hardly looked up at the Canyon. We each had a lot of news to catch up on. We did look up for a ewe and lamb below Ram Creek. Certainly, my strangest trip through First Canyon.

The clouds had been building all day. Near Lafferty Creek it looked as though we were going to get drenched, but no, it just sprinkled [on] us. The Indians all went for a bath in the Springs in the bush. The pool on the river bank is about six inches above water level not the 5-6 feet of last fall. The couple who passed us yesterday were in the pool when we arrived and as it transpired, later stayed in it

for six hours! We ran on downstream so Steve could make radio contact, only to find through garbled reception that the boat hadn't been able to make it today. So back to the springs for a nice shore supper followed by a hike into the springs and up to the mouth of the creek. The rain caught us briefly while we were there but just a shower. Steve then took over the boat and roared full bore up the First Canyon back to Deadmen Valley. I stood with he and Sue up front and did a little more looking and a little less talking on the way back. Sue spotted a cow and calf moose on a bar in Deadmen Valley near dusk.

We threw up our tent in the bush near theirs and then sat down and talked until 11pm Simpson time, probably about 1am sun time.

Aug 6 [Mon]

We were up at 7am and quickly broke camp for we were near one of their piles of logs and they would have to drag the logs right through the tent. Breakfast was quickly prepared and disposed of in the rain. After breakfast Steve got the men peeling chinking poles in their big tent while we talked in the cook tent. We had lots of talk about in describing where we had seen wolf dens, caribou and moose kills, etc. Steve is observant and had many anecdotes to add to ours about the Pass in Hole-in-the Wall country.

By noon the weather had lifted enough that we went out and worked on the cabin with them. The weather was not favourable for travelling. We got up 1.5 rounds today.

Lou and family turned up about mid-afternoon from upriver with news of yet more rain. We discussed further plans for the Tlogotsho hike. Steve wants to take his mother-in-law up with us but Lou and Steve can't both be away. Lou is so indefinite, and the rain has delayed us so long that we will probably be back from the Nahanni Plateau late and go with Steve on Aug 17.

The sky was such a mess when Lou left that we decided to stay the day and help on the cabin. I volunteered to cook supper. Francis Betsaka and Bob Vital had arrived from the Butte earlier with a big load of plywood, odds and ends like windows and food. I cooked up what I think was a jolly good stew and some less good cakes. Their Coleman oven seemed to burn or overcook the bottom long before the top was done. They worked 'til 8 pm and supper was right ready for them then.

Steve and I talked until 10 before turning in. We slept in his tent since Sue went out with Lou.

Aug 7 [Tues]

Still cloudy and the odd shower. We decided to stay until noon to help them lift on the top tier of logs which are nearly nine feet up. They really need the help with the big ones. We all got at it and things fairly hummed along. The longest top logs were real brutes. It took all that each of us could give to get them up.

Once they were up, I cooked a pork chop lunch while Jake packed. This fresh food has been a most welcome change from our fare. Not that ours is bad or we are sick of it, just that things like bread, fresh meat, eggs, butter and cookies are a very nice change.

Right after lunch we headed for the canoe. While saying goodbye it transpired that Steve's exposure meter needed batteries which we had and that he wouldn't mind using the telephoto (400 mm). We left it with him and were off.

A short distance later, no time at all it seemed, we were pulling into a snye above Dry Canyon fan. The canoe and gear we hid in the bush while the yellow food pack was left hanging from the limb of a balsam poplar. While doing so, I found an old 45 gallon drum in the bush and rolled it out on the bank. It seems I am constantly doing that.

The outfitter's camp is located on an older nicely vegetated upstream section of the Dry Canyon fan. It is a pretty spot set amongst open white spruce forest, floored with bearberry and a few small shrubs. Our route crossed it, then immediately hit the chaos of the open, active portion of the fan.

As soon as one starts towards the canyon, the question immediately pops to mind, how did a creek that is dry in the summer carve such a huge canyon? It struck Jake and me at the same time. It doesn't make sense. The plateau has been unglaciated for roughly 350,000 years so ice couldn't be the source of the water and I just can't see where its small drainage area could have gotten enough water any other way. Certainly, once in the canyon, one is struck by how awesome spring flood must be in here, even today. Where it is now dry, there is 20 feet of water in some place obviously going hell bent for leather between vertical walls. Boulders 3-5 feet across are clearly on the move. Yet even this flood can only last for 3-4 weeks at most, probably only at peak for one week. It seems unreasonable that a period that short each year has the erosive competence to carve a canyon like this, Yet I can think of no other explanation.

The boulder bed of the stream is variously fair to poor walking, the poor stuff being in small loose material which provides poor footing. It just rolls out from beneath you. The rock is generally well rounded except just below where talus encroaches on the river. We found a number of blue and green stained chunks of calcite and



limestone. On breaking the coarser chunks there was galena inside but no chalcopryrite. It had obviously been leached out and oxidized to form the stain of copper carbonate minerals. We probably found half a dozen such specimens in the two miles or so we hiked today. The amount of pure calcite in boulders in the creek bed is utterly phenomenal. There are boulders with bands of calcite; there is intensely brecciated limestone shot through and cemented with calcite and there are pure calcite boulders up to 3-4 feet across.

We hit a short section of bedrock in the stream bed which was the banded limestone-calcite sculpted by the boulder flow into beautiful shapes. By now it was raining lightly and the light glistening off its smooth surfaces was gorgeous. There was also a small water flow at this point which continued upstream. The water is a bit silty. There must be a small pocket of lake silt up the first gulch to the east, for the creek is clear above it.

About two miles up, the rain intensified enough that when we hit a small fairly level spot, with both firewood and water, we camped despite the early hour. We should have gone on but we were already wet and Lord knows where we will find another camping spot down in here.

Did a bit of diary writing and went to sleep early for I am tired. The return to freeze dried food wasn't much of a let down for we cooked up the finest rice pudding of the trip.

Aug 8 [Wed]

Happy Birthday Kirsten! And isn't it David's also? If so, same to you Dave.

The skies are dreary this morning and all is damp. We packed quickly and started our bash up the creek bed. Someone else has been up this far already this year. Tracks appear here and there in the sand along with those of a fair sized grizzly. I forgot to mention yesterday, but around the frost gulch to the east we hollered to listen to our echoes. They came back, plus some mighty strange echoes that didn't resemble ours. Shortly, we came around a bend to meet a family of seven plus two other fellows. The family's name was Coghlan from Toronto. Their kids were obviously enjoying the trip, the oldest being about 12-13 and the youngest about 7-8. Both Coghlan seniors were in their early 40s and looked fit, active and interested. The two other chaps were both British, in their late 30's, whose names I didn't catch. One was from Tagish and the other from central B.C., the name of the place I didn't quite catch but it may have been Smithers. They were obviously both very interested, active outdoor types. The one from B.C. may have been a teacher. Certainly he seemed to have some understanding of it and of geography and geology. The chap from Tagish had been to U.B.C. library and had got hold of Ford's papers amongst other things. They were also only the second group in two

years to have the 1:50,000 maps and who knew how to read them. They took my name since they seemed to want to know more. They could prove a couple of interesting contacts if they do write.

Shortly after leaving camp today, we ran into an interesting canyon of low walls. The creek has carved some magnificent shapes in both the bedrock and big boulders. Had it been a warm sunny day, I would have had a bath in one of several fine bathtub-like depressions. We tried climbing up through the canyon but in two places had to detour on the east side in the bush because of pools wall to wall or vertical rock faces. It was interesting and would be lovely in late afternoon sun.

Just above the canyon a little creek came in carrying muddy water. This plus a small pocket of what looked like lake silt at the top of the canyon are supportive of Ford's contention that small pockets of lake silt will be found in this area. Further on we found two more pockets, one big enough to have a permafrost slump topped by small black spruce and moss.

Above the canyon the water supply in the creek bed became intermittent but it always reappeared as far up it as we went. We took the first gulch to the west just after the turns and heads[ed?] due north about 5 miles up. There was a little stream bed up it which provided quite good hiking considering the steepness of the slope. We hit three copper stained rocks on it plus two or three others down in Dry Canyon this morning. We have yet to see it on a rock face though. We also passed a rock face containing some extremely porous limestone, what Douglas and Norris describe as vuggy and Gabrielse calls Swiss cheese limestone. The holes are huge and some contain tiny stalactites and stalagmites. The final push to the top was quite steep but the footing was good, on vegetated krummholz with lots of blueberries to pick while catching one's breath. All in all it seems a fine route to extensive chunks of tundra.

We broke over the top in sunny patches. At last after three days the sky seems to be breaking a bit. The tundra was all we had hoped for. Gently rolling, short grasses, fine vistas. We rested and caught our breath before leaving the packs to take a short tour around the small chunk to the south of us. Almost immediately we came to water and to solution features including small sinkholes. There are also large linear, parallel solution features with low limestone walls facing downslope. They have developed along joints and range in width from a couple of yards to 50 yards and up to 300-400 yards long. There is also intense frost shattering into pillars in places with some pillars collapsing into piles of rubble downslope.

We had no sooner picked up the packs and started upslope when I spotted four rams. All were large heads, but two had broken and broomed horns. They didn't see us from  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile off and we crept upslope using trees and knolls as shields

to within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile. They were magnificent. At that point they spotted us, then got wind of us, whence they ran off to a hilltop. They stayed there for half an hour and the watchers became the watched. As long as they had  $\frac{1}{4}$  –  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of distance they were quite content to watch us.

Meanwhile rainstorms were moving in from the west and when [we were] only a mile up on the tundra the first drops hit. We decided to set up the tent to stay dry and write diary, then move on if the rain stopped in an hour or so. It was 3:30 then. Well, we both started writing but soon fell asleep. We awoke within minutes of each other, both cold. The rain had stopped here but there was a heavy shower to the north up Prairie Creek and since it was nearly 6 we decided to stay here for the night.

We went poking around exploring huge frost shattered masses of Nahanni limestone. The pillars break out on roughly the angles of a calcite crystal. They get wedged out from the bedrock in pillars up to 20 feet high. The further out they are wedged, the more they tilt until they collapse into talus down the steep slope below. It is going on at nearly the massive scale we saw on Sunblood Mtn. last year.

Light poking through clouds out over Deadmen Valley enticed us over there for photos. The sky was breaking up above and below. Low clouds came flying up the slope at us whirling, breaking and tearing and sometimes reforming. It was a wildly beautiful scene which changed in seconds. Sometimes in sun, sometimes not and when the sun was present the clouds were backlit. We stayed and watched down the Prairie Creek gap for at least half an hour.

Then we returned home to our tent, had supper and watched a sunset develop in steadily improving sky. It too was wild – yellow and oranges predominate but also green, yes green, in spots. That was exciting since it marks only the second time ever I have seen green in a sunset. After that, it didn't take long to go to sleep.

Aug 9 [Thurs]

I awoke sometime during the night with a light in my eyes. The moon was one day shy of being full. The tundra was dimly cast in its blue light. Somehow, I expected things to be brighter. In the NE the sky had just a hint of a sunrise, while a huge pale arc of northern lights filled the ESE sector. Overhead a few of the brightest stars punched holes of light in the sky. The scene was so gorgeous I almost dressed and went for a walk, but my tired body said no. Too bad, for it would have been a new experience to hike under those conditions. Only a wisp of cloud was left to remind us of yesterday.

This morning dawned cloudless unless one counts the valley fog in Deadmen Valley and two spots up Meilleur River valley. A cool northwest breeze totally banished the bugs. What more could one ask for? A few sheep? While breakfast was cooking, I looked up to see a lone ram on the hills north across the little valley from us. Then five ewes and two large lambs came over the hill a bit east of him, often running, sometimes stopping to graze for a minute or so. They seemed to be heading towards the licks down off the Plateau. However, our scent and wood smoke was being drifted across the plateau by the breeze. Evidently it presented a barrier they were unwilling to cross for we lost sight of them. Ten minutes later they reappeared on the hillside down below camp in the valley leading to Prairie Creek. They wandered about it for the next hour except for the ram. When he got sight of us he made tracks back up the plateau and over the hill. Quite a way to start a day. We wandered about the area near camp for an hour taking photos.

At 9 am we started hiking. We carried water yesterday and again today. We probably don't have to for we have always had water within half a mile. There are pools and seeps all over the plateau. Many more have dried up, but I expect that on any average year, water would never present a problem wherever there is a good tundra plant community. The barer rocky areas are a different story, but they don't seem to be large or extensive.

Very quickly after leaving camp the plateau began to narrow towards a ridge north of us. We wandered from side to side alternately getting views into Dry Canyon and eastwards, then Prairie Creek canyon and west. Visibility is unlimited today, one of the best if not the best day all summer. Everywhere, as far as there are mountains we could see them. The Butte, Liard Range, Jackfish Mountains, Yellow Mountain, Silent Hills, Nahanni Range, Tlogotsho Plateau and Ram Mountains, Caribou Range, Headless and Funeral Ranges and goodness knows what else. Dry canyon is rather uninteresting, being just a straight v cut into gray dolomites. Prairie creek canyon is another story. It is unquestionably the wildest, most rugged, chaotic piece of rock work in the country except possibly for parts of the Ragged Range. Its valley sides are incredibly steep slopes littered with cliffs. Huge spurs plunge in on both sides. A stretch of the river has canyon walls 1000 – 1500 feet, as vertical or more so than First Canyon. At the bottom of all this, the brilliant clear green water foams and roars continuously over boulders. There [are] a few pools but precious few. In most places the creek, really a river, occupies the full valley bottom. It would be impossible to hike up except in an extremely dry year or in mid-late September. Certainly, the only way for average people like us to see it is from this plateau. Curiously, few, if any whites have ever been up here. They are missing some of the very best scenery in the country. The scene constantly changed as the light shifted during the day.

Once we hit the narrow ridge we dropped 400 feet, then had to climb back up another 700 to regain more plateau country. In crossing the ridge, we cut across massive calcite veins and several patches of copper stain. The vein seemed to run

along the ridge. Is the calcite weaker than the surrounding dolomite or limestone? Dolomite I think, yet it is solution etched.

Shortly after we regained the plateaus we came onto two ewes and a fairly small lamb. They fled north keeping a half mile or so in front of us. We topped a rise to see them join three other ewes, while another half mile away stood three rams. The ewes fled over the furthest hill at least a mile off but rams wandered about occasionally engaging in shoving matches. Then they lay down to watch us. We approached to within 150 yards before they got up and ambled off. Magnificent beasts, all with legal heads. The one might have been trophy material but for one broomed horn.

We kept on, suddenly topping a ridge to gaze into an abyss. It took me several minutes to realize we were looking into Dry Canyon. The direction seemed wrong. We could look northeast and see its very headwaters. Across it we could just see the cliffs lining the top of parts of Lafferty Creek. Behind us lay the Prairie Creek chaos. The binoculars showed a band of nine sheep across Dry Canyon north of us and another of eight to the southeast over in the Lafferty Creek country. That makes 34 sheep for today. Truly the Plateau of White Sheep as I think Patterson called it, except I believe he saw 54 head on the south end alone.

We are now nearly on the very top of the Nahanni Plateau dome and we are once again into Nahanni limestone country. The Plateau is much more heavily dissected by streams up here and thus there is less of the nice even sloping ground we have enjoyed. We next had to traverse 1.5 miles of ridge with hardly a speck of vegetation. Just steep hillsides of talus, coarse Nahanni limestone blocks, near the peaks, with extremely sharp, solution etched, small chinks of dolomite lower down. It played hell with the boots for it was just like a razor. While Douglas and Norris don't show it, there are some folded and dipping strata in here. Once again, the calcite appears on a massive scale along the ridges. There is more calcite than limestone or dolomite. Veins are sometimes feet wide. In one smoother section the vein showed up as a trail of calcite boulders amongst other felsenmeer on a smooth knob. It is shot through with gorgeous blue and green. Probably Patterson's Caribou Hole, if it exists at all, is up here somewhere. In the first showing of calcite around noon hour, there seemed to be some quartz, but not here. Galena is present in most of the pieces here showing copper stain. In fact it is probably the most common mineral after calcite.

Today, we saw two or three granite boulders up on the ridges and plateau here. Not as many as I expected to see but enough to confirm glaciation from the east.

The clouds built up quite heavily in places this afternoon and we just escaped two good soakings. Both went to the north of us and we barely caught a sprinkle off the south edge. The clouds certainly added a spice to the sky and photos. They included anvils, cumulus and mares tails.

This evening we are camped on a small piece of plateau at the head of Dry Canyon. We look NNE down a valley tributary to Prairie Creek with a fine cliff on its east side. North and east of us lie the forks and heads of Dry Canyon. Beyond them, spectacular cliff lined valleys lead down into Canal Canyon. Beyond, we can just see the jagged tops of the highest part of Ram Plateau. All around is rolling tundra upland. On a nice day as close to heaven as one can get.

Dry Canyon itself deserves comment. It receives a fair bit of water from its northern half. In fact, there is a stream running a few miles below here. In its southern half it is essentially dry, even where it passes over bedrock. This strongly suggests that its water sinks underground in a solution channel to emerge somewhere as a spring. There are a number of small side valleys funneling water down into Dry Canyon. None of them are large, but in total, they amount to a lot more than can be evaporated in a creek bed.

We have had a hard day's hike today according to my legs, knees and feet. In total it is only about eight miles but there was a couple of thousand feet of up and down, plus the talus to take its toll. Yet eight miles shouldn't be that bad after all the hiking we have done this summer. I must be getting old. Certainly, I can't hike like I used to and if this summer doesn't put me in shape, nothing ever will again. Should sleep well tonight if the wind stops flapping the tent and trying to blow it over.

Aug 10 [Fri]

We awoke to cloud this morning. It had been clear until dawn. The full moon lit the country up as though it were a weak sun all night. I got up and actually went for a short stroll until I got too cold in the stiff breeze. The sleeping bag sure felt good on re-entry. The wind died near dawn, the cloud moved in and now the wind has come back again but from the east instead of the northwest. We had a leisurely rising what with a cloudy sky and the hard day yesterday.

Breakfast was perfunctory but yummy granola, after which we quickly started downhill on a 900 foot descent to the lovely confluence of creeks. We headed north up the west headwater of Dry Canyon towards the two ponds in a side valley of Ford's Canal Canyon. On the way we passed along an entire hillside littered with quartz crystals and quartz blocks. The area was white. More massive injections of water deposited material into the nearly infinite number of fractures produced in the hard limestones and dolomites as the Nahanni Plateau anticline was uplifted. I wonder if quartz or calcite can be radioactively dated, because if so this material can be no older than the uplift, I believe. Thus, it would give a check on Ford's age for the First Canyon made by dating the stalactites.



We topped the valley to stand on a cliff edge overlooking the ponds. What a view. Rounded tundra knolls, ridges, plateaux and valleys surround us. East and north of us these are bounded by fine cliffs 500-1000 feet high. The entire area seems to have been smoothed by glaciers once, then reglaciated lightly by valley glaciers dissecting the area into the steep valleys, then left to weather and erode for a long period into its present form. Nahanni limestone caps most cliff tops in here ensuring good vertical faces. There are possible caves in some of the faces. On top some fine hiking exists that we won't have time to do. That doesn't hurt too much for we can see most of the country from here and some of it would require descents of 1000 feet to valleys and back up again.

Below us lay what we came to look at – the ponds. The map suggests they might be karst. I think they probably are not, but that is impossible to tell without descent to the valley to determine if its rounded bottom is bedrock or scree or moraine. With the binoculars it looks like moraine mostly but bedrock in some places. At any rate the lower pond seems to drain into the upper. That sounds like nonsense but by lower I mean the furthest from the head of the valley. Neither has outlets. Both have inlets and the upper pond is clearly receiving a decent flow from two streamlets off the headwall. We didn't head out the spur to see if a creek appeared in the valley below the ponds as shown on the map.

Both of us were fascinated by the ponds. They are perfectly clear and the colour ranges through the most gorgeous shades of green and blue depending on whether or not they are sunlit, rippled by the wind or are reflecting clouds. The colour was changing constantly as long as we watched, probably an hour. It was worth the effort getting here.

Reluctantly we headed back for we are now starting to feel the pressure of time both on this hike and this trip. We circled 2/3 the way around a peak with a vertical north face to get to the head of the east headwater of Dry Canyon, which up here isn't Dry at all. That was after a short hike across the knob above the ponds where we spotted two ewes. They were unconcerned so long as there was a good quarter mile between us. From the east side of the knob we got a view down into the valley east of the ponds. It had a waterfall that was about 100' I think, dropping over an orangey arcuate lip of limestone. A fine sight.

From the east head of Dry Canyon we used a nicely sloping tundra spur to gain the 500 feet needed to put us on top of the Nahanni Plateau again. I kept a slow measured pace of small steps, gaining the top without a stop and without heavy puffing. My, but it feels good to be in that kind of condition again. Once on top, we got a view down into the second valley east of the two ponds and like it, it drains into Canal Canyon but has only one somewhat larger pond. This one has normal drainage via a creek. It was as pretty as its two western neighbours.



Two miles hiking to the south brought us to the topographic high of this hike, a knob at 5800 + feet with, what I assume to be, a Topographic Survey cairn on it.

Just as we dropped off its south side, we came over a ledge to the Dall sheep high of the trip. Nine rams lying on a low sedge covered ledge above a lush meadow peppered with flowing springs. The same unidentified nine of yesterday in the same spot. All were legal heads and three of them were superb. Only one had noticed us, so we dropped to the ground, got out cameras and crept up. There was no concealed approach, so we tried the waving arms trick. The didn't bite so we got up and walked slowly forward. Gradually they got up one by one to watch us. At about 150 yards they fled downslope a bit, then regrouped. We just sat down and watched. They were alert but resumed grazing. Two even took a pretty fair butt at each other, the horns giving a loud clank. Both cameras were nearly out of film, so I walked back for more. On the way back, they must have winded me for suddenly they wheeled and were off down slope on a dead run. They kept that up until they were over a mile off. We last saw them disappear behind the hill southeast of us.

We continued southeast to pick up the fairly sharp ridge which separates Dry Canyon from the most westerly of Lafferty Creek's tributaries. The ridge rises and falls a fair bit so we sidehill gouged our way along very rough talus slopes on the east side of it. By now it was getting on. We were tired and footsore, so I at least didn't find this section particularly pleasing. Every step had to be carefully watched and placed. Even then footing often gave way. It was interesting in that the entire ridge is massively injected by quartz and/or calcite. The stuff lies everywhere.

We camped on the last knoll before the descent and ascent onto the bulk of the Nahanni Plateau. Surprisingly we had water.

It was another fine day. As the sun set, the clouds evaporated slowly as they seem to do on a good day. They had built to spectacular proportions during the day.

One let out a single thunderclap east of us that made us both take a single step equal to two normal ones. One of the few bits of thunder for the trip. Another decided to shower us, not that we don't need it. There is no shelter out on this tundra so I got the idea of hauling out the tent fly and throwing it over us. It worked rather nicely. We stayed dry and dirty.

Aug 11 [Sat]

This morning lacked promise, being fairly overcast, so rather than leap out of the sack, I lay about and did diary. Time well spent, for not only did some diary get caught up but the sky cleared. Our good fortune with weather holds.

I am very glad we didn't try the descent and ascent across the gap onto the Nahanni plateau last night. It wasn't as bad as expected, nonetheless it required side-hill gouging down a fairly steep slope and ascent of 100 vertical feet of very steep rough talus before ascending a rather easy 400 more feet. It was a piece of cake this morning. It most certainly wouldn't have been last night in our tired, foot sore state.

Once on top the tundra ridges extended out of sight, albeit more rolling than expected. The old case of not reading all the detail on the map. We wandered south to get a peek into a big gulch of Dry Canyon on the west side of the Plateau. Nice enough but confirming our impression that Dry Canyon doesn't provide the best scenery in the country by a long shot. Then we hit east over a rise to find a spectacular spine of rock separating Lafferty Creek from Patterson Creek. It was too cliff-studded and rugged for us to hike its length, but the first part obviously fitted our style and was thoroughly enticing. At this point a great armada of linear cumulus drifted in from the north west, shading the area we wanted to photograph and hike down. It was frustrating because there was sun everywhere else and just scattered cloud. We hiked out the ridge anyway hoping the clouds would clear by the time we reached the end.

On the way out, we passed over area after area of quartz or calcite. It proved to be the case all day. The entire Nahanni Plateau seems to have been heavily injected by the stuff as the uplift fractured the rock. In places the resistant quartz has weathered out and loose crystals and chunks litter the ground. These white patches range in size from a few square yards to over an acre. Looking into the sun they glitter white as winter's snow. It is an amazing site but so common one very quickly accepts it and expects it as the norm.

We wandered out the ridge until we hit a cliff lined gulch with a spectacular view swing[ing?] from NE to south. We just sat down here and enjoyed it to the fullest waiting for sun. Meanwhile a big black cloud drifted a heavy shower along the ridge separating Lafferty and the next canyon north which Brooks calls Ranger Canyon. All the while it entertained with fine thunder claps. We weren't disappointed it missed us. The gulch we are on is a probable karst street and cuts in a straight line through both ridges between the three canyons. The section between Ranger and Lafferty is extremely narrow, deep and vertical with no descent feasible by hiking. The one below us might be possible for us to get down.

Our wait was rewarded with sun on the Lafferty Canyon cliffs and elsewhere. Not as much as we would have liked, nor the best light direction but still nice. On the way back up the 700 vertical feet of ridge we had fine views into the linear fingered valleys of Lafferty Creek and down the huge gulch of Patterson Creek. The head of Patterson Creek contained a number of quite large snow patches on north and east

slopes. This seems late for this altitude, although there are several larger ones below north facing cliff rims on the Tlogotsho. One over there must be a mile long and 100-200 feet high.

Next, we wandered south to view the abandoned meander from north of it on what from the map seems the best place to view it. It may well be, but we didn't reckon on rain. Just as we reached the rim, running to beat the rain, it beat us. I took a photo through it, but it will be garbage. How I felt cheated for this was one feature I dearly wanted a photo of for the school work. We sat under the tent tarp for a while, but the drizzle kept up. Finally, in disgust and with things closing in even more, we headed around the tundra, topping the many valleys dropping into the west side of the meander.

The west side has developed a very active and quite extensive drainage system dissected into the plateau for 1-4 miles back from the meander floor. The creeks coalesce in the meander into a stony floodplain which carries an active braided stream in the spring. In contrast the east side has one fairly feeble creek which develops from seepage off the clearly arcuate east side of the meander. There are hardly even any tiny, tiny valleys carved in it. The east side has a wide flat, forested floor that rises sharply from the deeper west side. CWS people report the east stream as muddy. The combination of flat floor, higher on that side and muddy stream all indicate to me that it is floored with lake sediment. The west side with its active drainage has flushed all the sediment out. If true, this would put the lake sediment top at 2500 feet in this area, not the 1900 listed by Ford. It would be nice to check that one out. The west creek has also carved quite an amazing little canyon down into the bedrock below the original meander floor. The east may have done likewise but we couldn't see it.

The ridge led us to the tor we had seen from the east side of Dry Canyon. It is a large erosional remnant of limestone sticking up about 15 feet above the surrounding plateau. It is interesting and would have been more so had we not been forced under the tent fly again by rain. It isn't the only erosional remnant around by any means, just by far the largest. Scattered over the tundra are limestone blocks 2-6 feet across that are also remnants. Some are still part of bedrock like the tor, others have toppled off a pedestal and are left looking more like erratics dumped by the glacier.

The sky was pretty much closed by now and looked as though it could settle in for a good rain. We hiked two more miles south to get within easy distance of descent just in case it did just that.

We camped in a draw that was most pretty. A good water supply and nice tent site were set off by erosional remnants in all stages of decay lying on lush tundra. Just at sunset the sun peeked out from beneath the clouds casting a gorgeous light and shadows over the area. We got skunked on sheep today and badly

frustrated in the photo line but that short instant surely compensated for some of the bad.

Aug 12. Sun

Large cloudy patches with some sunny patches in the distance greeted us this morning. Again I lay in, writing some diary. I dozed off and awoke to sun. I dashed out, grabbed the camera and wandered off taking photos. It is a lovely area. The draw we are camped in is probably a slowly developing karst street or one that developed to some extent then stopped. There is a lot of calcite about here. Probably because of it there are some lovely erosional forms, including boulders on pedestals, lichen covered small cliffs, differential erosion of quartz veins and impressive swiss cheese limestone. I had great fun poking about looking for little photos instead of big views. I did discover that I should have got up at first light, for the bits of sun then probably lit parts of the First Canyon cliffs quite nicely, especially the high South Rim.

I was taking a photo of the moon above a lichen covered cliff, when several sparrow hawks appeared on the scene and alighted on the cliff top. I got one rather poor photo when they came to the edge and spread their wings. I got one more photo, probably not good, then out of film. Then they proceeded to give quite a display of landing and taking off from the cliff. A gorgeous sight and truly incredible photos if I'd had film. There was four of them, a family I assume. They swooped, soared and fluttered about us off and on along the cliff tops for several hours. The young birds were testing their flying skills to the limits. They seemed quite unafraid to come swooping right past our heads or to land quite close. Rarely have I seen such a display of the verve of youthful exuberance and such apparent joy in the freedom of flight. No wonder man has always wanted to fly and too bad we have only learned to do so in such a pitifully clumsy fashion.

About 11am, we pulled out after the light had got around to where I could photograph the meander. It didn't look too bad from the west side but it is now obvious that the only good way to photograph it is from the air. We hiked south to the north rim of First Canyon just about out to the Gunsight.

Once again we were blessed with a long line of fluffy clouds rolling off the Tlogotsho, casting shadow right where we didn't want it. We sat down and had lunch on the canyon rim. Quite some view. After some waiting we got sun partly where we wanted it.

As I scurried about on cliff edges, pinnacles and rims it slowly dawned on me that there were few if any good canyon photos from up here. We see very little of the river. The rim is a long distance away from the opposite rim, the direction one tends to find photos. There is a heavy haze today. The anticlinal nature of the

sloping rims means a good part of canyon is falling away in the photo, decreasing the feeling of depth. And worst of all one would need to wait a day at each site on the rim to take photos for each part in view has only a particular time of day when suitable light is cast upon it.

We started down the final stretch south along the top of Dry Canyon with my feeling rather frustrated with the photos of the past two days. The views and light into Dry Canyon didn't help my mood. Yet I shouldn't bitch for we have had five glorious days on tundra, seen many fine sights and taken a number of good photos, I hope. Yet whatever I get, I always seem to want better or more. Being a bit of a perfectionist means going through life dissatisfied and frustrated a good deal of the time. It must be hell for a real perfectionist.

We scrambled and thrashed into the bush along the sheep trail on top of Dry Canyon until we reached a gulch which some joker had listed in Lu Carbyn's CWS report on Deadmen Valley as a good route as recommended by Ron Seale. Somebody somewhere goofed on the map or was playing a joke. It was the worst thrash of the trip and downhill yet. Neither of us have sweated like that all summer. The hill was extremely steep and moss covered with small patches of very loose talus. We thought we could see the odd footprint in the moss, so maybe somebody else had tried. For their sakes we hope not. The only redeeming feature of the entire hillside was the water which started part way down. We arrived in Dry Canon, exhausted.

After half an hour's recuperation we started down the creek bed still tired. Tiredness led to sloppiness and lack of concentration, which led to stumbling which made one more tired. The trip down is better forgotten other than to say that we arrived at the Nahanni very footsore, weary and thankful to be here. It wasn't as bad as my Tlogotsho hike last fall when I arrived back totally exhausted, but it was nearly so.

We just sat for 15 minutes at the outfitter's picnic table watching a couple in a motor scow head upstream. We didn't give a damn if we were to camp here or not, we were doing it anyway. We went and got the stuff from the canoe. All safe. The barrel was gone from the beach, but so was the log across the snye and our tracks were obliterated from the bar, so I am not sure whether Steve or the rising water fetched the barrel.

We set up the tent west of the outfitter's camp then got out his buckets from the cache to heat water. Jake gave me first bath. I had just got the first soaping over and rinsed in gorgeous warm water and started on the second when I heard a motorboat through soap clogged ears, or so I thought. I couldn't see over the bar downstream, but Jake confirmed the worst. A boat coming in at high speed. I grabbed the pail and soap and some clothes and dashed bare feet and all over the bar, up the bank, to bush edge to see if they were coming in. All the time, I was

frantically rinsing with the little water left in the pail. Half an hour earlier I could hardly walk on those same rocks in heavily booted feet. I fled over them barefoot, sharp stone and all and never felt a bit of pain. Amazing what a little adrenaline does.

Jake dashed down and got the rest of my clothes just as the boat started to pull in. It was a big red and white fiberglass outfit with twin 85 hp Mercs on the back, carrying a raft of people. I dashed to the tent, pail, clothes and all where I frantically rinsed off what soap I could, dried off the remainder and dressed quickly, hoping to get back to help Jake face the music. I got back in time to say hi to a lady and a teenage boy when an Indian came up the hill with a big grin and said "Hi, I'm Rod Norwegian". I introduced myself and everything was alright from there on.

Rod is one of two outfitters using the river. It turned out he'd heard of me and me of him. He had Rev. John Bishop, the Anglican minister from Fort Simpson, his wife, and their son and his family (wife & two boys 14 & 16) on a trip. They are all from Britain, the son on a visit and Bishop Sr. only a year. We shared the cook fire over supper and chatted afterward. Rod retired early with a bad headache.

It didn't take any of us long to wander off to tents, but it did take me a while to get to sleep despite my tiredness.

Aug 13 [Mon]

Up about 7 to yet more sunshine and a nice breakfast of corned beef and egg. We talked to the Bishops a bit, helped them identify a few birds and then I started my washing. Things are filthy. Seven or eight days is just too long to leave clothes, but we didn't want to pack the weight of extra clothing. Everything required two complete washes but it all came reasonably clean.

The Bishops went up Dry Canyon for a 2-3 hour hike. Rod stayed behind. He and I chatted for quite some time. In his youth his family trapped on the Horn Plateau. According to him, it was quite a place to run into other people as families from Willowlake River, Rabbitskin (Rod's home), Simpson and Providence all used to head back there because there was fish for people and dogs and good fur, both of which were lacking on the lowlands. He just remembers the last of the fall fishery on Great Slave, when apparently a lot more than the RCMP went up. Apparently, the missionaries and some families made a habit of going as well. In the 50's, he commercial fished in the winter on the lake and he had a funny rather implausible story here, but he told it with such sincerity that I almost believe him. Needle bars were about 2.3 dollars each which was quite a few days wages then. To drop one was really serious. According to Rod, they could recover them if they took a big losh (ling), put a hook through his lips, tied a rock about 50 feet back up the line,



dropped the whole works straight down the hole and left the line sit overnight. The fish would swim in circles wrapping the line about the bar. In the morning, just pull in the line and bar. They always made a point of releasing the fish that had done them the favour. When they showed one fellow the trick and he ate the fish, they were most offended.

Wash up and clean up, continued after the Bishops left for upstream about noon. Just as they were leaving, John Bishop and I got talking about the church register. He is quite willing, even happy to have it microfilmed. So perhaps I shall get Parks to do it this winter since they seem to have done nothing.

After we had things cleaned up about camp we headed up the Prairie Creek fan. A snye follows up the base of the hill from the head of Dry Canyon fan, the two fans just meeting at their upper and lower extremities. Horsetail lines the banks. There is a fair flow of muddy water, the mud coming from the banks and bottom, not the Nahanni. We saw suckers and grayling in it. Beaver have built tiny dams on it lower down and regular dams in the upper reaches where flooding is infrequent. Willows line the snye in the areas subject to flooding but up further the old beaver dams are now nice marshy meadows. A mature spruce forest with just a very few, very decrepit balsam poplar left, occupies the lowest part of the Prairie fan where flooding never occurs now. It is lovely clear walking beneath it. It ceases abruptly, to drop a few feet onto an area of very open white spruce 20-30 years old, on inactive (or nearly so) gravel. The ground cover is a sea of dryas, odd patches of bearberry, scattered goldenrod and juniper and little else. Gorgeous walking. This in turn gives way to a fairly active area of the fan floored in Dryas, which in turn leads to the most active area of all which is just raw gravel that is well worked over at least once a year if not more so. The river channel has swung further east this year than last.

As we headed up towards the lick along the paleodelta bank, we saw a man and woman ahead of us. We caught up to them at the canyon. It turned out to be Al Savage and his 16 year old daughter, Pamela from Quesnel, B.C. He is retired from RCAF, Search and Rescue and is now a letter carrier. It turns out that it was his boat we saw in the canyon below the falls last year. He was up then with two of his sons. He seems to be another Patterson pilgrim. He wanted to find the Hermitage so we took them up the sheep trail to show them. He enjoyed that. We talked about all kinds of things. He could talk and ask questions at a mile a minute but he was interesting.

He was in on the Blake Mackenzie search to some degree and he gave me a few pointers on finding those records which he says will exist. He lent a little more basis to the rumours in this country that Mackenzie may have staged the entire thing and disappeared to a foreign country. The search master told Al, at a later date, that they actually had some organization, perhaps it was Interpol, checking to see if he turned up in Central or South America. The searchmaster felt his



disappearance from the crash site was too quiet, sudden and mysterious. The Weekend Magazine story seems to ring truer to me.

Al offered us a motorboat ride back to camp, stopping to see Steve on the way. I accepted because I wanted to confirm our plans again with Steve. While we were hiking down the bar, Al spotted a nice fat shiny, black bear. It ambled across the entire width of the bar in front of us, never once spotting us or hearing us.

When we got to the boat, it transpired that Al had made the aluminum river scow himself. It is a magnificent job, all flush riveted and 25 foot one piece oak gunwhales. The only thing he didn't do was the heavy bending on the ribs. A sheet metal shop did that for him. He also had a fancy lift for the motor that allowed him to set it at any level in the water he wanted, the idea being that if you began to ding stones, you just lifted the motor a bit. The whole outfit was very professional and well made right down to metal shoed poles and big heavy dirty oars.

Once we got to Steve's, further evidence of his handiwork came to light as Steve sought his advice on some points on cabin building. It turned out that the home he was building while living in the basement, was log. He hopes to have it finished by Christmas. Quite a fellow.

Steve offered to take our barrel and us back to camp after supper, saving Al the trouble. Steve obviously wanted to chat. So we had a nice stew supper. The cabin has the roof on now, the door in and the skylights in the roof. It is really nice but despite Steve's optimism I think the skylights are going to leak like sieves. It sure is nice though to have that much light in a cabin and to see tall spruce waving in the breeze through the roof. It is a job he can be proud of.

We roared down to camp in the jet boat and sat and talked until well past midnight. It seems Lou, in another of his changes of mind, has shortened Steve's days off. There isn't really time for the Tlogotsho now so we settled on the Headless Range, going up our creek route. It will be partly old hat for us and I was tempted to call the whole affair off but the Headless Range is beautiful, we wanted to hike south but didn't have the time then and most important, Steve seems to really want us to come and I don't like to back off and disappoint him. We will meet on the 16<sup>th</sup>. He roared off upriver in near darkness and we rolled in as quiet descended once more as the engines shut off upstream.

Jake just reminded me. On the way up the snye from Dry Canyon to Prairie Creek we passed a small stand of mint and a single water hemlock in a spring seepage area. Ah-hah, warm spring says I. Here are the two most important indicators. It was ice cold. So, my hypothesis now has one exception. They are not absolute indicators of warm seepage. Damn!

Aug 14 [Tues]

We are very tired and lethargic this morning. It took us hours to get things packed. In fact, Steve and his men had half a day's work done and passed on down river before we ever hit the water. We left about noon hour under brilliant sun. Today, there are a few clouds about, not quite as cloud free as yesterday which was a phenomenally clear warm day. Today it is quite windy and somewhat muggy.

We stopped just above the Little Butte and climbed its back steeply sloping side. It gave a new perspective to Deadmen Valley. It made me realize just how much of the east end is alluvial fan or braided stream. Nearly the whole valley floor is gravel. There was a fine view down to the head of George's Riffle. It seems that the best Canyon photos will be from neither the top nor bottom but some point part way up. There was a blazed tree on top of the Little Butte with a pitch smudged name and date on it. We couldn't read it but the year might have been '53. The blaze looked about 15 years old. On the way down we passed a hole in the base of the Butte. I crawled in to explore. It turned out to be a cave that went upwards and back about 30 feet. I used the lighter for light. It is not a solution cave. Probably it was produced by a combination of frost action and the river at a higher level. It is now heavily floored in a slope of crumbly wet soil. Someone had cut a long thin spruce pole for poking around in it and left it in the mouth. There didn't seem to be any animal droppings about. At the back end you could stand full upright with a couple of feet to spare. Back down at the Nahanni we passed the huge steel winch in the water that was brought in to salvage the plane (Cessna 180 I think) that sank here. I wonder what events led to that? The winch weighs tons I bet.

Before we left shore we checked the canoe over very carefully to see that all is stowed and safe. We are going to run George's Riffle without spray covers for it seems we packed the bow and stern sections in the wrong barrel and they are now sitting down at Nahanni Butte. If we can't run it this way then we shouldn't be on the river. We drifted downstream, hugging the island until near its bottom end where we pulled out right beside the big waves to get a clear shot at the narrow 30 foot channel between them and the cliff. We back paddled hard. I had to get Jake to help with the steering, the boils were so heavy, but it was only a minute or two and we were in the calmer water below. The last four waves, the smallest ones all caught the side of the canoe in such a way that each slopped some water into the stern and on me, two to three gallons total. We pulled ashore and backed out. I was pleased with the run. This year the north channel down the snye behind the island is virtually closed off, so the only choice is the narrow slot between the huge waves and cliffs. With a lightly loaded canoe the south shore could be fun. Two or three huge waves then yank hard right into the eddy behind the point.

Just around the bend from the Riffle, we pulled to shore on a beach and hiked back to a snye where Steve had said there was a spring back here. In fact, there were two. One gushed out of a rockpile like Whitespray, but on a much smaller scale. The other came up through silts in a 20 foot circular pool-basin carved in the silt bank. It had a good flow but surprisingly the silt wasn't bubbling and dancing in the bottom. How that much water could seep in with creating a disturbance is beyond me. The nicest thing of all though was the gorgeous curves of the snye and the sun sparkling off its breeze ruffled water. What photos! (I hope). The beach on the Nahanni has been used as a campsite on a number of occasions.

We then drifted down to Abandoned Meander Creek, stopping to climb 200 feet up the south wall on the way to little photographic avail[ability]. Getting decent photos in this canyon is a challenge, to say the least. We set up camp at 5:30 at Abandoned Meander Creek then went for a hike up it. The hike to its forks is rough as one crosses and re-crosses the stream, clambering over huge boulders and through small canyons. The east creek is a dirty brown from the lake sediments which I suspect lie up it. The west creek is perfectly clear. Both flow through pretty canyons but the west creek is a joy to hike up with its white-green water tumbling over rocks into clear green pools. What a difference that clear water makes to one's satisfaction in hiking them. We went about a quarter mile up each. No further because there was no light.

Back at camp I washed socks and that was about the last constructive thing I did today, for my back began to give me hell. I'd strained it earlier today lifting the canoe into the water.

Jake cooked a magnificent supper of beef and rice, apple sauce and cookies. We ate it while a sunset glowed overhead. I was asleep shortly after.

Aug 15 [Wed]

This morning we hiked up the west meander a little further than yesterday catching some places in light. We'd have done better had we not been so tired. We got up about 7 but then the sun disappeared behind the south wall of the canyon. I went in to do diary and fell asleep. Jake woke me as the sun reappeared about 9:30 or 10. It turned out to be a fairly good hour for our hike for part of the river and we got some good photos.

We hit the river before noon and commenced drifting as per usual. Twice we stopped for short hikes up the walls but despite the good sun, I just couldn't get decent photos. This canyon certainly has me stymied. You get one wall or the other, rarely both and then only on a curve where the one wall blends into the

other. Never, it seems a good shot of a deep gorge. I am getting frustrated at not photographing the Nahanni's most prominent features properly.

We opted out of climbing to the highest part of the south rim up the first creek-gulch opposite and below Abandoned Meander Creek, despite its looking like a fair and direct route. The only other decent route up is a creek opposite the Gunsight but it leads up into the bush, not onto the tundra of the high part. By the time we got to where we could have gone up, it was too late in the day to do so. It is an all day hike.

Instead we dropped down to Patterson Creek and headed up it. The first 50 yards of steep rough fan were waterless, but after that a creek picked up and flowed quite clear and cold. In spots it flowed over bedrock, plunging into pretty green pools. Suddenly, about 0.4 miles up the water came gushing down the canyon side into Patterson Creek. Above this, Patterson Creek was bone dry, despite our seeing plenty of water up at its source. We followed the spring creek up a very steep gulch with rather dangerous talus, for about 150 yards. As far as we could see beyond it, perhaps another 100 yards, the water tumbled down. It would seem to be a mini-Whitespray somewhere up the Canyon Wall. We went on up Patterson Creek another 0.3 miles. What a hot, desolate, boulder bed.

The next stop was Whitespray for a rather belated lunch. How refreshing that water is after a hot day in the canyon. Jake went fishing and caught a beautiful grayling. Then I had to try it. I have always been jinxed here. For some silly reason I put on the small Rapala and quickly caught two more beauties before giving the rod back to Jake who caught the last one needed for a good fish supper. We dangled the 8-10 pounds of fish on a shoe string out behind the boat. The sun was fast leaving the canyon so we continued our drift but with a bit of paddling now and again.

I couldn't help but think repeatedly throughout the day how fitting and proper it is to drift the canyons, even in a jet boat and how totally senseless, stupid, even obscene, it is to roar through it in any kind of motorized vehicle. The scope of any of the canyons is too large and varied to absorb at one pass even at river speed. By motor you also miss the gorgeous sound of water and wind, most of the smells (not all pleasant) and most of all the power and activity of the river. Our return trip with Steve on Aug 5 through First Canyon typified the worst way to travel. Today as we baked our near naked bodies drifting under hot sun typified the best.

We danced down the side of Lafferty Riffle, then I pulled over hard to the cliff and drifted right against it down to Hotsprings Creek. What a way to end a day in First Canyon. We saw it at its best today. Yellow spots and cliffs dominated the gray and even the gray had great variety in shades in the sun.

The tent went up quickly. Then we got supper. Gus' cabin logs had the grayling sizzling in no time. They were a fine treat eaten just at sunset.

Then Jake started down to wash clothes to be followed by a soak in the rock pool on the bar. I had toyed likewise with the idea and discarded it, hot and dirty as I am. However, Jake's example changed my mind. We got the washing done, then climbed into the pool with sighs that were probably heard up in Deadmen Valley. How warm. How utterly luxurious and decadent to be in bath hot water that never ceases to flow. Someone this year had done a tremendous job of deepening the pool by throwing out rocks. It is 18-24 inches deep and big enough for 3-4 people.

Once immersed in the pool with little but noses and eyes out, the mosquitoes hadn't much of a target and left. The warmth seeped into cold feet. Bubbles of gas emerged from the bottom to run up backs, fanny cracks and armpits, tickling all the way. With eyes at surface level, the First Canyon stood as black in the water as in reality while above or below, depending on where you looked, the sky slowly, ever so slowly darkened. Yellowish to the northwest on the horizon, quickly fading through various shades of pale blue, getting ever darker until overhead it was a deep royal blue, almost black. One by one, stars appeared while the aurora developed a pale green arc from east to west horizon. What a sight! We soaked [in] it for two hours, maybe more. I could have spent the night in there but the thought of shriveled surfaces of raisins finally drove me out to join Jake in a bath in the Nahanni. The mosquitoes were all off to bed now and the bath was surprisingly tolerable. Maybe we had just got warm enough so that it carried over. Then a dash up to light a good fire that we rotisseried ourselves about before turning in at goodness knows what hour.

Aug 16 [Thurs]

Another sunny day. It seems to be making up for some of the poor weather earlier.

The very first thing was photos at the mouth of Hot springs Creek and along its lower reaches. I failed on them last fall because of the rain and lack of tripod. While not quite as pretty today it was still nice.

The moisture seems to be driven up out of the ground in huge quantities by the heat to condense at night into an intense dew which soaks everything in sight. I strung a clothesline between Gus' two remaining caches and the generator shack. Soon all our stuff was hanging to dry. The place looked as though it was occupied by a troop of scouts.

Next chore was diary. While I was working on it, Jake wandered off to take photos. He returned and most industriously began to clean the lens. After some

time, he announced it was in tough shape and making grinding noises. Boy was it ever! Finally, I got out of him the fact that he had been carrying it in his shirt pocket, when he bent over and it dropped into the soupy hot springs mud. Several times this summer I have asked him not to carry it there because it gets filthy and the rear element is likely to get scratched without a lens cap. Now I was really angry because although I don't treat the cameras all that well, Jake, at times, has treated them as though they were a disposable item, when in fact I can't afford to replace even one. At any rate, I contained myself by starting the task of dismantling and cleaning the lens. The deeper I went, the more severe the extent of the problem became. Mud and highly corrosive spring water were everywhere. I managed to get it out of everything but the iris in several hours work. I didn't have the tools to handle it. A ball race of about 100, 0.6mm balls was real sport but it got done. The chore would have gone better had it not been for all the interruptions.

First, was Pat Wood and another Water Resources fellow with Bruce Reilly of Okanagan. They were on their monthly changes of water recorder charts here, Flat River, Virginia Falls, Tungsten and Macmillan Pass. They stayed for tea and we jabbered on about the history. They wanted to know all about Bennett Creek for they plan to stop in there this trip. I hope they don't take the few cans etc. that I gathered up for Parks to get. Bruce was quite a knowledgeable fellow and quite interested in things, especially air crashes. I think he wants to resurrect an old Junkers or Curtiss Robin or any other of those old aircraft. Certainly he wanted to know the location of any old ones. He gave me the name of Dr. Tron Nghus who was the flying doctor at Simpson in the late '50's and early '60's. When he left, he sold his Stinson to Jack Norcross.

Shortly after they left, a lone canoeist drifting in a square stern canoe pulled in. It transpired he had started at Nelson with a rather shaky six horse Johnson and had started up the Nahanni with it in sick shape. He persevered and got to within six miles of the falls before it quit for good. He turned back there and drifted down. The way he paddled made me wonder how he made it. All in all, a rather strange fellow. He was due in Simpson in three days to meet his wife.

He had barely left when a whole group of people appeared over the bank – four canoes I believe. At the same time, the drone of a jet boat could be heard a long way off. We started to pack, assuming it to be Steve. But while doing that and talking to the group it transpired that one was Wally Schaber of Ottawa who runs Black Feather Tours. So we had to chat and while doing that Steve pulled in with Myrielle, his wife, and Garcia and Louise Pearson, his brother and sister-in-law. They headed off to the springs while Wally and I finished chatting. By the time they returned Jake had packed up most things. I threw what was left of the lens into foiled paper and a plastic bag before helping Jake finish the packing.



Once we loaded everything in the jetboat, it was full. Gear was perched everywhere. We towed the canoe into mid-stream to load, filling it with water on the way. Finally, it was upside down on top of everything else and off we roared. Whatever I may think of jet boats, my thoughts are very, very considerably more mellow when I travel upstream in one, but only when I am in it. Even with the huge load we must have still been doing 15 mph upstream. I suggested we stop at Whitespray to let the Pearsons fish as well as see it. We got out Jake's rod or what is left of it and in fairly short order caught five good size grayling on the Rapids. Garcia caught two, Louise three. They very obviously enjoyed it and Jake and I just as much because they did so. No matter how hard we tried, we couldn't get a sixth, so everyone would have one for supper. We finally gave up.

Back in the boat, we roared upstream to where the pretty snye is, when I again proposed a stop to show it to Pearsons. Steve obliged. We hiked in and took photos while Steve and Myrielle took their 6 month old girl, Chantelle, for a walk on the sand. Shortly after that, we arrived at the Park's cabin in Deadmen Valley. The rest of the day was spent setting up camp, cooking supper and talking.

Garcia, a Montreal policeman, is fluently bilingual with a French accent. Louise teaches grade 4 and knows a little more English than I do French but not much more. Both are real lively, outgoing people who are loads of fun. They don't seem to have children and spend nearly all their spare time in the bush hunting and fishing. Garcia travels all over to hunt. He is from Chicoutimi and knew about the Ste. Marguerite River, The Saguenay, Tadoussac and St. Rose du Nord. We talked about that a bit.

Steve and Myrielle sure have a cute baby with the deepest blue eyes. They are a couple of doting parents and as Garcia observed are producing a slightly spoiled child. They still have time to learn though.

We finally hit the sack at dark. Tomorrow we head up the Headless Range.

Aug 17 [Fri]

The baby got us all up in good time, first light in fact. I feel somewhat tired as a result. It took us quite some time to get away though. We made sure the girls would be comfortable about camp. Then we had to sort our food to cut down on duplication. Jake and I had to pack up our surplus gear and store it in the cabin. At last we [were] ready. This time the load looked quite reasonable. Four lightly loaded backpacks, that hopefully will return heavily loaded with sheep meat.

I forgot to mention yesterday that Al Savage dropped in last night. He never does things by halves. He had done the Headless Range hike more or less as per my suggestion. He was just raving about it. He and Pam went up the first gulch



beyond where we came down and came down the one we went up. They had seen the rams and just thoroughly enjoyed that and the entire experience. He had also hiked up the west side of the Prairie Creek fan and over the hump into what just had to be the Hermitage. He described a pool at the base of the cliff where there was sure to be three foot lunkers even though he didn't see any. What a character. His enthusiasm is infectious. He left his name and address which I now seem to have lost. He promised to write and get more info on the Blake Mackenzie affair from a friend of his about to retire from Search and Rescue. They pulled out for Nelson very early this morning, before sunup in fact. I wish him well.

It took us little more than half an hour to roar up Deadmen Valley to the creek in Second Canyon. A nice eddy on the lower edge of the fan provided good shelter for the boat.

We headed up the creek at a slow even pace because a week before Garcia had ripped his feet into huge bloody blisters and shreds of skin on a twelve mile fishing trip hike though a bog. Steve asked at the first running water about 200 yards up if we should fill up. "Oh no", I replied, "there is water all the way up". Fifty yards further on it went dry. We made jokes about no water but I confidently predicted its reappearance a short distance, at the first forks at the very furthest. We passed the forks and still no water. We were a pretty thirsty bunch and I was getting more than a bit worried. Finally, just below the shale outcrop we hit some. What a relief. We drank and drank of water so clear and cold it hurt. Then we ate the better part of [a] package of dried meat, drank some more and filled the canteens. The creek ran dry a short distance up and we didn't hit water again until the headwall where mighty thirsts were once again mightily quenched. By now I was really worried about what was on top.

As with Jake and me earlier, we puffed up the tundra covered headwall taking plenty of time and stops to eat blueberries. I ate so many that the acid of these rather sour berries began to hurt my mouth. They surely are a poor cousin in the flavour and sweetness departments to our berries back home, but my, how they clean the cotton from the mouth. Once on top, we scouted for water to no avail. We decided to hike out to the canyon lookout to see it and see if there was water by which we could camp.

The wind didn't favour our seeing sheep, blowing as it was from the southwest. We wandered long, reaching every place we had seen water two weeks previously. To no avail. The real shocker was to find the pond in the clump of alpine fir dried up. I had taken it to be virtually permanent. In a couple of places the soil was still damp but no water. What a shock, especially after my predictions on water availability. What an eye opener as to what two weeks of hot dry weather can do to this country. We got to the canyon rim early in the afternoon, a much more favourable time to photograph it than the late afternoon when we were here previously. That was the only photo I took, for nothing else was as pretty as that

first day when every step nearly turned up a new scene of stunning beauty, usually including a patch of water glowing in the sun. Now all the greens had turned to brown. Steve and Garcia seemed to enjoy the scenery, but they didn't go searching for different views over a little cliff here, around a boulder there. That rubbed off on me a bit. Most important for me, that magic of seeing something really beautiful for the first time wasn't and couldn't be there. I don't know how places have looked best on first sight. Very few look better on second or third. Maybe that is just me, maybe that is just in the nature of perception.

Garcia was very thirsty and hobbled back even before reaching canyon lookout. When we got back to the packs, he was gone, presumably downhill for water. We dropped down to the lowest point on the ridge with the packs. I set off for a bowl about 0.25 miles away to see if its promise of water held. It didn't and after a walk of nearly a mile checking out several other sights I returned to find Garcia up on the ridge with a big grin. The other two in their turn had dropped down for water taking all our pots and canteens. Garcia had passed them on the way, then once well above them had discovered a trickle in the moss only about 150 yards from camp. Shortly afterwards Steve and Jake came over the hill having made the same discovery the hard way. We decided to set up camp here, where there was wood and water fairly close by. Tent spots were at a premium but we found two and had home for the night.

Supper was spaghetti à la Bates and Addison. Poor Jake was draining the water off the spaghetti when the pot lid slipped and it all drained into the moss and lichen. Did the poor guy ever feel badly. He and I picked it up and plunked it into a pot of cold water, skimmed off the floating garbage, then picked out the spaghetti, clean as [a] whistle. It made a fine supper that was topped by warm applesauce. We sat around and talked until dark.

Steve has had quite a varied life. He was brought up on the prairies and near the foothills. His parents sound a bit like Mom in that they taught the kids about the outdoors and made a point of getting them out. At Drumheller they used to go picking dinosaur bones as a family. They were interested in Indian artifacts and collected whatever they found. An uncle near Lumsden apparently has a house full of arrowheads, spear points, etc. from his farm which he turned up in ploughing, cultivating or whatever. He must be on an important site. Steve talks of the tent rings at different places and digging in a site where buffalo were killed, finding matted hair in layers up to two feet thick in the soil. At Drumheller he and a friend used to go out camping in the badlands searching for bones. From the sound of it he must have quite a collection at his parents' place. He also describes horse trips as a teenager with another friend in the mountains in and around Jasper Park. They tried rather unsuccessfully at living off the land. He seems to have always been out camping and living in the bush. Somehow he came north to Fort Smith working as a seasonal warden and living in a log cabin. While there, he met Myrielle who was nursing there. What she was doing there escapes me for she longs for her native Québec so badly. At any rate, Steve with his ever itchy

feet took off on a 5 ½ month camping trip in the Pacific with the present naturalist from Wood Buffalo. Steve got homesick and was ready to settle down so they got married. Now only after a couple of years of marriage two very nice people have a problem. She feels alienated in the west and totally miserable in Nahanni Butte (understandably so) while he feels at home only in the west. I hope they find some way of satisfactorily solving their problem. A move from Nahanni seems certain.

Aug 18 [Sat]

For some reason, I had an utterly miserable night's sleep and am quite exhausted today. We arose in fair time to yet another sunny day, the tenth in a row, although one or two days have had afternoon showers, heavy ones at times.

We hiked south on the Headless Range, stopping frequently to let Steve and Garcia scout ahead. The [wind?] is from the west to northwest which is fairly good for us. Yesterday afternoon Garcia spotted five rams on a talus hill just south of Scow Creek and within the Park. How he saw them I don't know for even with the binoculars you have to look twice to see them against the rock. They were still in the same spot this morning. Nothing else did we see. Whenever Steve wandered ahead I would flop in the sun on a piece of soft tundra sometimes actually getting in a catnap. We proceeded slowly with all the stops, but it left plenty of opportunity to see the country.

The view over Deadmen Valley was gorgeous this morning with sun turning the splits and Prairie fan to silver. There is at least 50 percent more bar showing now than two weeks ago. There are some very steep cliffs dropping off into the Scow Creek valley which give fine views out over it towards the Funeral Range. The Headless Range itself is not at all level. We were constantly climbing or dropping several hundred feet and on one occasion probably 600 feet. After about three or four miles of this we started searching for a campsite. I went off on another goose chase to a likely looking spot. On my way back, Steve hollered to say they had found a pond on top. All I had found was dry sink holes below. Little did I realize what he meant by pond. It was over 100 feet across, two feet deep at deepest, really looked permanent and set in a depression surrounded by low hills. It was a stunning sight both for beauty and water. It was on tundra but treeline was only 100 feet down so there was even wood. We set up camp, left the packs and headed further south.

More up and down dale until we came to the biggest gap of all. The last ridge before Meilleur River cuts through the Headless Range, is separated from the rest of the Range by a gap of 1500 or more feet. (I can't tell how much for the map of this area is now down at the Butte). We clambered part way down over a very

steep slope. Ahead, no sheep were in sight and Steve decided that even if there were, it wasn't worth packing across that gap. So we turned back.

The day had turned very muggy and clouds were building rapidly. Both east and west of us on the Funeral Range where Eric and Lou are hunting, thunder boomed and rain was falling. We headed for camp, reasonably satisfied that no sheep were outside the Park.

Supper tonight was beef stew topped by a huge rice pudding with a pound of dates in it. Another success. Storms were all about but still we escaped. The sun came out to light up the Meilleur Canyon wall below us, a great streak of white in a sea of gray and black. Over on the Tlogotsho another shaft of light turned a small area to yellow while a short rainbow glowed from a storm over top of it. Grand!

I crawled to bed and immediately fell asleep after a fine day. Any sunny day on tundra is, by axiom, a fine one.

Aug 19 [Sun]

It rained during the night in at least three showers but was cloudy and dry this morning. Steve was anxious to get back to the girls since we haven't been able to establish radio contact in repeated attempts, despite being in plain view of the cabin. I have yet to see this Parks communication system work except between Simpson and Nahanni Butte. Anyway, the heavy cloud, fog patches and likelihood of rain wasn't conducive to staying up. We packed quickly and headed directly out. Gracia's feet, must be better. He tore out ahead of the rest of us.

About a mile before our descent off the ridge, the fog rolled up from Deadmen Valley and the wind rose to whip it about. In no time we were coated in fine, fine water droplets. At times we couldn't see 50 feet but there was little fear of getting lost so long as we kept generally north. It was a different and fairly pleasant experience hiking in the fog just so long as we kept moving to keep warm.

At what we figure was the last hill before descent we stopped to pick blueberries. We wanted some for one last cobbler to use up our last cake mix which just happened to be white, while Steve wanted some to take home to the girls. I had spotted blueberries all over the hillside while searching for water two days ago. We got into some lovely patches of good sized ones, so long as we wandered about. Everyone was picking so industriously that we didn't notice the fog lift until I looked up in response to a strong noise.

I heard it for 1-2 minutes before I realized that I was listening to a ram. By the time I looked up and told Steve, the ram was probably in the fog or had gone around

the side of the hill north of us after spotting us. Certainly, it wasn't in sight but we heard it several more times. Earlier in the day we'd seen our flock of six rams still over on the hill near Scow Creek, so this must have been another one or flock. Perhaps our flock of nine of two weeks ago had split into six and three.

With the fog lifted a bit, we discovered that indeed, we were where we thought we were. We picked a few more berries, about six quarts total before heading down. The downward trip was quite easy. We fairly galloped down the headwall on the vegetated sections, however, that gallop may have done some damage to my "downhill knees". Somewhat lower in the creek bed I stepped down off a rock and the left knee gave way. After that, stepping up or down caused sharp pain but fairly level walking was no problem. I limped to the boat. Garcia was even worse off. Somehow, he damaged his Achilles tendon. He refused to let anyone take his pack and with the aid of a walking stick he too made it down. True to form for the entire trip, we stopped at the midway waterhole and ate the last of the dried meat and gorp. We have eaten in the style of kings this trip and the quantity of pigs.

Part way down a hole appeared in the clouds and by the time we reached the boat, the sky was pretty well clear over us. We motored into mid-river, then shut off the motor and drifted, whether or not in response to my well voiced opinions on motors I didn't ask. We started up again near the foot of Second Canyon. Steve was anxious to get back to the cabin, but I did persuade him to stop at the Deadmen slumps to check out raspberries. They were pretty well over, many being dried up, but there were still enough to pick for a pie or jam. We picked only a cupful to take home and a couple of handfuls each.

The girls were happy to see us back. It seems a bear had started to swim the river towards the cabin with every likelihood of its landing there. Lady, Steve's husky, didn't see or smell it. So – Myrielle banged pots and Louise howled and barked like a dog. She gave us a sample and then we howled – laughter of course. Their antics had the desired effect, for the bear turned back to the bank whence he came albeit considerably further downstream. Quite a pair, those two sisters.

They had a fine stew already for us when we arrived. Steve and Garcia didn't have much faith in reflector ovens so we set out to show them after supper. I did up a huge blueberry cobbler which took about two hours to work and got demolished in about two minutes. Success number one. Jake outdid me though when he produced a blueberry pie in the cast iron frying pan. Everyone but Jake was too full to eat it, so it waited until morning. We had a grand chat around the fire while these things cooked. Went to bed around 11 pm.

Aug 20 [Mon]

The baby awoke before first light howling and couldn't be pacified. It came out later that nobody got much sleep. Myrielle had had more than enough roughing it with the baby so camp was broken in great haste so they could get home. Jake and I didn't realize this until they were nearly packed, then did we turn on the speed for we wanted a lift in the jetboat to the top of Prairie Creek fan. Amazing what a shortage of time and sheer laziness does to a fellow's attitude to jet boats.

Steve dropped us there and then went back to pick up the girls and head downstream.

We in turn left everything on the bank but cameras and rod and headed up the fan. Staying west of Prairie Creek is by far the easiest route up, for it is on vegetation most of the way. The lower portion of the fan is covered with the heaviest mat of juniper I have ever seen anywhere. Both species are present, but the one resembling cedar is by far the most common, giving acres of ground a blue-green cast. Spots of yellow-green up to 30 feet across were the prickly juniper. There were minor quantities of bearberry and the odd goldenrod, fireweed, etc. About half a mile up the fan the juniper thinned gradually over half a mile until it was just scattered clumps amongst bearberry, scattered white spruce and annuals.

The only shale exposure I know of is a small one where the active portion of the fan first reaches the base of the hill about 1 mile up. It is topped by paleo delta sediments and just around the corner, lake sediments. Just as upstream where the Nahanni is undermining them, here Prairie Creek is doing the same thing causing the same rotary slumps. Not as huge but if anything, even more active and chaotic. It is a dramatic experience walking over this slump area, and one must or else wade in the deep swift water of Prairie Creek. The active portion of the fan downstream from the slumps is covered in the silt washed down. This same silt may account for the fantastic juniper growth even further down. Some is deposited there by some floods amongst the juniper. Perhaps it is quite fertile.

Above the slumps one is an active fan and near or beside the main creek channel all the way to the canyon. At the slumps one gets the best downstream impression of the underfit canyon. As the low infilled section is approached, a trail up near the present canyon becomes obvious. As one climbs up the infilling, the trail becomes a highway through moss carpet, white spruce forest. The trail forks, one fork up to the west canyon rim, which consists of a series of successively higher pinnacles and the other fork descending over the infilling to the bars above Prairie Creek Canyon. (This might better be called Hermitage Canyon and the entire canyon from here to the galena deposit, the Prairie Creek Canyon).



We climbed the pinnacles and while I haven't reread DR [Dangerous River] yet, I think I must come around to Al Savage's view that these are the pinnacles that Patterson sat on overlooking the Hermitage and this west route is the one he used most often. Now that I have seen this, it makes more sense than the east side I have been advocating. Also, when I think of it, Wheatsheaf Creek is west of the west side of the active portion of the Prairie fan, so it would have been natural for Patterson to go up the west side.

The views from the west rim of Hermitage Canyon are far better than the east, both up Prairie Creek and down into Deadmen Valley. They are easier to get to, let you see more and except for vertically into the canyon are more spectacular. Rocks thrown over the side consistently took five seconds to reach the bottom with a smack and splash that sounded more like a reverberating cannon shot than a small rock hitting water.

The Hermitage, or small wide ring of the Prairie Creek valley above Hermitage Canyon is indeed a fine spot. I sort of discovered that when I waded up the canyon last fall, but then I didn't go far enough. Coming up the west side can't help but put one far enough. The water was still at a fair volume in Prairie Creek but not so much to prevent wading it where it split into three channels. There are at least four nice pools this year in the first 0.25 miles. The one against the cliff that Al was raving about, two other smaller ones against the west cliff 150-200 yards upstream and a huge pool 400 yards up. Jake yanked out two Dollys and two Grayling and obviously was just getting started when I called him over for photos. Those four fish certainly provided the base for a substantial lunch later, back at the Nahanni.

Derek Ford is quite correct, as he usually is, when he says the best place to view the underfit canyon is from the Hermitage, although he doesn't call it that. The infilling of lake sediments sweeps in a graceful arc from rock wall to rock wall. The pinnacle of rock between old and new canyons rises in incredibly spectacular fashion from the Hermitage floor, overhanging it in as graceful a fashion as the bow of a modern ocean liner or destroyer. In fact, I called it Destroyer Rock, which is apt in more ways than one for the river surges into it. By climbing the cliff north of the new canyon (Hermitage Canyon) we could just see out it to Deadmen Valley and get it in with the 2mm wide angle lens vertically. Then horizontally we could do the same with the older infilled canyon. It would take a 21 mm, maybe a fisheye to get it all in one shot and then the distortion would be terrible. It was bad enough with the 28 mm. How I longed for a perspective control lens in this and all the other canyons on this trip. The best time for photos in here is early afternoon but we couldn't afford to wait 'til then, or thought we couldn't. Actually, we should have, for they were important enough to warrant it. Hope the ones we did take turn out usefully.



After lunch of fish and crackers and jam, we pushed off downstream. We stopped at the cabin to leave Steve a note about a 45 gal. drum on the bar in the Hermitage, before dropping down to Dry Canyon. We went up the first couple of hundred yards of the Canyon for photos while it was in sun. It is the most spectacular portion of Dry Canyon and we hadn't got it in sun yet. From there it was a short drop to the hoodoo patch on the north shore just below the sheep lick. Two of them are capped by boulders. They have developed in material similar to those up Flat River but instead of this being a paleodelta matrix it is a matrix of talus and lake sediments. Just as hard and every bit as resistant to erosion. It was a difficult place to get a photo because of the light but I think I got one. Noon hour would be a better time.

We ran George's Riffle in neater fashion than last time despite the waves being worse. This was surprising for the water is lower. The fairly smooth chute against the canyon wall is getting wavier. We should have tried the right shore, taking the two or three big waves then the calm water in the eddy. That would have been real sport.

By now, much of the First Canyon was in shade so we actually paddled the shady sections. A crime in a way but time is short now and we have seen it once this trip at its best. We still drifted the sunny portions, shirts off.

We pulled into Whitespray for our last good chance at grayling. After some effort, Jake caught a one pounder. Then nothing. I lost one then out of desperation, changed lures to a rooster tail and went upstream to the clear water above the beach. By now the sun had dropped behind the canyon rim. It was getting quite cool. I managed to get two nice ones about 2-2.5 pounds but not a fourth. Oh well, we had four for lunch. Three will have to do for supper.

When we started today we planned a hike up Lafferty Creek canyon. The best light for it is around noon and for a while this afternoon we contemplated camping at its mouth and doing it tomorrow. As we passed the Grotte Valerie "caves closed" sign we discussed the merits of it. By the time we reached it and had a look at it we decided we'd seen enough canyons for this trip and that more exciting or perhaps I should say different things awaited us downstream. We paddled hard for the hot springs, arriving there at dusk. Dew was already all over everything.

The tent was up in no time and fish were soon sizzling over the fire. Probably, almost certainly our last fish meal for the trip. We ate by firelight for dark had descended. Briefly we contemplated a repeat of our last bath-soak here but wisely decided it was too late and turned in.

Aug 21 [Tues]

This morning dawned more or less sunny, but mackerel sky soon became quite heavy. Our last batch of pancakes disappeared with gusto, then we hit washing the clothes, and ourselves. This included an hour's soak in the rock pool, which I further deepened and enlarged.

By then the sky had cleared so we loaded the cameras including the 400 mm for a change into Jake's pack and headed for the springs. I wanted a good look at them and the saltspring-moose lick about two miles up Clausen Creek.

We stomped all about the springs area looking at each one and photographing a few of them. Seeps or springs seem to come in everywhere and bubbling seems more active than ever I remember. As we wandered along the base of the hill we came to the largest and nicest pool last. Suddenly I realized this was the pool Gus and Mary used in 1966 and the one we were photographed in by the NGS photographer. Why I hadn't found this last year I don't know, for the path comes right to it. It has a little wood stake dam across it. It is the last of perhaps ten distinct springs.

We continued along the base of the hill towards Clausen Creek from the last hot spring. Within a few tens of yards we were into cold springs which are building tufa into the moss and rotten logs. It must be a very slow process for you can't see the tufa but you can feel it crunch underfoot. It can be seen if moss is peeled back. In some places there is an iron stain produced by the water. As we continued along the hill, the springs started feeding into an open linear marshy area parallel to the hill base which contained a pond. The water in it is cold and mildly salty. Something about this area seemed quite familiar. I have thought about it quite a bit in the three days between seeing it and this writing. I am fairly sure this is the area that I walked into in 1966 and took to be the salt lick up Clausen Creek. At that time I went in by going down to the mouth of Clausen Creek and thrashing up it, interminably it seemed, then going up a stream. A snye and stream of sorts heads to Clausen Creek from this spot in about 100-150 yards.

At Clausen Creek we hit one of Mary's trails, probably the one up to the lick and her trapline. We lost it when we reached a two foot wide creek in a small gully. We had thrashed the bush in places to reach it so the distance probably seemed further than it really was. We crossed it, assuming it to be the first creek marked on the map. And here was another problem. We only had 95F1 with us when we should have had it plus 95F8. On 95F1 it looked s though the creek might possibly end near the edge of the sheet, which would account for its small size.

We continued on doing a fair bit of thrashing through heavy underbrush in terrific muggy heat. The Clausen Creek flood plain supports some of the finest white

spruce and balsam poplar forest anywhere in the Nahanni country. The spruce are typically 80-100 feet and the poplar are often three feet across. We saw a rotten one lying on the ground that must have been nearly four feet across. Right on an undercut bank of Clausen Creek we came to a beaver cut balsam poplar stump nearly three feet across. I have never seen such a large tree cut by beaver. Actually, the wind must have helped. It had chewed out a good 9-11 inches all the way round leaving a still very respectable uncut section of 15-18 inches which would still have supported the tree quite nicely except in a wind.

Shortly after that we picked up Mary's trail again and followed it to a much larger stream bed of dry gravel. This being the second creek we started up it looking for the lick. We thrashed around it for over [a] quarter of a mile. No damn lick. Very hot and disgusted we headed back under clouding skies. The trip back seemed quite short.

At the snye going up the base of the hill to the hot springs we continued on, on Mary's trail. It wandered along beside the cold spring, crossed a second small snye with a hard mud bottom, criss-crossed several trails until we came to the choke cherries where the trail turned into one of Gus' tractor roads now quite overgrown. It came out right at the campsite (their last home site). My how the bush has taken things over.

Back at camp we realized our mistake positively. When the trip back seemed too short for two good miles we had suspected it. The first little creek isn't worked on the map. Our second creek is really the first and once again I don't get to see the big moose lick. We should have gone a mile further.

By the time we reached camp, it was doing a fine job of clouding up and turning black up First Canyon. We gathered up all the clothes hung out to dry or air, packed and hit the river. We want to be at Yohin Ridge tonight.

A mile downstream the rain hit along with strong winds. We put on rainsuits and kept on going. It was really pleasant for the rain was warm. We ran out of it about Painted Cliffs. The skies continued to lower, thunder rumbled and showers lay all about. We didn't waste much time watching the scenery. Just paddled for a change.

We camped on the south bank just above Yohin Ridge, as the rain started to sprinkle. We lost little time in setting up camp and crawled into the tent as the rain started steadily. Worked on the diary in the remaining light, then fell asleep to the patter or rain. What a lullaby.

Aug 22 [Wed]

Still raining this morning but worked on diary, contemplating maps and slept. We have decided not to hike Yohin Ridge from the river but rather go into Yohin Lake first, then up to the ridge from it. The hike is shorter that way. We packed up about mid-afternoon under glowering but dry skies and headed downstream. We found the portage to Yohin with very little trouble using Steve's instructions. We left the canoe and all gear but the two backpacks behind the log jam at the head of the snye where the portage starts.

There are two trails into the lake. One, like a highway is a winter skidoo trail which starts at the foot of the snye and meanders around through and beside the many piping sinkoles on the paleo-Nahanni sand and gravel terrace. The other, a summer trail goes from the head of the snye, almost due south until it hits the winter trail, backtracks about 50 yards towards the river on the winter trail, then heads SSW around a little round pond arrive on the N.E. arm of the longest lake of the group. There, Parks had stashed a 17 foot Grumman which Steve said we could borrow. We took the summer trail to the canoe, paddled the length of this little lake and portaged to the next length [lake?] south. Both lakes are gorgeous, clear water ponds with edges variously of poplar bush, reeds, bulrushes or a huge graceful grass 4-7 feet tall. Beaver were on both lakes as were ducks, mainly buffleheads. There wasn't a breath of wind so naturally reflections were perfect.

Most of the bush in the area is poplar stands of at least three age classes. Quite mature, perhaps 25 years old and perhaps 15-20 years old. It is lovely stuff, straight, tall, clear green bark. Unfortunately, the portage goes through the younger stuff which is quite close together and never cut out. Fortunately, the portage was only 150 yards but even that required a fair bit of pushing, shoving, sweating and cursing with [the] canoe. In some parts of the area there is jackpine, in others probably jack-lodgepole hybrids. These stands are not extensive. There are also a few large spruce about, and around some of the lakes spruce are fairly common.

The map and Steve both indicated that there is just a short lift over from the second lake into Yohin. To our dismay, not so. The second lake drains into Yohin and is elevated 18 inches to two feet above it by a beaver dam. We pulled up to it to discover Yohin Lake, at least here, is a sea of grass and quaking bog. By now it was nearly dark. Jake climbed a tree to see where water was while I thrashed about the bog and fell in a mudhole assessing the situation. Finally, we decided to hike the shoreline along an apparent trail to the campsite area, leaving the canoe behind for morning.

In three hundred or so yards we began to see the lake. What a sight. Looking south the rugged Yohin Ridge sweeps down to meet the massive Jackfish Mountain running east. Light cloud drifted along their faces. The lake itself is

spattered with round islets of reeds and rushes, the reed fringes being dark green, nearly black while the bulrush core is a vivid lighter green. As if that wasn't enough, ducks were everywhere. All was reflected in the lake's mirror surface. Very rarely have I ever seen such a blend of variety and beauty, ruggedness and gentleness, life and stillness. We stopped repeatedly to listen to the silence in awe of it all. It was all the more impressive because of the rich variety of gray tones in the sky, mountains and lake.

The campsite, on a sand ridge about 20 feet high, overlooks all this. What a spot to pitch a tent overlooking all this. Poking around we found that my fears of a wood shortage in such a well-used, confined area were totally unfounded. Dead spruce were common and ready-cut firewood lay at the base of a number of spruce, nice and dry. It is hard to find a more perfect campsite. The only drawbacks are very shallow water which also tastes muddy. The mosquitoes were even half-way civilized.

We ate supper as the scene got darker and grayer, crawling into the tent to the patter of little drops.

Aug 23 [Thurs]

We got up with the sun which was poking through overcast. The light wasn't nearly as pretty as last night's grayness but the mirror was still in place. Our eyes strayed from it all only to prepare the finest batch of Patterson porridge of the trip. After breakfast, the cloud closed down a bit so I went in to work on diary while Jake decided to try and get the canoe into the lake. It didn't take him more than half an hour to walk back and get out on the water. At that point, the cloud started to clear off and then the scene changed radically.

It was as beautiful as last night but in a much brighter, more brazen way. Light played on everything. Drops sparkled on trees and bushes. It backlit the islands into unbelievable greens, turned the mountains blue, the first peak of Twisted Mountain darkest, the scarp a bit lighter, Yellow Mountain lighter yet and the Butte a baby blue. Standing alone out of the level line of the plain stood the Little Buttes. And the lake was still calm, reflecting it all.

