

# THE YUKONER

MAGAZINE

ISSUE  
No.17

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- NORTHERNAIRS
- SPY BUILDING
- COLDEST DAY
- EDITH JOSIE
- DOGPUNCHER

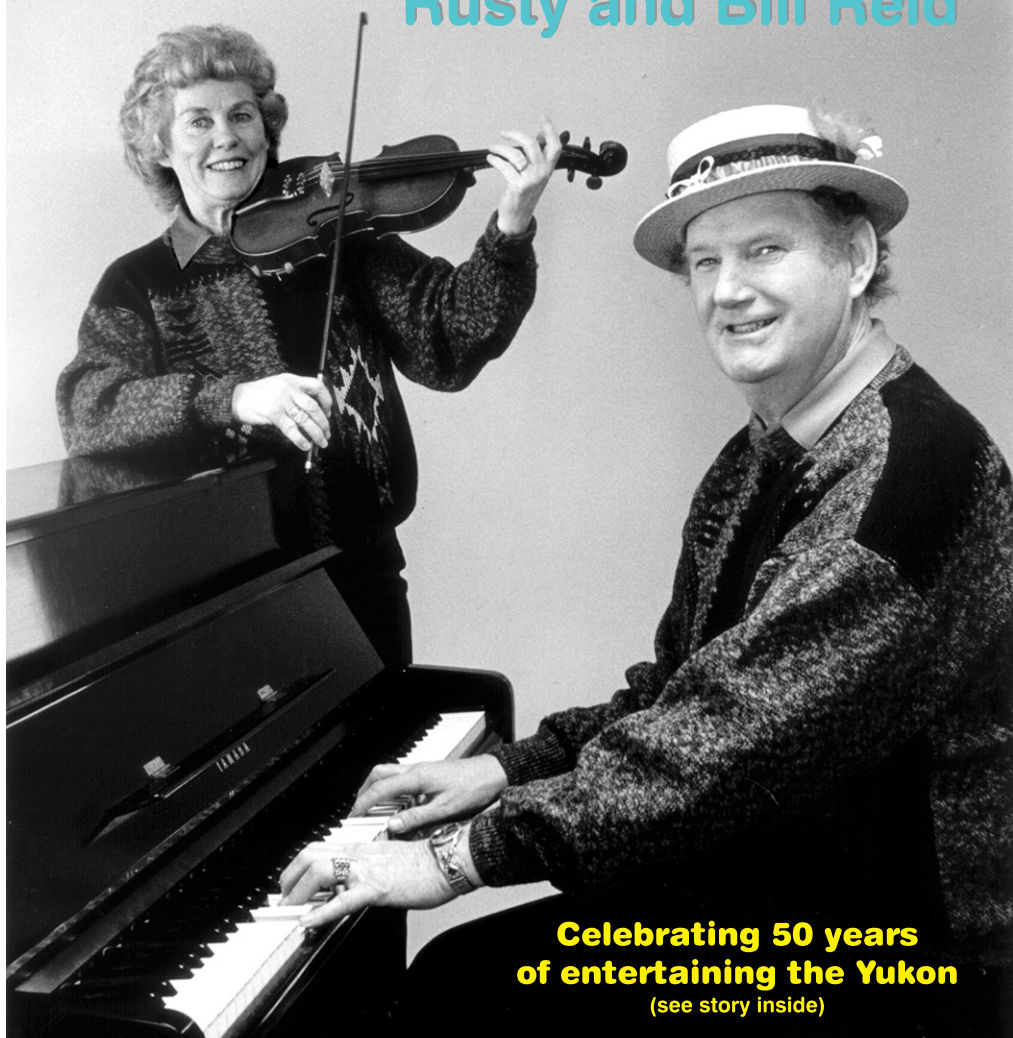


# WHITEHORSE MOTORS

**SALUTES**



**Rusty and Bill Reid**



**Celebrating 50 years  
of entertaining the Yukon**  
(see story inside)

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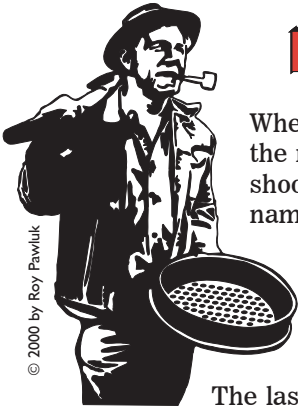
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## From the Editor

When we sent out the last renewal notices, we put all the names that came back into a big paper bag. We shook the bag every which way, then Dianne drew a name for a big gold nugget.

The winner this time was Ron Hurry, a former Yukoner who now lives in B.C. The irony of it is that Ron was a well-known gold nugget jeweller for many years in the Yukon. He probably has seen more gold than all of us put together.

The last time we had such a draw (now to be included with every renewal notice), a Yukon gold miner's son won the nugget. He too had seen a lot of gold in his lifetime. What does that tell you about the universe?

The Yukon is at a tremendous crossroads just now. Environmentalists from the south have infiltrated the government and the media, including one major newspaper. For the past 20 years, many meetings have been held in secret in Whitehorse in which land claims and environmental laws were discussed, and passed. All without much input from old Yukoners. Of course they didn't want us to know what was really happening.

As a result, the mining industry has been chased out of here and we have about a 20 percent unemployment rate, not counting Yukoners working "outside."

Now the crunch has really hit. An outfit called CPAWS (Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society), funded by big donations from New York and other places, is pushing for the Yukon to become one big wilderness park. Which it is already, but they want to make it illegal to set foot in these areas. Amazingly, they have sealed off much of the whole territory, with many more parks planned for the future.

This plan, called the Yukon Protected Areas Strategy, spells doom for many of us here. With no resource industries possible, we are left with the government payroll and 90 days of tourism in the summer. All this was accomplished by a non-profit organization that pays no taxes and cares nothing about what happens to Yukon residents. Indeed, their intent is to depopulate the Yukon.

All this has not been made into law yet, but it is very close. Remember how nobody wanted the GST but we got it anyway? It's like that.

I had planned on spending my retirement years, if I get that far, looking for gold in a dozen areas I have studied over the years. If the environmentalists get their way, I won't be able to step off the few roads we have here.

About 20 years ago, a couple of partners and I were gold mining along the Stewart River, using diving equipment and a little underwater pump. If you have ever seen that river during spring run-off, when trees and boul-



ders come rushing along, and with clay cliffs splashing tons of gravel and sand into the river; then you would know what a muddy river looks like. That same year, my friends and I were astounded to learn that a moratorium had been proclaimed. There would no more bar mining along the Stewart.

‘Proclaimed by whom?’ we asked. We have been mining gold along here since the 1880s with no damage whatsoever. It was the employees of the fisheries department of the government who brought a bill to Ottawa, and the good MPs there, not knowing a meteorite from a hutterite, signed the bill, making it law.

Since then, the Americans in Alaska have caught all the fish, and hardly any ever make upstream to the Yukon. But the laws still stand.

That was nothing compared to what is happening here now. We have big government, big-money lobbyists, and no one, from what I can see, gives a damn about old Yukoners.

But some of us are protesting with all our might, and we’ll have to wait for the outcome. I will keep you posted.

The photo below is of my great-uncle, Joe Haley, who trekked to the Yukon in 1894. When my mother’s oldest sister was a girl, he sent the pictured gold nugget brooch to her as a gift from the Klondike. My mother had inherited it, and then passed it on to me.

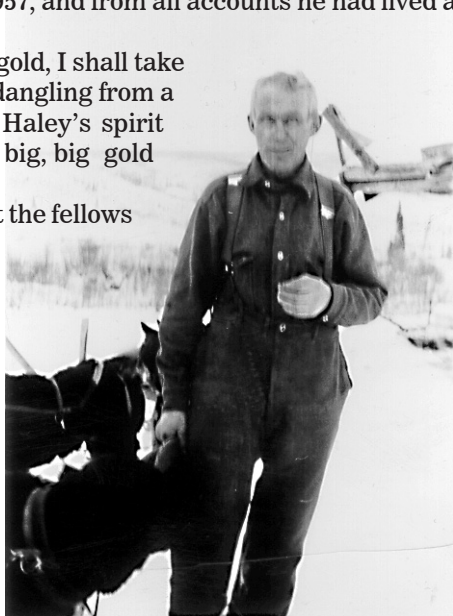
Joe left New Brunswick with a friend to work the prairie harvests in the spring of 1894. At Winnipeg they were attacked by thugs, and my uncle’s friend was murdered. Joe kept going to the coast and made his way up to Juneau, Alaska, and then into the Yukon.

He spent his life in the goldfields, going on occasional sprees in Seattle or Victoria. My family, being very strait-laced, never approved of his lifestyle. But he died in Fairbanks in 1957, and from all accounts he had lived a very contented life.

Next time I go prospecting for gold, I shall take that brooch with me. Then, with it dangling from a string, I will walk along with Joe Haley’s spirit wrenching it into the direction of a big, big gold deposit.

Sounds crazy? Well, what about the fellows who won the gold nuggets?

So long for now,  
Sam





*Hello:*

Although I was born & raised in the Prince George area, I can relate to 40 & 50 below zero temperatures and lots of snow. Mom & Dad raised six of us in a one-room log cabin 20 miles northwest of town.

I was #6, born in 1930, moved to Alberta in 1950, married a cowboy & we moved to the Okanagan Valley in 1967.

Enjoy your magazine. We can relate to the struggle to survive under adverse conditions. Take care.

*Louise Ruddy,  
Lumby, B.C.*

*Dear Sam:*

Your article on "Fur Trade Days in the Yukon" by Jim Kirk brought back many fond memories, especially as related to Fort Selkirk.

My parents, Mary & Oscar Adami, trapped on the McMillan River, a tributary of the Pelly River. Every fall we would leave for the trapline by a "tunnel boat" with all our supplies, dogs, etc. and return to Fort Selkirk in the spring, it being our summer home.

I clearly recall all the excitement of returning to Fort Selkirk after spending a long winter on the trapline. Even though I was quite young, all the names of places and people mentioned I vividly remember, such as Copper Joe, the Wilkinsons, Ione (Cameron) Christenson, but especially RCMP "Cam" Gordon Cameron. His wife Martha and Cam were my godparents. The Camerons and my parents were very good friends.

My grandfather, Frank Oscar Adami, went to the Yukon in the early 1930s and remained there until the 1950s. He trapped in the Stewart River/Rosebud Creek area and has a mountain named after him.

My father, Oscar Frank Adami, went to the Yukon in 1935. My mother, as a young bride, went to join him in 1936. She was a passenger on the sternwheeler, *Klondike I*, when it sank on the Yukon River.

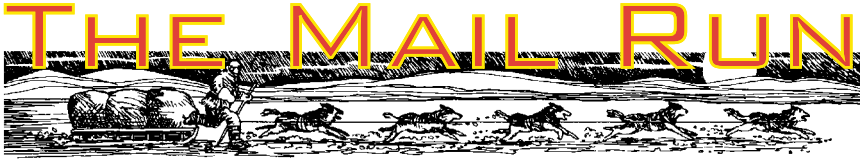
My parents and I left the Yukon in 1949, returning to Vancouver, B.C.

I and my husband, Nick, have been back to Fort Selkirk on two occasions in recent years. Our summer home at this historical site still stands. Another trip is planned this summer.

*Annabelle M. (Adami) Verbisky,  
Vilna, Alberta*

*Dear Editor:*

I am writing because I wonder if you or some of your readers can explain what I believe is a mystery—the mystery of John Lee, my grandfather's brother who died during the Gold Rush in Yukon.



As you will note from the attached copy of a letter dated March 16, 1899 to my grandfather, James Lee, James' brother died in his sleep September 1, 1898 while travelling between Dawson and Whitehorse on the steamer *Willie Irving*.

The mystery begins with the statement, "The remains of your Dear Brother was [sic] interred (interred) at Whitehorse Rapids on a side hill overlooking the Canyon ... he is not alone..."

When I was in Whitehorse for one afternoon in 1988, I visited the Archives and showed this letter to an archivist who claimed there was no cemetery in the location indicated. The archivist made a copy of the letter.

Also, although I had only a few hours in Whitehorse, I hastily researched the gold claims registered in 1898, as well as before and after that date. I found many in the name of a John Lee. I have no proof these were claims of John Lee, my grandfather's brother, but from my experience with researching family history, it would be creditable to think so. As well, I believe I saw claims registered in the name of John Lee after his death, September 1, 1898, and into 1899. The writer of the letter dated 1899 claimed he knew nothing about John's gold.

Was this normal procedure? Perhaps he had partners—the "unknown" John H. Little is mentioned in the letter—and the claims reverted to the partners? Perhaps there was another John Lee? Perhaps there was claim jumping involved? Who was the writer of the letter, T.J. McGradi (spelling)?

I thought you might be interested in this small Yukon mystery, if indeed it is a mystery. We hope to be in Whitehorse next summer (2001) and maybe I'll be able to find some answers to some of my questions then. The whole scenario would make a good short story.

Thank you for your attention.

*Mervyn Kelly*  
*Baysville, Ontario*

#### Editor's Note:

Thanks for the copy of the letter. The part in it about the burial ground reads: "The remains of your brother was interred at Whitehorse Rapids on a side hill overlooking the Canyon and although he is buried among strangers, he is not alone on this lonely river as it is the resting place of several poor unfortunate gold-seekers that have given up their lives in order to gain a few dollars. But such is life and it will so continue forever."

Perhaps someone in the Whitehorse area knows where this burial ground is and can let Mr. Kelly know.

more letters....



*Dear Folks:*

I have received your magazine for a number of years. I read every word in it as soon as it comes in the mail. I really enjoy your articles of trappers and their hardships and their fortunes.

I have made several trips through the Yukon and to Alaska and to Inuvik in the N.W.T.

Please keep up the good work and Happy New Year to all.

*Bill Neir*

*Mirror, Alberta*

### **A TRAPLINE ADVENTURE I DON'T WANT TO REPEAT BY TENSLEY JOHNSTON**

I'd like to tell you a little story of how my old '94 Winchester 30-30 rifle saved my life without firing a shot.

I'd been trapping beaver along the creek where there are several dams and beaver houses. This trip to visit my traps was on a fairly mild day in spring, either in 1974 or '75. Well, as I came to one of the beaver houses, there was a hole in the ice and muddy tracks from it up onto the house. I forgot I was a bit heavier than a beaver. I walked a bit too close to the hole and the next second I was down in about eight or nine feet of water, looking up at the hole where I went in.

Somehow I shrugged out of my pack, but I guess I had a death grip on the old '94 because when I came up to the top of the water, I still held it. I had splashed water quite a bit on the ice and I couldn't hold onto it, it was so slippery. I had a snowmobile suit on and it got mighty heavy by then.

By digging the hammer of the old rifle into the ice, I was able to work my way over to where I could get ahold of the sticks on the beaver house and pull myself out. I stripped right there and wrung out my pants and emptied my boots and then ran about a quarter of a mile to where the skidoo was. I headed home, about three miles away. By the time I got there, my clothes were frozen stiff so I laid in front of the stove until they melted. Then I got dry clothes on and went back and got my rifle and my frozen clothes. I could see my pack and extra traps lying down there in the water but I didn't care to mess around there just then and it soon froze over again.

When spring came, I went down with the canoe and as usual, the beavers had covered my pack and traps with sticks and mud, so I made a wire hook on a long pole and finally got my pack out.

I thanked that old rifle many times for the fact that it wasn't me the beavers covered with sticks and mud like they always do with anything they don't like around their houses.

*Tensley "Tin" Johnson*

*Ross River, Yukon*



# *The Northernairs*

Bill and Rusty Reid just don't understand that they are Yukon treasures.

By Darrell Hookey

Yes, they agree, they have many friends (more than they can count); and sure, they have won awards (filling an entire room in their Porter Creek home); and they have been playing music in the north for a long time (fifty years).

But not knowing all this and just listening to Bill talk, you would think they were just a well-dressed bar band.

The truth is that Bill Reid's Northernairs have spread the genuine joy of music to many far-flung northern communities, relieving countless audiences of their isolation.

The image of a lively Rusty, elbows up and hands poised to bring bow and string together on her fiddle, and of Bill commanding the keyboard of a piano with a warm smile on a tough man's face, is an icon of a glorious Yukon party.

This part-time job of theirs is a noble profession, contributing a valuable and welcome element to the northern experience.

Bill does allow himself to feel pride for the fact his band has never missed a date in 50 years. Whether they needed to be in Dawson City one night and then Atlin the next, or in Ross River at -55 degrees Celsius, they can put any modern band to shame.

And Bill is proud they can play 95 percent of requests brought to them. Tears form in the eyes of those who are reminded of precious times in their lives, a nostalgia that blends nicely with the rollicking good times on the dance floor.

His pride is born of a firefighter's work ethic (which he comes by honestly, having served Whitehorse for 32 years).

Besides the pride of a job well done, he is most grateful for the chance to play music with his wife. "Just wonderful," he says today. "I don't like playing without her and seldom do. The experience goes from 0 percent to 100 percent when she is there."



They met on a Vancouver street in 1949 when Bill was visiting his sister. He had taken a job there and was out driving with a co-worker, who was Rusty's old boyfriend. They went to a dance that weekend where he proved to Rusty he was a good dancer.

"That was important," Rusty says today, nodding her agreement with this fact of life.

Three weeks later, Bill was in Rusty's living room waiting on her for a date. He sat at the family piano and started playing.

"Have to look this one over," Rusty whispered to her mother.

Bill saw them enter and then pointed to a fiddle hanging on the wall: "Who plays the fiddle?"

They had each just found out the other had come from a musical family.

Born in Wallace, Nova Scotia, in 1930, Bill saw music as an integral part of community life. Other than church, the only time the town got together was to dance to the music of George Reid's Orchestra two or three times a month.

His father played fiddle and his mother, Retha, played piano.

Of 12 children in the family, nine of them played an instrument. Bill's chance to join the band came when he was 14. He was paid three dollars — a princely amount for a teenager as the country edged from the depression to the war years.

Years later he would take Rusty to the "huge" hall he first played in. He was shocked to find it was actually the size of their living room today.

Rusty's father, Harold Parker, came from an Irish musical family. Their own home would be taken over by friends and family as they gathered around Harold's piano and sang songs. Rusty remembers her mother, Mabel, looking out the window at new arrivals as she would take out another potato to feed her guests. They came and they went until Sunday evening.



1953. Heading for Atlin, B.C., in our 1954 Pontiac.

Rusty was born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, in 1929, where her father worked as a railroader. The family later moved to Vancouver where he took a job as a bill collector for the Vancouver Province newspaper.

Her introduction to the fiddle began at age 11, when she was caught sneaking a try with her grandfather's that had been inherited by the family. Her parent's reaction was to arrange lessons from a family friend who knew a few tunes. They exchanged Sunday dinner for the lessons for a year and a half until he suggested she continue with "real" lessons.

She joined the 35-piece Vancouver Junior Symphony playing the violin (which is the same as the fiddle, just played differently). On the side, she played with an all-girl ensemble at garden parties and such.

Meeting Bill and finding out he was musically inclined was almost perfect ... but then she had to admit she had never heard of Don Messer.

Can a piano player, rooted in Old Time Music from down east, find happiness with a classically trained violinist? Obviously so, because he proposed 10 months later.

Bill then started a two-week vacation visiting his sister in Whitehorse. But he found a job the next day building houses. He called Rusty and said he would stay the summer and earn a lot of money to bring back. But she decided to come up for a two-week visit and she was offered a job at the Bank of Commerce.

They both decided to stay, Rusty living above the bank where the Toronto Dominion Bank now stands, and Bill living on the air base in the civilian barracks.

As fate would have it, Rusty's roommate introduced her to Harry Johannes, who was looking for a band to play at the Elk's Hall. Asked if she would play the fiddle for them, she answered, "Yes, if Bill will play".



1969. L-R Stan Yuckin, Jack Earls, Dave Burrows, Rusty & Bill Reid. Army Mess Hall, Sourdough Rendezvous, Whitehorse.

They were only supposed to play for one night, but they ended up playing every weekend for the next two years ... and another 48 years beyond that.

At first, they called themselves “Reid’s Rhythm Ramblers”. But then they changed it to “Bill Reid’s Northernairs”, named for the clear northern air of Whitehorse.

As was the style of the day, they dressed in matching outfits. It is a tradition they continue today because they want to look nice for the audience, even it is just jeans for a barn dance or tuxedos for the Commissioner’s Ball.

After a year of construction, Bill joined the Fire and Ambulance Service until his retirement in 1985. At first he worked 24 hours on and 24 hours off making it difficult to play at a function. Trading off with a co-worker made it possible most of the time, but he couldn’t leave in the middle of a fire.

In these cases he would be replaced on stage, instead. Yet he has only missed seven dances in 50 years. And after much negotiation he has never missed a New Year’s dance.

Rusty worked at the Bank of Commerce for a year and then went to work at the White Pass office. She then spent time at home with her children, David and Shelley (now, Bidden). From there she worked in a doctor’s office and then the library until retirement in 1985.

As the only woman in the group, which grew to five members after four years, Rusty has tried to be “one of the boys”. That is, until, she had to straighten a tie or head off to her own change room.

The original foursome included Chuck Dickson on guitar and Chuck



1973. L-R Jack Riggett, Ward Lamoureux, Ken Eastman, Ron Shortt, Rusty Reid, Bill Reid. Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous, Whitehorse.

Choquette on drums. They lasted two years and eighteen months, respectively. In the years that followed, Bill and Rusty were joined by 38 other performers. Many would leave because they had to leave the Yukon. Others left because they got married.

Rusty explains that new wives know musicians are tempting targets for rooms full of girls who are drinking and partying.

Regardless of what happens on the dance floor, Bill says his band has never gotten into booze and drugs. It has always been important to keep families together and the band together.

Rusty felt safe enough to bring their children to dances they performed at, preferring that to leaving them with babysitters. They would bring coats or sleeping bags for them to snuggle into. They would only awaken when the music stopped.

Both children learned a little piano at first, but David went on to become a “fantastic” piano player, and then the trumpet, says Rusty. He started his own band, “The Notables” when he was 18, after filling in from time to time with the Northernairs for three years. Although they competed for the same jobs, Bill says they gladly watched him take the teenage crowds off their hands.

Once, in 1978, Bill asked his son if he could play trumpet for a performance in Elsa. David had been a pilot with Air Canada for only a year at that time and would be in Montreal that day. It didn’t look good.

But he headed to Edmonton starting at 8 a.m., caught a connecting flight to Whitehorse just 20 minutes later and took the family plane to Mayo. After borrowing a truck, he surprised them on stage just 15 minutes before the performance was to start.

Now, as a pilot with some seniority, he can often make it back to join the Northernairs for special occasions.

Such as the 50th Anniversary performance for New Year’s Eve. They rented the largest room in Whitehorse and sold tickets for half the going rate. Invitations went out to their favourite audience members and they were left with a waiting list of 40 hoping for a ticket.

They even hired two other bands to allow them a chance to meet and greet their friends, about a dozen of whom were former band members that they brought up on stage for a jam session.

A 50th Anniversary may sound like the end of an era—but not for Bill Reid’s Northernairs. They still perform three or four times a month. They even have bookings a year from now.

Today they prefer playing to audiences aged 35 to 70. These crowds tend to love to dance and don’t like loud music in a smoky room. They also call on the band to play everything from polkas to rock; from Latin music to country; and from waltzes to Motown.

Bill continues to pick just the right songs to fill the dance floor. Once, in Carcross, they played Achey, Breaky Heart and watched with great concern as the rafters swayed with the stomping crowd. They were asked to play it twice more.

Then there was the time they played at the final dance at the Army



Sergeants Mess. They finished up at 2 a.m., but were asked to play another hour. At 3 a.m. they said, "Going good, play another hour." At 3 a.m.: "Going good, play another hour." By 5 a.m. they fed them breakfast and had them play again until 7 a.m. It was the longest dance they ever played at and the room stayed full. Nobody wanted to leave.

Like a lot of Yukoners, Bill and Rusty left the territory once. It was after their first year when they packed up and moved to Nova Scotia. But they returned to their "home" 11 weeks later.

They were hooked on the clean water, the people, the small-town feel and the mountains. They can't leave on vacation for too long because they start to get home sick. "Just look out the window," says Bill, pointing at Grey Mountain filling the view.

They both love the Yukon. And they prove it just about everyday these past 50 years with their contributions to worthy causes. They have played at Macaulay Lodge most every Wednesday night for 22 years. They have played for the Golden Age Society, Yukon Order of Pioneers, Elder Active, every Remembrance Day afternoon at the Royal Canadian Legion for the past 40 years, at the Sourdough Rendezvous since it started, the United Way and the latest City of Whitehorse Anniversary.

Bill has been president of the ski club for 14 years, director of the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association (Rusty is treasurer), president of the Yukon Flying club and has held every job with Softball Yukon for over 30 years.

Rusty has pushed a tuck cart at the hospital, been a charter member of the Yukon Order of Pioneers Ladies Auxiliary since it began 29 years ago, president of the Whitehorse Photography Club for 20 years and been involved with the Yukon Old-Time Fiddlers, Softball Yukon and the Whitehorse Ladies Basketball.

When not performing or volunteering, they enjoy the retirement they began at age 55. They have their toys — an airplane, boat, cottage on a lake, snowmobiles — and a glow of health owing to an honest life of hard work and play ... lots of play. □



2000. L-R Tom Barnaby, Dave Burrows, Bill Reid, Rusty Reid, Ken Mason. Commissioner's Ball, at the Palace Grand Theatre, Dawson City, Yukon.



**By Roxanne Livingstone**

**E**dith Josie is alive and well and still living north of the Arctic Circle. For 37 years Josie has been writing a news column detailing everyday life in her village of Old Crow.

This vigorous lady who turned 79 last December has received the Order of Canada, the Centennial Award, and was once the mystery guest on Front Page Challenge. Her column is translated and published in Europe.

"They say I'm a famous woman. I'm glad people respect me and are proud of me cause I start write news from Old Crow since 1963. I still keep it up and I'm glad of that" Josie says.

It all began in late 1962 when the *Whitehorse Star* asked her to write a few paragraphs about Old Crow. At that time she was living in a one-room cabin with no electricity, while caring for her blind grandmother.

As the story goes, the staff at the *Whitehorse Star* did a double-take when they read Josie's words. Her writing style is a direct translation of her first language- Gwitchin.

The patterns of speech are different from English and can bewilder the reader. There's also no difference between 'he' and 'she', making it a challenge at times to figure out who she's talking about.

But there is no question that Josie's column 'Here are the News' has captivated readers around the globe. In the spring of 1963 she shared the excitement in the village as everyone prepared to go muskrat trapping:

"...they will to to Crow Flats for rats. Chief Charlie Peter make meeting for everyone before they move out of town until middle of June.

"The weather is warm and the snow is melting and soft. Anyone who is going to move out will travel night time when it's cold. Some of the people got no dogs, but they will help each other."

Josie told of how women set rabbit snares and picked cranberries, but berry-picking sometimes led to other things:

"Mrs. Martha Kendi and Annie Nukon, they went down to pick cranberries and they saw caribou swimming across the river and they shot five caribou out of it."

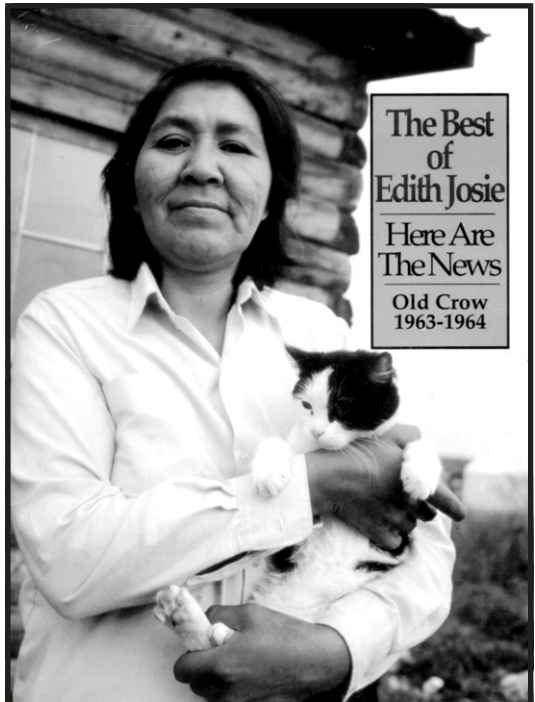
The reader is held in suspense when we learn that Alfred Charlie's family is sleeping alone in a tent upriver when a bear comes into camp. Alfred has rafted wood into Old Crow to sell, when his wife hears the dogs bark:

"Helen didn't waste no time and made a run for her rifle...When she loaded her gun, Helen started the job. She fire at the bear few times..."

At Easter the Vuntut Gwitchin celebrate with snowshoe and dog team races on the frozen Porcupine River, balloon shooting and a dance where they jig to fiddletunes.

Josie shares the laughter and tears of her people as they run for their life from a wolf, or mourn the sudden death of a former Chief.

She celebrates all triumphs large and small, whether it's the medals earned by outstanding athletes, or a safe trip back to Old Crow from a visit to the doctor in Whitehorse.



The *Whitehorse Star* published this book about Edith. You can order it by mail.

Send \$12.95 for the book plus \$3.00 shipping and then add GST. The address is:

Whitehorse Star, 2149 - 2nd Ave., Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1C5.



Charlie Thomas and Edith Josie, 2000. Photo by Roxanne Livingstone.

While Josie constantly praises the qualities of the people in her small community, as a true journalist she's not blind to the faults. Josie wants young people to learn traditional skills and stay active. When they don't measure up, she speaks up.

Even back in 1963, long before prohibition came into effect, Josie criticized drinking:

"When trouble and fight goes on it don't look very nice. The boys are their own fault if they don't drink they have an easy life."

Communication with the rest of the world was, and is, of utmost importance to this Gwitchin journalist. Josie writes how special 'mail day' was, and describes in glee her first contact with other people by mobile phone:

"On Friday we have our WA (Women's Auxillary) meeting but those WA at Fort MacPherson will talk to all WA at Old Crow...we went to school house to listen to tape and after they finish talking the WA Old Crow is talking back to them.

"...sure lots of fun and laugh when one person talk silly to each other sure funny."

For nearly four decades Josie has kept up her bi-weekly column. Last spring the elder from Old Crow was flown to Vancouver to receive the National Aboriginal Achievement Award. Her daughter Jane Montgomery, a language teacher and entrepreneur, travelled with her.

The two ladies came to my home in Whitehorse on their way back north of the Arctic Circle to their village. Jane said her mom had been up until 1 a.m. signing autographs. If I thought the elder would be tired out

from the trip I was dead wrong. Meeting new people had stimulated her:

“This kind of surprise for me but I’m really glad to get it. Lots of good friend from around Canada come for my award, I thank everyone that pay my way...Like this how I dress is how I went like that” she says, pointing to her moccasins and colourful clothing.

Indeed, on my visits to Old Crow, Josie’s vibrant purple pants, green jacket and rose kerchief stand out on the gravel streets. There’s strength in her stride and I ask her what I can do to be like her.

“Exercise everyday,” she advises, pointing out my window to the clay cliffs.

“Sometime run around. Sometime you go up the hill and pack some dry willow or wood for your house. That’s what I do. How my father raised me I still keep it up. That’s how come I run around and am lively. I never save my leg and back. Climb up the hill and run down.”

Josie certainly isn’t saving her legs and back. At 79 years of age she still picks berries, dries meat, walks home carrying her own groceries. She teaches language at the Old Crow college campus on Wednesday nights.

She was also an Anglican lay minister until her retirement a year and half ago, but still visits people in their homes.

I’ve been there when she’s burst in the door in a blaze of color and brought chit-chat and laughter as she sips tea.

I want to be like Edith Josie. I want to be connected to my community, interested in the bigger world, and healthy in my old age. So up that hill I go.

As I reach the top of the clay banks overlooking my village of Whitehorse I think of Edith’s parting words to me:

“Every night before I go to bed I say prayer for everyone in Canada and Alaska that God will protect them from danger and mischief...I remember them in my prayers every night.”

Yes Edith, and I’ll remember you in mine. Keep writing, stay strong, and massi-cho for what you’ve shared with the world. □



#### Editor's Note:

The photo on the opening page of this article was taken by Richard Harrington in 1973. It is in his wonderful colour photo book: *Harrington's Yukon*, now out of print.

The *Whitehorse Star* deserves much credit for launching Edith's career.



# *This Building Had Big Ears*

By Jane Gaffin



**I**t was Sunday, May 1, 1960. For a while, North America forgot about the Cold War. Students were excited about approaching graduation ceremonies and summer vacations. Adults went about business as usual.

Within a few days, the serenity was shattered by an explosive political event that pushed the world to the brink of nuclear disaster.

This was the age of suspicion. And perched on a hill a few miles southwest of Whitehorse in what is now the LoBird Trailer Park, the Radar Apartment complex served as a radio receiving station where Canadians eavesdropped on the Russians for the United States.

The Whitehorse facility was never equipped with radar, as the name implies. The Pentagon had drastically cut back on use of obsolete radar screens. Its budget was directed toward inventing more sophisticated surveillance systems to detect faster and more formidable enemy weapons.

Over a span of 20 years, fascinating tidbits of world history filtered across the airwaves into the ears of the some 400 people who worked inside #5 Rad Unit from 1948 to 1968.

The Alaska Highway had been constructed in 1942. The Second World War was over in August, 1945. A month later, it was learned that the Russians had not been a wartime buddy.

In September, 1945, a Russian cipher clerk, working in the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, defected and begged for political asylum. Igor Gouzenko provided evidence that convinced the government and RCMP of an elaborate spy ring operating inside Canada.

During the war, the U.S. had naively given the Russians a blank cheque. It allowed the Soviets to steal the secret formula for the atomic bomb and enough uranium to blow up the world.

They had no financial wherewithal to build the bomb so stole the machine to manufacture money. The missing U.S. Treasury money-printing plates were traced through the U.S. Lend-Lease Program that had supplied 8,000 aircraft to Russia for wartime purposes.

In all, about \$9.5-billion worth of war materials and supplies disappeared from the U.S., plus an incalculable amount of luxury commodities like cosmetics, silk stockings and sporting goods.

In 1946-47, the Canadian military designated seven sites to be used for eavesdropping purposes: Five stations were in the Northwest Territories, one at Goose Bay, Labrador, and #5RU Whitehorse.

In 1948, Poole Construction of Edmonton was contracted to build the two-storey Whitehorse facility which the air force communication specialists dubbed "The Squirrel Cage". Civilians called it "The Listening Post".

Tight security was mandatory under the Secrets Act. Perimeter lights illuminated the 20 acres of grounds. Airplanes could not fly directly overhead.

Unarmed guards patrolled the premises hourly between a double row of chain link fence strung with barbed wire. The entrance gate near the Alaska Highway was manned to turn away any unauthorized traffic.

A civilian guard watched over the main entrance of the sturdy concrete-and-steel building which was locked and latched like a vault. Venetian blinds covered the oversized windows that extended almost from the floor to the ten-foot-high ceilings.

A spacious, greenish-blue room on the second-floor was crowded with a pandemonium of hissing Hammurand Special Purpose 600s and other radio paraphernalia, hammering teletypes, clacking typewriters and ringing phones.

The hands of a fat-faced wall clock clunked toward 8:30 p.m. A young corporal's ears were encased with rubber-insulated earphones like the other 24 communication specialists on duty.

Four shifts of a hundred RCAF employees, plus regular daytime staff—all sworn to an oath of secrecy-kept the place buzzing on a 24-hour schedule.

Rene Besse had picked up some Russian gobbledygook through the static and sputter. He scribbled furiously on his log. Sometimes, when a Russian comrade couldn't understand a radio message, the sender obligingly spelled out the words.

These habits amused Besse, who had come from MacDonald Air Force Base in Manitoba to Whitehorse in 1954.

The fragments of unintelligible conversations gleaned by the individual operators were compiled and sent to Ottawa for interpretation.

The logs were then forwarded to Washington, D.C., the repository for eavesdropping material from all the countries belonging to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Only American Intelligence had a complete picture of what the cryptic messages meant.

Although the practice of one country listening in on another was forbidden by the Geneva Convention, every country engaged in the practice.

While the military tried unsuccessfully to squelch rumours about the unorthodox activities by disguising listening posts as weather stations, the top-secret nature of the sites piqued public curiosity.

On this particular May Day evening, Besse had picked up an attention-grabbing transmission. A spy plane had been shot down somewhere over Russia.

Besse notified the superior officer who read the log, listened for a moment, then shrugged. 'He's on the ground now,' offered the officer about the pilot plucked out of the sky, and returned to his own desk.

The incident was over in a few minutes. Besse went back to the routine of monitoring other voices coming over the airwaves.

In a few days, however, the press broke the riveting news story, which, on first blush, had seemed rather innocuous.

U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower and Nikita Khrushchev, the head of Soviet government, had planned a meeting in Paris, France. Both super powers wanted and expected a detente to result from the important talks.

A few days prior to the meeting, the White House had grappled with whether to clear the CIA to dispatch a Lockheed custom-built, espionage plane over Russia.

The long, black U-2 had a high tail, wide wings and a single-turbojet engine. Sensitive infrared cameras peeked from seven portholes under the fuselage. Other instruments would provide evidence of secret nuclear tests and measure the efficiency of Russian radar.

The authorities assumed the 65,000-foot altitude, coupled with carefully designed aerodynamics and structural details, would protect the swanky aircraft from Soviet surveillance. The U-2 also was equipped with radar-deflection devices.

Nevertheless, U-2 pilots were suspicious that the Russians had developed accurate missile guidance and radar technology that could track high-altitude spy planes.

Operation Overflight was in its fifth year. Only a couple of missions were sent out annually. This was the second flight for 1960. If the Paris talks concluded in a ice-melting agreement, it would be the last flight for a while.

Sweltering inside the one-man cockpit was 31-year-old Francis Gary



The Radar Apartments, Whitehorse, 2000. Photo by Dianne Green.

Powers, a hot-shot mercenary pilot who flew for big bucks rather than love of country.

It was a shady business. If caught, Powers had the option to be captured alive or commit suicide. He could ingest cyanide or prick his skin with a poisonous needle kept inside a fake American silver dollar, carried in the outer pocket of his flight suit.

The pride of the U-2 fleet had been reserved for this dangerous and unprecedented mission. Yet, for some inexplicable reason, the U-2 gem was grounded for a maintenance check and replaced with a lemon. No. 360 had a legacy of fuel-tank leaks and a myriad of other malfunctions.

The nine-hour flight, which was the first attempt ever to cross the entire Soviet Union, would be made in silence over the bleakest terrain on earth. After take-off, Powers would have no radio contact with Mobile Control.

The U-2 broke away from the air force base in Peshawar, Pakistan, at 6:26 on the May Day morning.

Four hours into the flight, Powers had penetrated 1,300 miles into Russian airspace. The pilot was making log entries when a thud pitched the plane forward. A blinding flash of orange light flooded the cockpit.

About the time the plane was detected by a "Heat Seeker", Besse caught wind of the transmissions in Whitehorse.

Powers bailed out. The intact plane tumbled past him. The parachute deposited the flyer on a large state farm, where he was disarmed and held captive at gunpoint until KGB officers arrested him.

The Americans, who flatly denied a spy mission, accused the Soviets of luring Powers across the border. The world tensed. Would the political heavyweights duke out their differences with a hot nuclear war?

Meanwhile, Powers had gone on trial in a Russian court and served 17 months of a 10-year prison sentence. In late 1961, he was returned to the U.S. where he continued his career as a Lockheed test pilot.

He had been exchanged for Colonel Rudolf Abel, a Russian spy, who had been convicted in an American court.

No sooner had the dust settled over these fun and games, when all ears at #5RU Whitehorse were tuned into the Cuban missile crisis.

The Listening Post was closed in 1968. Local businessman John Watt bought the building and property from Crown Assets in 1970. He converted the Radar Apartments into 17 one-bedroom units. The former mess hall was leased out to two men who named the trailer park LoBird, a combination of their wives' first names. Watt sold the entire estate to businessman Earl Bennett in October, 1987.

Although files pertaining to the Listening Post and postwar era were declassified 20 years ago, information is not always easily obtainable.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is concerned about foreign agents or students working for undercover agents who could compile answers from easily accessible material and prove a threat to national security.

Librarians and archivists are supposed to notify FBI investigators about any person who tries to probe too deeply into specific, declassified subjects.



# *The Coldest Day*

By Dianne Green

**T**he Yukon could be losing its reputation as North America's deep freeze.

In mid-January, when eastern Canadians were digging out from the worst snowstorm in memory, Yukon temperatures averaged 15 degrees warmer than normal. Snowmobilers and skiers complained about the lack of snow. Seniors gathered at Tim Hortons in Whitehorse for morning coffee shook their heads in disbelief and recalled a time when the Yukon was the coldest place on earth.

Gordon McIntyre is one of a few old timers who remember well the winter of 1947 when Yukon temperatures plummeted to an all-time low. On February 1st, neighbour Norman Wightman asked McIntyre to photograph the thermometer outside his Mayo cabin. The instrument measured minus 72 Fahrenheit.

The next day, McIntyre returned to Wightman's cabin to take a second photo. This time it recorded minus 79 F. On February 3rd, McIntyre walked to the town's weather station, which was maintained by the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. There he aimed his camera at the town's official thermometer. It showed minus 80 F.

The photo McIntyre took that day has been reproduced in several publications, including this one. Now 90 years old, McIntyre keeps the origi-

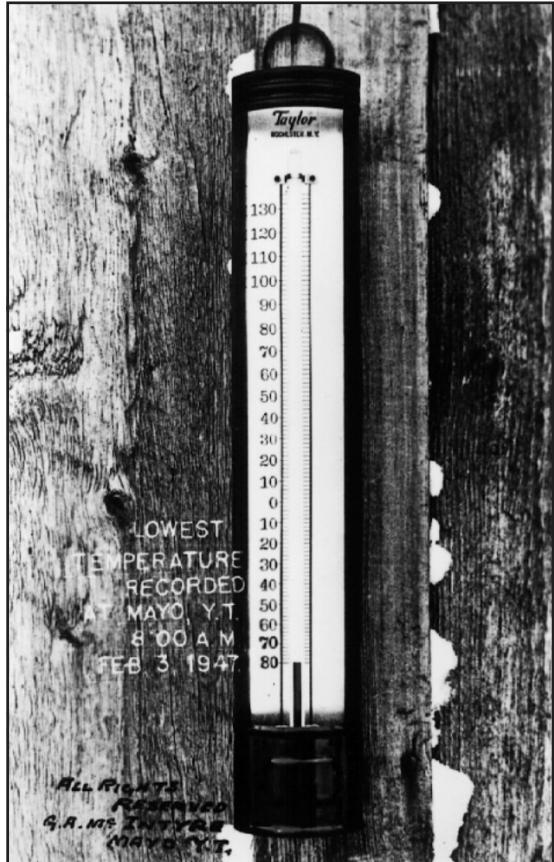


Photo by Gordon McIntyre, February 3, 1947.



nal photo in his Whitehorse home. It reminds him of that unforgettable day 54 years ago when he and his fellow Yukoners shivered through the coldest day ever recorded in North America and lived to tell the tale.

"We survived because nobody burned oil. Oil would have solidified at that temperature and we would have frozen to death" recalls McIntyre.

Most of Mayo's 500 residents lived in small, log cabins with no insulation. In a normal year, where temperatures didn't get much below minus 60 F., it took about eight cords of wood to heat a cabin, but there's a big difference between 60 and 80 below, McIntyre notes.

"At 80 below even a gigantic wood pile does not last long," he says.

Fortunately, there was no lack of firewood in Mayo. It was just a matter of getting the wood to the people who needed it. Emery Shilleto was one of the men who helped replenish the wood supply of those who ran out.

"It was February 4th," Shilleto recalls. "There was not too much action. It was pretty cold and people didn't move too much. We piled wood onto a small sleigh one cord at a time, then we went inside to warm up. Frank Cantin had a small tractor that he used for his wood business. He kept it in a garage heated by a wood stove. Charley Profeit drove the tractor that pulled the sleigh and that's how people got more wood."

Mayo wasn't the only cold spot that day—all of the Yukon was feeling the chill. Three hundred kilometres to the southwest, at Snag, near the Alaska/Yukon border, weather observer Gordon Toole saw something he had never seen before. The tiny bit of alcohol visible at the bottom of the thermometer had fallen well below the minus 80 degree point—the last mark on the thermometer. Using a sharp file, ink would not flow in the cold, Toole scratched a mark on the instrument to show how far the alcohol had fallen. He estimated the temperature to be about minus 83 degrees F.

The Department of Transport, which ran the weather office at the Snag airport, packed the thermometer for air shipment to Toronto where technicians could confirm the reading, but a plane couldn't land for almost a week. When one did land, the 16 men living at the Snag barracks were more excited about the arrival of fresh meat, beer and whisky than they were about making history. During the cold snap they had survived on frozen fish and bacon and eggs. The only alcohol to be found on the base was in the thermometer and that was almost frozen.

Three months later Toronto relayed the test results to Snag. The thermometer had been reading minus 1.6 degrees F in error. The corrected temperature was minus 81.4 degrees F, cold enough to shatter the record for the coldest day in Canada. That record had belonged to Fort Vermilion, Alberta where, on January 11th 1911, the temperature dropped to minus 77.9 degrees F.

Snag airport was one of several emergency landing strips along the Northwest Staging Route, a string of airports connecting Alaska and Yukon with Central Canada and the United States. Although the Canadian government had developed the original airway in peacetime for civil aviation purposes, the route took on a different role during World War II.

Following the Japanese occupation of the Aleutian islands of Kiska and Attu, American commercial airlines used the route to fly reinforcements and war supplies to Alaska. In the early summer of 1942, the United States decided to use the Northwest Staging Route to ferry war planes to its Russian ally.

After the War, weather stations along the route continued to provide basic weather services for the Government of Canada. Located 25 kilometres north of the Alaska Highway at Mile 1178, the Snag weather station operated from 1943 to 1966. In February 1947, 16 workers lived at Snag airport.

Six kilometres north of the airport, Snag village was home to six to 10 indigenous people. On February 4th that year, it was so cold that Gordon Toole could plainly hear the village dogs barking. Ice in the White River about 1.5 kilometres east of the airport, cracked and boomed loudly, like gunfire.

Fuelled by westerly winds that brought a continuous supply of cold air from Siberia, the dome of cold air that covered the Yukon grew in intensity for several weeks. In late February the winds relaxed allowing Maritime air from the Pacific to flow into southern Yukon where the cold broke for a few days. At Snag the mercury rose to a balmy 45 degrees F.

To this day, Snag holds the record for the coldest day in North America. But some long-time residents of Mayo claim that theirs was the coldest town. Unlike Mayo, Snag was not a real Yukon settlement.

Unfortunately, Mayo's claim can never be proved. At midnight on February 15th the station burned down destroying the weather instruments and observation records. All that remains of that historic day are the memories of those who witnessed it—and a photo taken by Gordon McIntyre. □

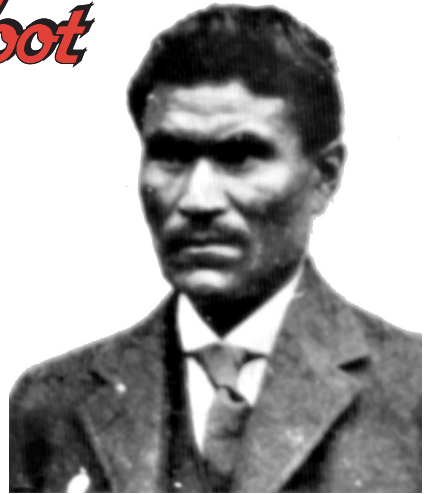
The Snag crew, standing outside in February, 1947. Gordon Toole, second from left, back row.



# Gun-An-Noot

**By Don Sawatsky**

**Of all the outlaws that fill the history books of Canada, one stands head and shoulders above all others for endurance, determination and romance. It's the story of Simon Peter Gun-An-Noot, the full-blooded Kispiox Indian who lived near Hazelton, in northern British Columbia.**



Simon Peter Gun-An-Noot

**A** lot of romance and mystery has surrounded Gun-An-Noot since he first bolted for the mountains in 1906 after two men were gunned down following a drunken party. He was a fugitive with a price on his head for 13 years, hunted by experienced and hardened bushmen and trackers.

Gun-An-Noot was a powerful man; six feet tall, almost 200 pounds, intelligent, industrious, a devoted family man with an irreproachable Christian character and a mountain man of unparalleled ability. In fact, his only serious failings were his dauntless pride and his terrible temper.

He hunted and trapped in the Hazelton country and his family, friends and relatives did well by him. But, Simon Gun-An-Noot needed all these qualities to survive during the 13 years of his life that he dodged posses for a murder some felt at the time he hadn't even committed. It was in the spring of 1906 that Gun-an-Noot emerged from his beloved mountains with a heavy catch of furs. He took his catch to Victoria and sold them and then he returned to his family on the Haquilite reserve near Hazelton to celebrate a successful year. He went to a nearby highway lodge called Two-Mile House where he met and treated his many friends to rounds of drinks.

The home-coming party went on into the night and, in fact, by early morning it had turned into a gigantic orgy that resulted in everyone getting perfectly soaked to the ears.

Everyone was Simon's friend that night, everyone, that is, except a half-breed, Alex McIntosh and a former French sailor, Max LeClair.

It's not exactly clear what caused the disagreement and the fight that followed between Gun-An-Noot and McIntosh but it was said it was over some insulting remarks that McIntosh had made about Simon's wife.

At any rate, most of the party-goers agreed later, after they had got over their hangovers, that it was a rousing good battle and the last they remembered was that Gun-An-Noot was delivering a good beating to McIntosh. Gun-An-Noot received a superficial knife wound to his cheek. McIntosh had his finger damaged in the bar-room brawl.

The fight ended the party and Gun-An-Noot stormed out the door muttering something about going to get his rifle and finishing McIntosh off properly. It was early in the morning and shortly after Gun-An-Noot left, McIntosh and LeClair departed. It was the last time anyone saw the two men alive.

About 7 o'clock that morning a party of Kispiox Indians going to the reserve found the body of a man lying on the trail. He had been shot through the back as he was riding his horse along the trail. Police Constable James Kirby went to the scene and discovered McIntosh with a neat bullet hole about two inches from the spine, just below the twelfth rib. The bullet had ripped a jagged hole just below the left collar bone as it exited, tearing the main arteries of the heart away and puncturing a lung.

McIntosh never knew what hit him.

After the coroner had viewed the body and arrangements had been made to remove it, Kirby left for Hazelton to fill out his report. But, his day wasn't over. On the way back to town, Kirby met another local Indian, Gus Sampan, who reported that a second dead man had been found on the trail between Hazelton and Kispiox. The second man was LeClair, shot through the back in exactly the same spot as McIntosh.

The killer had been a marksman of remarkable and deadly accuracy. Kirby reasoned that while the two dead men were found some miles apart, there was good circumstantial evidence to indicate that the same person did the shooting. Who, was another question.

He began to round up witnesses for the coroner's inquest and soon was in possession of a number of vague, garbled, often conflicting stories told by the party-goers of the previous night. But, out of the booze-fogged minds came one fact and that was that Gun-An-Noot and McIntosh had got into an argument and a violent fight at Two-Mile House and that Gun-An-Noot's hot-tempered brother-in-law, Hi-ma-dan, had become involved and he, too, had threatened to kill McIntosh and LeClair.

He had nothing concrete to charge the men with but he rode out to Gun-An-Noot's place to ask him about the killings. Kirby found Simon's wife at home but she claimed she didn't know where her husband or Hi-ma-dan were. It took the policemen only a minute to realize that the pair had fled for the mountains. In the yard lay four of Gun-An-Noot's horses, three shot behind the ears and one killed with a pick-axe, either so the police posses' could not use them to hunt him down or in a fit of rage.

Gun-An-Noot's guns and ammunition were gone and Kirby started off to organize a search. Kirby and a local rancher by the name of Barret immediately searched the hillsides on Barret's nearby ranch in an attempt to pick up a trail. It was from there that they spotted the canoe of Na-gun, Gun-An-Noot's father, crossing the river.

The policeman gave chase and arrested Na-gun and charged him with aiding his son to escape. The old man was promptly lodged in jail.

Kirby was working on nothing more than a number of confused, conflicting stories and the fact that Gun-An-Noot and Hi-ma-dam had obviously bolted for the mountains. All of it was purely circumstantial evidence and his first job was to capture the pair and try to find out what they knew about the murders.

Meanwhile, on June 9th, 1906, a coroner's jury, under coroner Edward H. Hicks Beach, heard the convoluted evidence from 13 people who were completely oblivious to what had happened on that fateful night. The inquest ended without a single piece of first-hand evidence before the jury, nothing, that is, except that Gun-An-Noot and McIntosh had had a fight.

But, this didn't hamper the jury in reaching a quick verdict.

"We, having heard all the evidence relating to the above case, have come to the conclusion that Alec McIntosh was killed by a gunshot wound on the morning of the 19th inst. between Two-Mile Creek and the hospital and are agreed that it was a case of wilful murder by a person of the name of Simon Peter Gun-An-Noot (Indian) of Kispiox village.

As for LeClair, the jury was somewhat less sure although they agreed that he had, in fact, been murdered. But, just to put a lid on the case, the jury contended in their statement, in part "...and strongly suspect an Indian by the name of Peter Hi-ma-dan as the murderer." It was a clear case of trying and convicting both men without benefit of evidence, defence lawyer or giving either man his day in court to give his version.

The police received the warrants for their arrests and they were determined to follow them up. Little did they know that their pursuit of the pair of fugitives would last 13 years and cost the government of British Columbia more than \$100,000 and those, let us remember, are 1906 dollars!

Trail-hardened mountain men were hired to track them down. But, it was an impossible task because the two fugitives were like shadows, moving with the ease and silence of smoke.

The first year of the hunt was as intensive as it was impossible. Through freezing, blinding winter blizzards and stifling heat of summer, the posse plodded through the unrelenting wilderness. Despite the manpower, the bush knowledge of several white bushmen, first-rate horses and equipment and ample supplies, the posse suffered hardships that few men could realize.

By spring, the exhausted posse was ordered in and fresh ones were sent out. A reward of \$1,000 was offered for the capture of Gun-An-Noot and Hi-ma-dan and, to assist the Canadian hunters, trained men of the famous Pinkerton detective agency were called in to aid in the search. Pinkerton's men cost the government \$11,000 and they came back without even a decent rumour as to the whereabouts of Gun-An-Noot and Hi-ma-dan.

It was a cat and mouse game—experienced hunters and mountain men against a will-o'-the-wisp that was always just out of reach. The posses laid elaborate traps for Gun-An-Noot and he tantalized the hunters by coming



within a hair of entering their trap and then, at the last second, he vanished without a trace.

He doubled back on his trail, laid false trails or left no trail at all to confuse and confound his pursuers. Parties spread out over hundreds of miles of territory around Hazelton, through trackless tangles of bush and mountain. Bounty hunters joined in, attracted by the reward money and the glory of bringing in a fugitive that, by now, had captured the imagination and respect of the entire nation.

Even the police and hunters had to admit a grudging respect for the man who, in fact, made them look like amateurs in the bush. Many people openly applauded Gun-An-Noot for his determination and skill and demonstrated their admiration by refusing to help in his capture.

The police knew only too well that Gun-An-Noot could have shot them down at any time from ambush without the slightest risk to his own safety. Yet, he played the game. The hunted trailed the hunters, waiting until they turned in for the night, and then relieving them of some of their supplies before he vanished in the night.

Many years later, several stories of close calls were verified by Gun-An-Noot himself, stories that would have made the hair stand up on a man's neck if he had ever known at the time how close he had come to either capturing Gun-An-Noot or being killed in the attempt.

One such story involved one of the most experienced bushmen and trackers in B.C., Otway Wilkie, who was within a step of being killed at one point in the search.

Gun-An-Noot and Hi-ma-dan had been working their way back to Kispiox to see their families, drop off some furs they had trapped in the mountains and replenish their food supply. They were tired, hungry and chilled to the bone as they plodded through the fresh snow.

But, tired and hungry as they might have been, Gun-An-Noot was perpetually alert for the slightest sound or movement. As his keen eyes darted through the bush, he caught a slight movement off the trail. The pair ducked behind a deadfall and watched.

Then he saw Wilkie and his men moving toward them, searching the snow for signs. The posse was moving slowly with Wilkie in the lead. Gun-An-Noot and Hi-ma-dan waited and watched. Hours went by, the posse moved away, but they remained in the area.

Then they returned, moving slowly toward the trail and the tell-tale tracks in the snow. Wilkie was scowring the snow, his rifle hooked over his arm. Peter Hi-ma-dan slowly swung his rifle on to the policeman's heart and cocked the gun. Another few yards and he would be onto them. He couldn't miss.

But, the shot was never fired. Gun-An-Noot's hand clamped itself over the hammer of the rifle. His lips formed the word "wait" and the tow watched. Then, just feet from their trail, Wilkie abruptly stopped, looked around, and then turned and strode away, not realizing that he was only a couple of paces away from the fugitives' fresh trail and probably a bullet in the heart.

Meanwhile old Nah-Gun, Gun-An-Noot's father, was still being held in jail awaiting charges. The police were interrogating the stubborn, loyal old man but were getting nothing from him. He was too busy concocting an escape.

He had his own personal guard, a man named "Windy" Johnson, so-called because "he said little, but said it often." Johnson was never more than a foot away from Nah-Gun wherever he went, even if it was out in the stockaded jail yard. Escape seemed impossible.

But, Nah-Gun discovered one weakness in this fortress. It was an outhouse that had been built along the stockade wall and the weakness was in the fact that the back wall of the outhouse constituted a part of the wall of the stockade.

He asked to go to the outhouse and tested the back wall. It had a loose board. Nah-Gun came out again and continued pacing the yard for another half an hour before he asked to go back to the outhouse.

Johnson was annoyed but he permitted it. Nah-Gun asked Johnson to hold his coat and he entered. Five minutes went by before Johnson realized he hadn't heard a noise from the outhouse. He dropped the coat and wrenched the door open. All that met his gaze was a twelve-inch gap in the back wall. Nah-Gun was gone.

Johnson was summarily dismissed and was known thereafter as "Silent" Johnson. Nah-Gun disappeared into the mountains to join his son and the rest of Simon's family who had joined him in exile.

But, the long search for Gun-An-Noot and Peter Hi-ma-dan had given the authorities time to reconsider the entire case. There was absolutely no evidence to link Hi-ma-dan to the killing of McIntosh and LeClair. In fact, the chase was becoming tiring, expensive and hopeless. The warrants were still out for the men but the police let it be known via the moccasin telegraph that Peter Hi-ma-dan could come home and undoubtedly be cleared of any charges.

But, according to one source, Peter Hi-ma-dan "died from natural causes somewhere in the vast hinterland of British Columbia."

As the years wore on without even the faintest glimmer of hope, new government officials had come into office. Huge sums of public money were being spent on what had almost become routine and futile patrols. Questions were being asked about the wisdom of spending even more money to catch an elusive shadow, a fugitive that many believed would not be convicted in any case.

Nah-Gun, who had joined his son in the wilderness, was a tough, stubborn, dedicated and proud man. He shared the life of his fugitive son. But, age and a life of hiding took its toll and the old man finally died. His last request of his son was to bury his remains "beneath the cottonwoods" at Bowser Lake, about 70 miles north of Hazelton, where the pair had camped many times in happier days.

Gun-An-Noot and his entire family continued their life throughout the wilderness country in the Bell-Irving river country and the headwaters of

the Stikine and, in fact, covered virtually hundreds of square miles in their endless odyssey. Gun-An-Noot and his family were outcasts among the Indians of the northern interior. The Indians at the head of the Stikine did not want him or Hi-ma-dan near them for fear of prompting the wrath of the white man and the government.

But, neither would they assist anyone in apprehending the pair.

It was a lonely exile. But, R.T. Hankin, an employee of the Yukon Telegraph Line, was able to fill in some missing parts of the long, difficult life of Gun-An-Noot. It was about seven years after the double killings that Hankin and two other men were camped on a small tributary of the Skeena, about 20 miles east of the main river, near the Stikine. They were on a hunting trip and the three were seated around the campfire as night began to fall.

Two men approached the camp, unarmed. It was Gun-An-Noot and Hi-ma-dan. Hankin recognized the pair and offered them a meal and tea. Gun-An-Noot informed Hankin of the trio's every move for the past days and seemed to know everything that was going on in the country for hundreds of miles around.

The meeting was the beginning of the long trail back because the now-famous outlaw was beginning to learn to trust at least some white man.

A year later, Hankin was camped about 12 miles from his cabin near what is now Hankin mountain, 50 miles north of Bowser Lake, when Gun-An-Noot reappeared from the dark woods. He was alone and they traded some caribou meat that Gun-An-Noot had for some of Hankin's bacon and beans. Then they sat throughout most of the night and talked.

Gun-An-Noot spoke with emotion of his exile. Death had taken his father and one child and he was tired of running. He asked if the government would treat him fairly if he surrendered. Hankin said he didn't know but promised to help.

Hankin contacted a friend of his, George Biernes, a packer for the YTL, and slowly the pair began the long, difficult task of winning Gun-An-Noot's total confidence. They promised that if he surrendered, they would be sure he had the best criminal lawyer in the country.

Over the following years, they met many times and discussed the possibility of surrender. Gun-An-Noot was wary. He made promises and proposals and then backed out at the last minute.

At last, it was agreed that Biernes would go to Vancouver and contact one of the best criminal lawyers in British Columbia, Stuart Henderson. The idea was to arrange a meeting between the two and let the lawyer convince Gun-An-Noot that he must give himself up.

Henderson made several trips to Hazelton before Gun-An-Noot finally agreed to meet. It was March 15, 1919, that the two met face to face.

Henderson listened to Gun-An-Noot's story and then gave his private opinion that he would have no difficulty in winning an acquittal. All he had to do was stand trial.

The visit of a famous criminal lawyer to the tiny community of Hazelton didn't go unnoticed and everyone suspected why he was there. The police

knew too, but they decided wisely to stay out of it, hoping that the outlaw would give himself up to his lawyer. Time, they felt, was still on their side.

Gun-An-Noot was still apprehensive but, despite his wife, Sarah's strenuous objections, he named a date for his surrender—June 24, 1919. The day came and Henderson and Biernes went to the appointed place in the mountains. He was nervous and for a time it looked as though he was going to back out of it.

In fact, the more they talked to Gun-An-Noot, the more he glanced back at this beloved mountains and away from the jail at Hazelton. Then, Henderson decided to try another tack. He stung Gun-An-Noot's pride.

"It's because you're afraid," he snapped. "I didn't think you would be afraid or I wouldn't have tried to help you. Come on", he said to Biernes, "we've wasted enough time on this case now."

Gun-An-Noot's face was crimson with anger as he watched the two men walk away from him down the trail. He hesitated and then began following. The decision was finally made.

Within a couple of hours he was within jail walls and Henderson was arranging for a change of venue in Vancouver.

The trial began and those witnesses who were still alive after 13 years appeared. Their evidence was contradictory and vague. Thirteen years was a long time and those who were present on that fatal night were all drunk. The trial took only a short time and within 15 minutes the jury returned the obvious verdict of "Not Guilty."

He was a free man and he wasted no time to head right back into the country that he knew so well, back to a life of trapping and hunting and fishing but this time with no warrant hanging over his head.

Over the years until his death in 1933 of pneumonia he took Henderson out on a number of hunting trips through the very wilderness in which he hid for 13 long years. It was part payment for the patience and understanding that he had shown Gun-An-Noot and, in fact, the new life that one of B.C.'s most famous criminal lawyers had helped to grant one of Canada's most famous outlaws.

Mrs. R. Cox, wife of a former operator on the Yukon Telegraph Line and a long-time court interpreter, knew much of the histories behind the Kispiox Indians and she later related a bit of little-known history of the Gun-An-Noot family tree.

Gun-An-Noot's father, though commonly called Nah-Gun, was named Nazgh-guhn. He and his wife were members of the Kit-ah-shon tribe and lived in the Indian village of Kit-an-max, which practically surrounded Hazelton. Three children were born to them, two boys and a girl.

Apparently an uncle committed a murder and, according to tribal law, the family had to pay for the life of another family member.

As a consequence, the girl was given to the Sikanni Indians as payment for the killing. That left only the two boys, Gun-An-Noot and his younger brother, Dhin, at home. Gun-An-Noot's real name was Zghun-min-hoot, which in Indian means "young bears that run up trees." His brother Dhin

carried a name that meant “tissues of the bear.” The family belonged to the Wolf clan.

Mrs. Cox’s story goes on to say that at an early age Gun-An-Noot and his brother Dhin and some other children were playing at bear hunting. They were using bows and arrows and pretending, as children will do, that they were mighty hunters and were stalking the great black bear.

Dhin apparently decided to top his brother and took his father’s old musket and aimed it at one of the children. He pulled the trigger and sent a charge of shot into the child’s stomach. Young Dhin, horrified at what he had done, ran into the bush. Only Gun-An-Noot stood staring at the tragedy.

The boy died that night and his parents appeared at the Gun-An-Noot home and demanded payment—an eye for an eye. Old Nah-Gun offered everything he had, even a prized hunting ground, which was accepted. But, it was not enough. Gun-An-Noot, whom they believed had killed the boy, had to be killed or made a servant.

The relatives of the dead boy looked at Gun-An-Noot and then held a hurried consultation. Finally, one of them said: “Do not take him. There is murder in his blood. Take his height in blankets.”

The debt was paid and he was free but, if the story is true (and that law was, in fact, common among many Indian tribes of North America) those words were to prove prophetic. There was, in fact, murder in his blood.

That is the story of Gun-An-Noot and one of the most incredible man-hunts in Canadian history.

But, the question has remained over the years: Who did kill McIntosh and LeClair?

Canadian writer and historian Pierre Berton appears to have finally solved the riddle following an interview with Gun-An-Noot’s eldest son, David, at his home at Stewart, B.C. northwest of Hazelton.

According to Berton’s version, Gun-An-Noot actually did shoot both McIntosh and LeClair in the back from ambush and he was even proud of it.

McIntosh and Gun-an-Noot got into a vicious fight after the half-breed drunkenly taunted Simon. “I can sleep with your wife any time,” David quoted him as saying. “You’ll never do anything about it. You’ll never scratch my skin.”

Gun-An-Noot was in a blind rage and screamed at McIntosh: “Before the light comes you’ll be frozen blood!” Then Gun-An-Noot ran out of the tavern into the early morning dusk. Before the sun was up both McIntosh and LeClair were dead.

According to David, however, the family’s long exile in the wilderness of northern British Columbia was hardly one of grinding hardship. They lived well, trapping, hunting and fishing and even coming to Hazelton on a number of occasions to sell their furs and pick up supplies.

Gun-An-Noot’s most daring public display occurred when he walked into Hazelton all dressed up in a new suit and neatly trimmed moustache and took in his first silent movie. Those who recognized him said nothing; those who didn’t merely wondered who the smartly dressed stranger was.

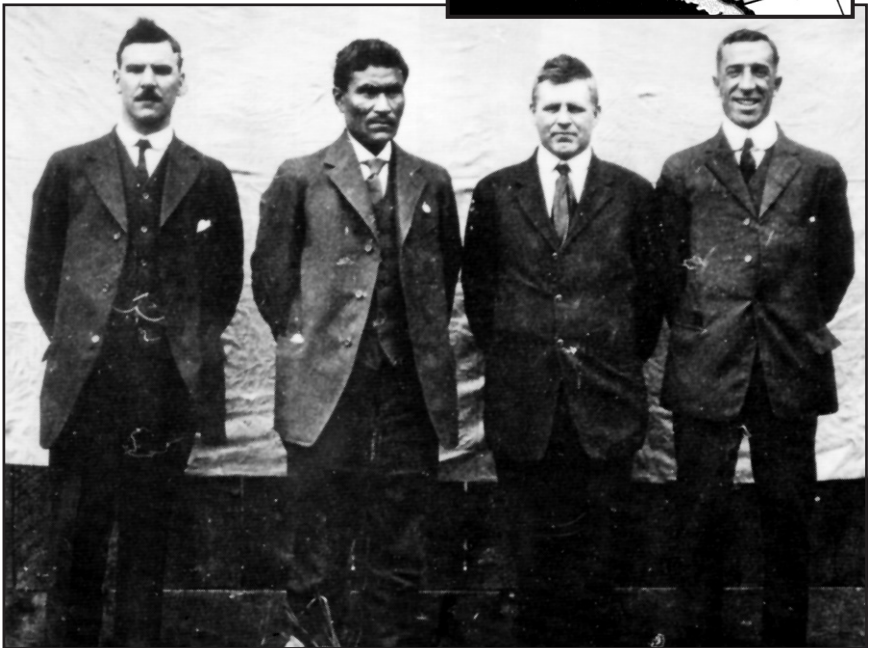


Berton quoted David Gun-An-Noot as saying he wasn't even aware all the early years of his life that his father was a fugitive. He knew no other life and thought everybody in the world lived in tents. To him it was a normal existence.

David did wonder at times why his father was always on the alert and avoided other men and why he always cast a cautious eye about when he emerged into a clearing. But, as a young boy, not even in his teens, it was nothing serious to worry about.

When Simon Gun-An-Noot died in 1933 at the age of 59, his last request was to be buried beside his father at Bowser Lake in the wilderness that he loved and in the country that protected him from hunters for 13 long, haunting years.

Sarah, Simon's wife, died in October of 1958 in Hazelton, leaving five sons—Fred, David, Alex, Charles and R. Simon and one daughter, Kathleen. □



Chief Constable John Kelly, Simon Gun-An-Noot, Constable Sperry Cline, Detective Inspector Parsons (B.C. Archives photo).

# By Bev Wood *Alone!*



## A YOUNG WOMAN'S TALE OF SURVIVAL IN THE WILDERNESS

**I**t was a shocking realization when that warm, caving-in sensation of helplessness landed home in the pit of my stomach and I knew... I could not walk out! The snow was up to my knees, I was engulfed in ice fog and the roar of the giant, 90-mile-long lake made it impossible to be heard. The recognition: I can't walk out, I can't walk anywhere! No snow shoes, no visibility. The planned 13-mile walk that would take me across the lake to a small native community was lost in the ice fog. No fire, no matter how big could ever have been seen. I knew my only plan was no longer an option.

The cabin on the creek was small and the roar of Big Lake in the fall drowned out all other sounds. In a small boat you could have white caps and rollers sometimes six feet high, a wall of water on both sides.

I don't recall the walk back to the cabin on that day, but sometime soon, I was able to assess the situation again. I had half a pig frozen in the cache, I had lots of 22 shells and three-300 Winchester magnum shells. I had shot the rest away trying to be heard. By anyone! I had set up a target about 20 feet down the trail to the lake. I understood that three shots in close succession meant distress. I got real good at it too. I hit the target in the same place three times. But my distress call went unnoticed by human ears. The crack of the rifle echoed through the snow covered hills to disturb the silence that occupied my soul.

For five weeks, 35 short days and long nights I waited and wondered, never allowing the thought to penetrate that I may die here. Freeze up would come and I would cross the lake to be seen and heard again.

It was the fall of 1979. I was 24 years old.

The argument I had had with my boyfriend at the time was not much different than the ones previous, save for the sinking helpless feeling as I watched the boat get smaller and smaller to finally disappear completely into the fine mist hovering on the surface of the lake. The motor sound muffled, it grew quiet. I was alone.

I had been alone before but this time felt different. Upon arriving at the cabin, a quick glance confirmed the wood situation. The swede saw came to mind, the meat hanging in the cache, the bag of flour, the lard, the tea, the sugar, the matches all came to mind. I felt safe in a practical kind of way.

In the first few days I just cut wood, made a plan for my supplies, fighting off some terrible impending feelings. I ate as little as possible each day,

fried pig fat and bannock, tea and sugar. It was late fall so daylight was a fleeting comfort.

In those four or five hours I had to ready myself for the next day. As the days went on I slowly allowed an understanding to settle in my mind. I had been abandoned; no one would know where I was. It was cold, 20 to 30 below zero. The wind roared down the lake without mercy. Day after day the ice fog from the lake loomed between me and the rest of the world. I was about 13 miles south of a small northern native community on the opposite side of the lake. At that particular place, it was about two miles across the lake.

## A fear of evils in the night...

Every day, in daylight, I would commit to myself: 'If no one comes today, tomorrow I will walk that 13 miles, make a huge fire and wait... to be seen. As dusk started to creep in on the stillness of snow-covered trees and frosted willow branches I felt fear. A fear I had never felt before. A fear of evils in the night. In the dark of that 12-by-20-foot cabin, my mind threatened, "bushmen, Sasquatch, death," Standing ever so close I could feel danger stalking me.

A book occupied my mind, kept the evils inches from my face, my mind. I needed to fence my mind in, to not let it escape from the confines of that book. It was called "Gray Owl, Life with the Beaver People." I surely would have experienced bush madness without it. I could feel it all around me each and every dusk till dawn when the comfort came again. I awakened with a start, still dark, no clock, in a vacuum of silence and stillness and cold.

Had I died in the night? Was this heaven? Hell? Where was God? Tremors of cold like a clock ticking came and went, came and went. It was morning, I rose, took my moccasins from the line where they had hung all night above a smoldering fire, now nothing more than an ice cold black tin stove completely empty of life and warmth as a reminder of my fate. I wrestled to get them on my feet with the concept of warm feet in the near future the only thought and the motivator of my robotic movement. Rubbing my hands together, I knew deep in my soul my demise if I let my hands get numb. I fought to wrap the laces of my moccasins, my breath making it impossible to see the job at hand. My mitts, some wood, a new day. Like a shot I was through the door entering the outside. As if in a dream, all stood the same. Nothing had moved. The trees heavy with snow, the sky icy blue, the trail to the lake still unoccupied and quiet. It was as if I had stepped into a photograph or a painting that had no way of changing.

The trail to the lake was about 75 feet long, winding through the trees heavily laden with snow. I had to duck in many places to avoid getting snow down the collar of my coat. It was there I set my target. A piece of cardboard about a foot square. With the lead tip of my rifle shell I drew a dark dot in the centre, placed a stump at the beginning of the trail and there I sat.

Would anyone ever come? Did anyone know where I was? How long had I been there? Could I live till freeze up when the lake would become a huge crossing? Did I have warm enough clothes, mittens to keep me from freezing during the crossing of that wind-swept flat?

“If no one comes tomorrow I will walk across from that little town where people will be asking, “where’s Bev?” The reply: “I don’t know where she went; she left.”

Many things took place on that stump. Shots rang out echoing through the valleys. Yells, screams bounced back to enter only my ears. All was instantly quiet again, save for the roar muffled by the snow-laden trees. I sent hundreds of messages, with all the power of my feelings and thoughts to friends, relatives, sensitive people, clairvoyants anywhere. All went unanswered.

I thought I heard... far off... a tiny sliver come through the fog and quiet. A motor! A boat! I jumped up, ran for the lake. I arrived at the shore consumed with hope. The waves roar, no motor sound comes through. To look out across the lake was futile. I was lucky if I could see ten feet across the water and eight feet of that was shore ice. I dared not fall through. I walked back to my stump, painfully aware of the snow down the back of my neck.

It was on this stump at some point in the 35 days that I realized I could not keep up with wood using-only the swede saw. I quickly swung around where my eyes lit on the cache. A fleeting memory of a small red gas can. Beside the cache under the snow, I found it. I quickly picked it up and rocked it back and forth. Liquid swished in the bottom. I packed it inside the cabin removed the lid and smelled the unmistakable fumes. I poured it into the power saw.

I was afraid of the saw, and I knew that. I couldn’t help but think about how much wood I could quickly cut if I were just to use up the gas. Maybe 15 minutes worth. I had two huge logs just out front.

Out the door I went, saw in hand. I kicked the log to get it loose from its frozen spot. (Not a real smart thing to do with moccasins.) Once over the initial pain of that, I dragged the log toward the sawhorse. Lifting up one end, the sawhorse caught it. I then went to the other end of the log, lifted and slid it on. It was in place. Now the saw. I approached it with apprehension. Stuck the toe of my moccasin through the handle to hold it firmly on the ground while I pulled the cord. Only a few pulls and the saw screamed as I squeezed the throttle to keep it running. I got it! Carefully I picked it up and positioned myself for the first cut. It went well. The chain was extremely sharp and cut the wood like butter. I stepped back to move over for the next cut and that’s when it happened! I felt the log under the arch of my foot, I knew the log would roll. Time stopped and, as I toppled over backward, I instinctively squeezed the throttle, the saw roared... throwing the saw in mid fall made it land, still roaring about two feet from my now solidly exposed lap. I imagined the saw landing on my lap, across my legs, a picture of frozen crimson puddles. How quickly the nightmare flashed through my already unnerved being.

From that day on the feeling landed and never took flight of just how vulnerable, small, soft I really was. Just a bitty, small thing in miles and miles of snow-covered hills, thick spruce trees, big blue sky, the elements, the lake.

I had to spend the days outside, moving as much as I could to stay warm. I didn't have enough wood to burn all day keeping the cabin warm. I only had wood for nighttime. At 30 below by a big open lake it took a lot of wood to put warmth into just a portion of the darkness.

I thought of my acquaintances in the small community. I thought if I pleaded with my heart, with my soul, that someone would hear. I thought of my brother who had gone weeks earlier to Prince George, BC miles from the spot I was surviving on Big Lake in the Yukon Territory. It was he who heard.

## Just a bitty, small thing in miles and miles of snow-covered hills...

I had sat on my stump at the start of the trail long enough that time around. I was now working up a sweat packing the start of my day wood into the cabin. A motor! A boat ... I stopped breathing, listened... nothing, there was nothing. A recurring, daily noise named hope. I paid little mind, although my heart felt the loss each and every time. I continued to pack wood inside the cabin. A while later, in retrospect probably an hour, I sat on a block of wood by the door, leaning up against the outside wall. That is when I saw it! A dark object filled the trail. It was in total contrast to the white heavy branches, and it was moving! Toward me! At what seemed like quite a pace. I must have blinked in disbelief, maybe shook my head to blink again. What was that? Why did it walk like a person? Who is it?

The pace of the object never changed, moving with fluid large strides, and I found myself standing reaching out, hanging onto the front flaps of a pair of brown coveralls, gazing, shocked, baffled, confused into the face of my brother. His first words, or at least the first ones able to penetrate my senses, were, "Do you have any meat?" "What!" I reacted.

He calmly repeated, "Do you have any meat?"

Now a little more present, I asked in a confused desperate voice, "Why?" "Because there is a bunch of ptarmigan down at the lake, I should go..."

"Go! Go! I said, my grip tightening on his coveralls. "No, no," I said as I moved toward the cabin door. Brother and coveralls in clenched fists following right along. It wasn't until he was a foot and a half from me that I knew what, or who he was and I was not about to let him stray from that range at that particular moment.

We didn't know at this point that the elements would keep us together yet another two weeks. Stories flew across that little two-by-four plywood table, in the lamp light, in the dark on the shore of Big Lake in the late fall of 1979.



To this very day, almost 20 years later, it gives me shivers and goose bumps to recall the details of my brother's crossing. His hands were blistered and bleeding when he arrived, the result of trying to start the boat motor on the other side of the lake where it had been parked the whole time. He figured that after about 45 minutes, it started! But no more than a few feet out from shore the lake water circulating through the motor froze it up solid. He paddled, in the ice fog, in the cold, across the most treacherous, huge, unpredictable, unforgiving lake I have ever known. In the late fall, huge winds are all that prevent it from freezing. The calm spells, where the lake is truly like glass and a sheet of ice starts to form, never lasts long. The calm lasted for my brother and me that day.

And I must admit, I went to sleep warm and just a little smug... I had heard a motor! Even if it lasted for only for a few seconds. It was a safe night, no evils; death gave up its stalking, when my brother arrived. That constant heavy weight I thought had magically disappeared had simply gone into retreat. A reprieve.

If I had to sum up the next two weeks in just a few words they would be joy, laughter, panic and learning.

It was a cold clear day about seven or eight days after my brother's arrival and we stood stuffing moss into the gaps between the logs on the outside of the cabin.

It was a quiet time, no words to disturb the stillness when all of a sudden... we stopped, looked quickly at each other and ran for the cabin. It was quiet, the roar had stopped, and the lake had calmed.

Still with no words, we quickly put on coveralls, toques, and mitts. This was our time. A chance to get out! Quickly and quietly, out the door we went. Down the trail arriving at the lake. All was still save for the rhythmic slap, slap, slap of the water hitting just under the shore ice.

Still assuming the lake was calm, even though all was enveloped with thick, grey fog, we headed toward the boat. The 20-foot, hand-made freighter canoe was still tied up to the tree where my brother had left it on the day he arrived. Because of the huge waves that had obviously roared up the beach while we worked away up the trail, it was frozen solid in the rocks and ice. Still not speaking, our necks jerked as we looked into each other's face. Mine filled with panic; his with worry and concern.

At that moment, my fear came back and it brought recruits. The reprieve was over.

We walked back in silence; my eyes never left the ground as I tried to get my thoughts under control. I was assessing the situation in a whirling swirl of panic. The meat was gone! We had very few matches! Freeze-up could last up to three or four weeks, I thought. The tea was gone! My mind showed me bannock and grouse as the box of 22 shells entered my mind.

Right at that moment we arrived at the cabin. My first words since we had stopped our peaceful chinking (stuffing moss in the gaps) shocked us both. "How are we ever going to cook grouse, we've got no lard!" I yelled. "What are we going to do?"

He looked into my twisted face and calmly said, "I'm going to cut wood, I don't know what you're going to do." With that he turned to the woodpile. I turned to enter the cabin. By the time I got through the door a smile was starting to creep across my face. "We can boil it." I thought. "Or roast it for that matter." I felt foolish as I went for my bed. My bed was built before the floor and, as a result, was sunken about eight inches lower than it. Those eight inches was filled with about six inches of moss. A real piece of heaven in the summertime when the moss was fresh.

A little while later my brother entered, arms loaded with wood. He too had a grin. "Thought I'd lost you for sure," he said. We both laughed well into the night. Reminiscing over just a few of our humorous times over the year and a half previous we had spent together in this cabin.

The next morning as we sat over steaming bannock, we made a plan. He would pack the boat motor up to the cabin and then attempt to chip out the boat.

I did the regular chores of wood, water and fire while my brother went at it. A few hours later he was back. The boat was free and there were no holes. We awaited another calm. On about day four it happened. The wind quieted and off we went. Coveralls, mitts, toques down to the lake. It was quiet. Ice fog so thick we could hardly see to the end of the shore ice.

We both decided we should try the motor first. We did not want to attempt to slide the boat and motor into the water over the shore ice if it wouldn't start. So we got a big log, lifted the back end of the boat up onto it so the boat was way off the rocky shore. From there we hooked the motor on and he pulled the cord. It started! We laughed hysterically. To see a boat so misplaced, with its rear sticking way up in the air, motor roaring away in the cold close fog was just too funny for my bushed brain. I almost collapsed with laughter.

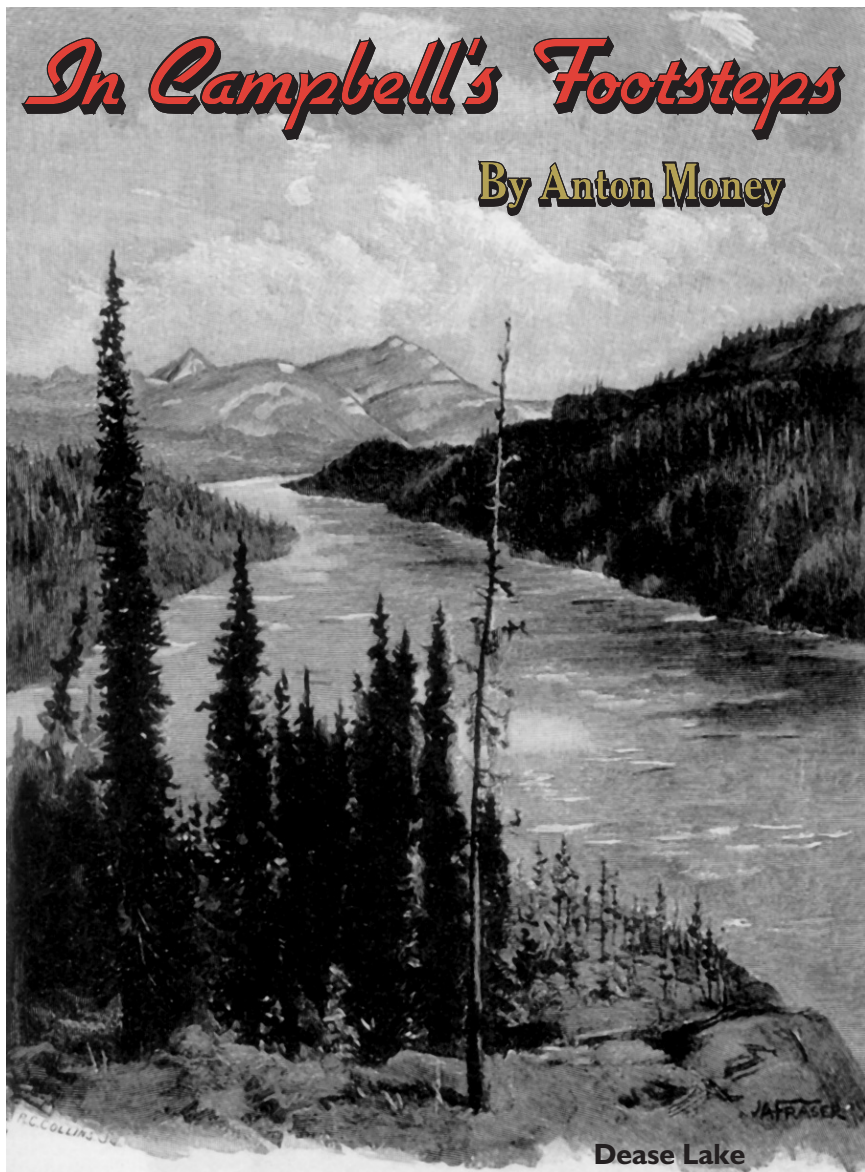
He shut it off. We slid it across the ice very carefully, never knowing when or if we would break through. It was in. We had to jump from the ice ledge into the boat. The fog was claustrophobic, the silence grew and we were afloat. A few pulls and the motor started right up. Off we went, pointed out into the fog. Nothing solid anywhere. I was terrified.

I really don't recall the trip across or the landing. My next memory is of my brother and I walking down the road toward that little native community 12 miles away.

It was cold, 30 below for sure. It was as if I was in a dream. I could hear our breathing, and our feet walking. I looked at him, real scared, real serious and said, "I feel like I'm really still sitting at the table in the cabin and I just think I'm over here walking down the road." I'm sure he saw that twisted look again. "Can you pinch me?" He slowly reached over and pinched my arm. It hurt. I was awake. I was alive and free. I was out. □

# *In Campbell's Footsteps*

By Anton Money



Dease Lake

**I** first climbed the rugged Too-stcho Mountain Range in 1925. I believe that I was the first person ever to climb over the range and to stand on top of the highest peak.

Dr. G.K. Dawson, the famous Canadian geologist, named this peak Mt. Logan when he made the remarkable trip through the Northern Interior in 1887. The name has since been changed to Mt. Hunt. The Indian name, Too-stcho, which means Big Lake Mountain, is still used by many old-timers.

The Too-stcho Mountains are situated in South Eastern Yukon Territory, hemming in the East Arm of Frances Lake.

The lake consists of two arms. The West Arm, which empties into the Frances River, is 30 miles long while the East Arm flows into it four miles above its outlet and is 28 miles long.

I have never seen a lake of more entrancing beauty than the East Arm of Frances Lake. The lower end consists largely of a series of little bays and narrows. The sides of these little bays are filled with wild roses and thousand of other wild flowers.

About ten or twelve miles up we passed through the last narrows and came to the lake proper. Here it widened into a mile to two miles across. The Too-stcho Mountains rose sheer above the easterly shore of the lake, casting their shadows across the wide waters. The lower parts of the mountains are covered in spruce and pine timber which comes down to the shore. while timberline here is about 4000'.

I found the rotted ground logs of the old Hudson's Bay Co. fort at Fort Frances, abandoned in. 1851 and situated at the junction of the East and West Arms. I found no other sign of habitation, other than the few Indian families living at the lake, in the whole isolated district.

In 1925 there were no roads anywhere in Yukon Territory. The rivers were the highways, poling home-made boats in summer or packing over the mountains. In winter travel was by dogteam over the frozen rivers and lakes.

My partner in this venture and I built a boat on the shores of the head of Dease Lake, whipsawing boards from spruce trees and using pitch from the trees mixed into rope to cork the seams. We cut 16' poles. smoothing them down with a draw knife to slide easily in our hands. We also cut a pair of oars for use going downstream or on lakes and a big sweep for stern use.

Following down the 24 miles of Dease Lake, we came to Porter's Landing, which is situated on the bank where the lake empties into the Dease River. It is about 100 miles from Telegraph Creek and is the first of the interior Hudson's Bay Co. trading posts.

The Dease River is a beautiful river except for one or two bad rapids, and near its mouth are two canyons.

We camped the first night above the Cottonwood Rapids, running them in the morning, and rowing downstream to the next H.B.C. post at McDame Creek, another 100 miles downstream from Dease Lake. The next day we kept on downstream making camp a little above the Upper Canyon, only twenty odd miles above its junction with the mighty Liard.

The canyons were not too severe and we arrived safely at Lower Post, called by some the Liard Post.

The Hudson Bay Co. Post and the Indian settlement are on the bank of the Liard across from the mouth of the Dease, approximately another hundred miles below McDame's.

We then poled and lined our way up the Liard River, through the four miles of terrible canyon at the British Columbia and Yukon border and on up the wide sweeping Liard to the mouth of the Frances River, another 60 miles.

We poled and lined. up the Frances River for 160 miles through some terrible canyons with ten-foot waves crashing between boulders as big as houses, until we eventually arrived at Frances Lake.

It made a trip from the head of Dease Lake of 23 long hard days.

We contacted the Indians at the head of Frances Lake. At that time, few men had. ever attempted to go up the Frances river so the lake was practically unknown, and was just dotted lines on most maps.

We met Caesar and Little Jimmy, two Indians who lived with their families at the lake, and they guided us to the showing of ore on the East Arm, the ore which had inspired us to make the long and. hazardous trip.

For three days we traced the ore bodies and staked the first claims ever staked within a radius of well over a hundred miles.

The fourth day I left my partner to sample more from the veins and I followed up the steep walls of the creek. Deep moss and lichens covered the ground under the trees where masses of wild roses blended their perfume with the tang of warm spruce and pine. The air was alive with the fluttering and buzzing of insects and birds. Butterflies of every hue fluttered from their sunbathing on warm rocks at my approach, dragon flies hovered over the racing, tumbling creek, or darted over the hundreds of wild flowers filling every meadow. Birds of a dozen different varieties flitted from tree to tree, hunting grubs for their newly hatched young.

Indeed, I had found a Garden of Eden.

While I took a short rest beside the creek, half a dozen Canada Jays, or Whiskey-Jacks as the northerners call them, appearing from nowhere glided into the trees nearby to look me over, then hopped to the ground at my feet without fear, to investigate this strange animal.

Perhaps two miles up the creek the timber thinned out and a mile-wide swamp covered the space between me and the true foot of the mountains. Suddenly the whole range of jagged peaks came into view. Peak after peak rose sheer toward the sky while chunks and pieces of broken rock made huge talus slopes tumbling into unseen high valleys.

I followed moose trails which had cut deeply into the soft swampy flat until eventually I came out onto the true creekbed again. I could see now that the creek forked up the mountain ahead, and decided to keep to the right fork which would take me almost to the southernmost end of this mountain range.

The ground got firmer as I climbed toward the forks with the myriad flowers swaying and laughing as the warm sun of August drew their sweet scents into the gentle breeze. Here and there alderbush and occasional small stands of birch found footing in the gravelly soil. Keeping close to the banks of the creek, I soon came to timberline. From where I stood, the creek forked, leading steeply into two high valleys. Jagged peaks of bare rock formed a cirque at the head of each fork, with rough slopes of broken schist tumbling into the high valleys.

The creek now became precipitous entering a narrow canyon, the walls of which rose sheer each side for twenty to thirty feet.



I climbed out of the creek bed, scrambling to the head of the canyon, when suddenly I found myself looking across a beautiful hidden grassy meadow. Drainage from the surrounding mountains made a shallow lake from which the creek meandered, then gaining velocity cut against the mountainside to tumble through the little canyon.

The stillness of this high valley was entrancing. The meadow surrounding the little lake covered a little over 50 acres, the lush new grass in brilliant contrast to the somber slopes of the talus. One mountain the colour of chocolate tumbled its broken chunks into the valley at the south end. This tiny valley with its own lake and pasture lay completely hidden from the rest of the world.

The great contrast of this pristine high valley with its little sparkling lake and fresh grass meadow was the very antithesis of the jagged spires frowning down from 2000 feet above.

As I climbed onto the slide at the head of the valley, a high shrill whistle pierced the stillness. Immediately, another answered from further up the slope, Marmots, or Whistlers, as they are called by northerners, sat on the bare rock, arms folded across their chests, and making no movement except raising their heads to emit the shrill warning. As I came close to the nearest, he suddenly dropped to all fours and, bushy tail straight out and behind him, dropped from sight among the rocks.

After another hour of climbing, I reached the top of the crest. Walking only a few yards, I was able to look down a similar slope on the other side and into a huge valley flowing eastward. From where I stood, I could see over most of the range. Mt. Logan, a little further back in the range, seemed little higher than several other peaks, all of them bare of growth except for



Sternwheelers pulled up for the winter at Whitehorse during the winter of 1943/44. Photo by Anton Money.

mountain lilies poking up through the snow in some of the more sheltered crevices. Here and there lichen mosses covered some of the dips between the ridges.

It now looked as if I could follow the ridge I was on all the way to Mt. Logan. It wasn't quite so simple. After another hour of twisting my feet between huge slabs and crevices, with occasional lichen-covered breaks, I had to descend into a low saddle and climb the other side to gain the foot of the peak.

This was the contact of granite and schist. In places it showed clearly where the granite had pushed up through the schist, leaving the spires and broken-edged ridges of rough schist standing on edge.

Each ridge and crest afforded new vistas of endless mountains and deep valleys. Crystal clear streams trickled from near the peaks, gathering volume and widening as they sped toward the valleys beyond, to be lost eventually in the distance.

It was mid-afternoon before I reached the highest peak.

Throwing off my light pack, I sat down to eat a lunch of bannock and cold moose steak. I began counting the numerous peaks but they seemed endless. A crevice slashed the side of Mt. Logan in front of me, making an ever-widening valley which became a river valley in the distance. Drifts of snow still filled all the high crevices while patches of white gleamed on the shadowed slopes.

The vast panorama of peaks stretching as far as the eye could see faded into the horizons of eternity.

To mark this conquest of the peaks, I set about building a cairn of rocks. Several big slabs lay loosely on the surface which I was able to carry or drag to the rounded summit. When finished, it looked sturdy and formidable

*The late Anton Money, author of **This Was The North**, in 1925.*



enough to withstand the wind and drifts of winter. It stood about four feet high like a claim monument. On top I put a large triangular shaped chunk and hoped that we would be able to see it through the field glasses from the lake.

I sat with my back to the cairn, letting the magnificence of this vastness seep into me. A great quietness settled over the land, hushing life. as the sun swung lowering toward the north-west. It lit up the distant peaks of granite behind Pelly Lakes and filled the near valleys with a deep purple haze.

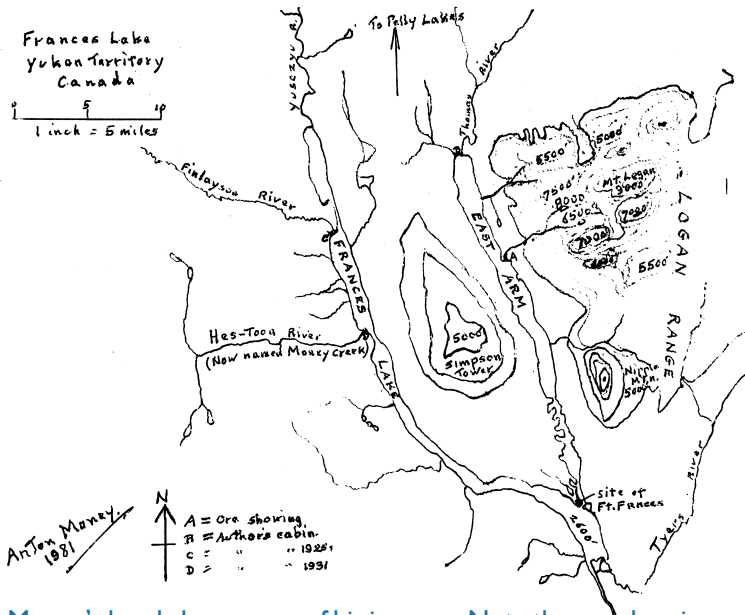
The wind was resting to let the mountain lilies go to sleep where they coloured the highest saddles between the rough and jagged peaks. The very rocks seemed to hold their breath in subtle understanding of these precious moments. The overpowering silence pulled the heart out of a man as it drew his thoughts into the open and made him companion to the wilderness.

As the sun sank below the peaks, I scrambled down, following the route I had taken climbing up.

As I neared the camp, my mind had to adjust itself, for I had the inner feeling that I had passed through the veil into another world and seen and felt the glories hidden there, not ordinarily known to other men.

The smoke from the camp cooking fire rose lazily through the trees as I turned toward the creek mouth.

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Anton Money's hand-drawn map of his journey. Note the ore showing on the east side of the lake. In 1964, Alan Innes-Taylor found an 1830s era Hudson's Bay Co. trade musket at the site of Fort Frances, wrapped in oilskins, in perfect condition. (See photo of it at the Yukon Archives under Fort Frances).

# *Will Rogers' Last Ride*

By Dick North

Sixty-six years ago this summer Will Rogers and Wiley Post landed, in Post's bright red pontoon-equipped Lockheed Orion plane, on the Yukon River at Dawson City. Both men at the time were riding the crest of a wave of popularity and fame accorded to few people in a lifetime.

Rogers, a former Cherokee Indian cowboy, had become famous as a world champion trick-roper on stage with the Ziegfield Follies. It was his ability with a lariat that lifted Rogers from a run-of-the-mill cowboy to world fame. Before he retired as a roper, he could just about do anything with a lariat but make it talk.

Using one rope, he could throw a figure eight lassoing a rider with one loop and the man's horse with the other. Rogers could make three catches at one time using three ropes to ensnarl the rider, horse's neck, and the steed's withers. One of his specialties was the "bounce" in which he twirled a spinning loop in such a way that it travelled yoyo-like to arc high over his head, then down to his feet and up again.

Will Rogers was known to have lassooed a mouse with a string and the entire Ziegfield Follies Cast with 90 feet of rope. In a movie called "The Roping Fool," he exhibited 53 different tricks with a rope. He later added a list of accomplishments to his trick-roping and acting career: newspaper columnist for the New York Times, homespun raconteur of radio, humorist and after-dinner speaker, world traveller and pioneer air tourist.

Roger's companion, Wiley Post (also part Indian) was a celebrity in his own right. He was the first man to fly solo around the world, completing the trip in seven and a half days in 1933. Howard Hughes, who beat Post's time five years later with a crew of five, called Post's feat "the most remarkable flight in history."

Post pioneered high altitude flying in the United States by reaching the height of 40,000 feet while wearing a pressurized suit that he had developed for the purpose. Other contributions of the gifted Oklahoman were the variable pitch propeller, radio direction finder, and the automatic pilot. Post made the first prolonged contact with the jet stream and forecast its potential for future use of aviation.

The space suits worn to the moon on July 20, 1969 were in principle the same as Post envisioned and designed and successfully tested in his high altitude flights over Bartlesville, Oklahoma in 1934.

Post and Rogers were taken on a whirlwind tour after their arrival in Dawson City on August 10, 1935. Squired around by garageman Ed Hickey, they dined at the Arcade Cafe, visited Robert Service's cabin, and toured the Bonanza and Hunker Creeks during the 28-hour stopover.

Will Rogers had been an admirer of Robert Service for years, on many occasions he expressed his admiration for Service's talents. Consequently,

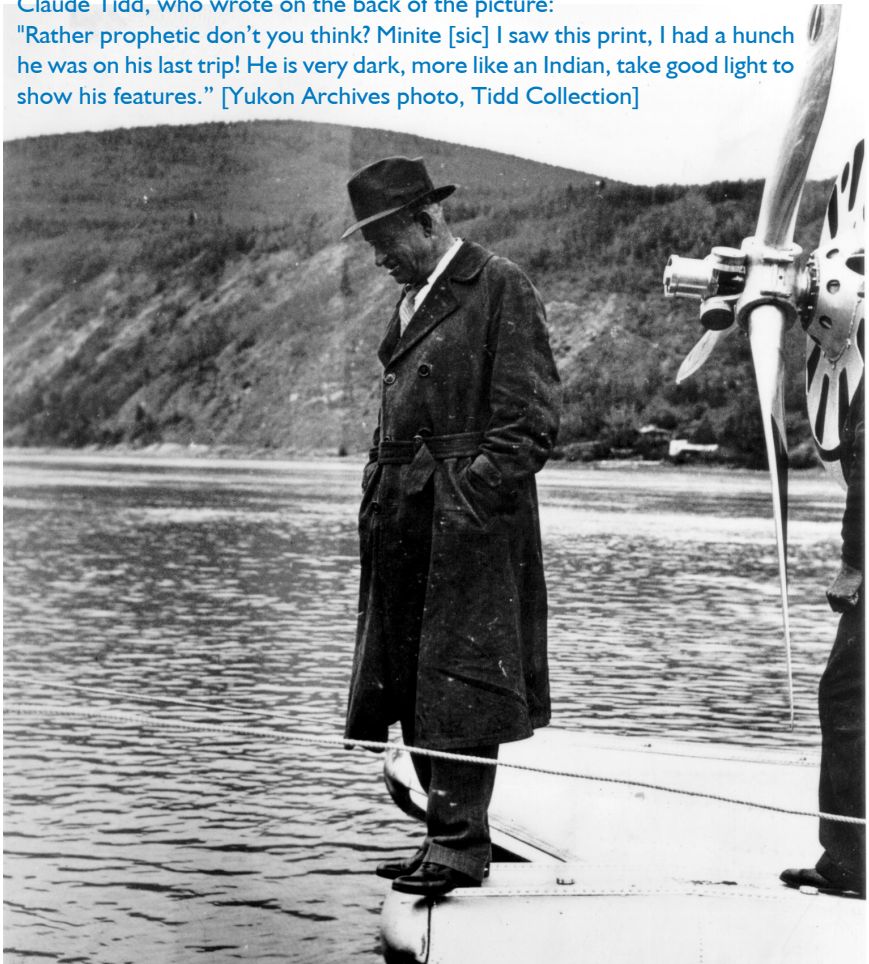
one of the first places he wanted to visit when he arrived in Dawson City was Service's cabin. Roger signed the guest book and wrote: "To me, your's [sic] are the greatest poems ever written."

In a humorous anecdote, freelance writer Otto Nordling reported that the Yukon "absorbed" pilot Post. After dinner, with Harriet Maelstrom, an attractive reporter for the Dawson News, Post walked down to the plane to obtain some maps. According to Nordling, the pilot failed "to take his eyes off his fair young companion... and stepped right off the pontoon and into the river for a real good ducking."

Rogers spent the evening looking up old timers of Dawson City including "Apple" Jimmy Oglow. But being a cowboy at heart, a horse attracted his interest. The next day Post and Rogers flew to Aklavik, Northwest Terri-

This is the last photo ever taken of Will Rogers, standing on a plane float in the Yukon River at Dawson City. Photographed by RCMP photographer Claude Tidd, who wrote on the back of the picture:

"Rather prophetic don't you think? Minite [sic] I saw this print, I had a hunch he was on his last trip! He is very dark, more like an Indian, take good light to show his features." [Yukon Archives photo, Tidd Collection]





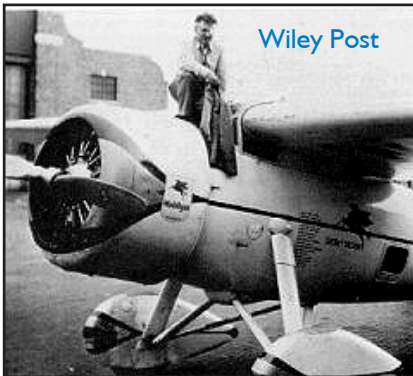
tories and in a column filed August 12 from Aklavik, he wrote: "Friday and Saturday we visited the old Klondike district, Dawson City, Bonanza and El Dorado. Say, there is a horse here, the furthest north of any horse, and he eats fish and travels on snowshoes."

Post and Rogers stayed in Aklavik for two days-long enough for them to fly over the reindeer herd that had newly arrived in the vicinity after a five-year drive from Alaska. While in Aklavik, Rogers also visited All Saints hospital and gave a good size cheque to a boy in need.

The men flew from Aklavik to Fairbanks, and along the way may have stopped at Old Crow. From Fairbanks, after a side trip to Alaska's Matanuska Valley, they flew to Barrow but they never made it. The two men were killed when their plane crashed 14 miles from their destination on August 15, 1935.

One of Germany's greatest World War I air aces, Ernst Udet, on hearing of Post's death said: "I considered Post the greatest flyer of all time. He was the most advanced and courageous man aviation has thus far brought forth."

A statue of Rogers now graces the rotunda of the capitol building in Washington, D.C. and his famous statement "I never met a man I didn't like," was the epitaph placed on his tombstone. In retrospect, Rogers' words could be reversed because just about every individual who ever encountered Will Rogers, liked him. □



"As they fly North, Will pecks out stories about Alaska on his typewriter. Soon Will and Wiley head north toward Barrow on the Arctic Ocean shore. Their flight route across the Brooks Mountains is over a wilderness of peaks, ice and fog. In the afternoon Wiley sets the plane down on a lagoon. There he learns from an Eskimo that he is only 15 miles from Barrow. Taxiing back out, the plane races free from the water and begins a climbing turn. But the takeoff is its last."

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# A DOG-PUNCHER ON THE YUKON

## 1896-1902

*By Arthur Treadwell Walden*

### Part Three



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

### CHAPTER III FREIGHTING WITH DOGS

...I read somewhere of the rush into the Black Hills of South Dakota years ago, where the superintendent of the stage line asked his manager how he was handling the traffic. He answered: 'Fine! First-class passengers, we carry them and their baggage. Second-class passengers, we carry their baggage. Third-class passengers, they walk and carry their own baggage.'

The nights at the way-houses were extremely interesting. The men came from almost every country in the world. Some were old prospectors from the rush of '49, and some had mined in California, South America, Australia, and South Africa. The old-time prospector was a breed by himself, with his own code of right and wrong strongly developed, which fitted in very well with this northern country, where written law was unknown.

Horse-play and tricks were of course always going on at these gatherings. I remember reaching the Grand Central Way-House long after dark one night, and, as I was taking off my load of dog-food to carry it into the house, I met a man in the corral who was cooling his. The air outside the corral seemed to be swarming with hungry dogs, drawn by the smell of food. Inquiring about one very obstreperous dog, I was told he was Chris Sohnikson's leader, and that if I wanted to play a joke on Chris I could do so if I followed instructions.

Now Chris was extremely fond of this dog and proud because he would do a certain trick if he was given a piece of salmon. We prepared by filling the dog chock full of salmon. After we had done so I let him into the road-house, shut the door, and inquired in a loud voice whose dog it was. Chris claimed the dog, and, as he came over to let him out, I started a discussion on the merits of the beast, and Chris, as we thought he would, boasted about this trick.

I offered to bet him drinks for the house that the dog would not do it. At this, men who had already gone to bed began to swing out and march to the bar, knowing that it was a drink either way for them. The dog, being full of salmon, turned his head away in disgust, and Chris 'set up' the house. Afterwards, when we told him the joke, he was so pleased because the dog hadn't actually gone back on him that he set up the house again, and, as there

were some twenty-five or thirty men and it cost fifty cents a drink, the trick proved to be something of a luxury.

It was at this way-house that I heard the story of the tactful way in which the Indians were handled by the white men up here. This incident happened years before, and had been hushed up. Two men were prospecting one summer on the headwaters of the Tanana River, and, while coming down a small stream in a boat, were set upon by Indians, one man being killed and the other wounded. The wounded man landed on the other side of the river and eventually got back to town.

A deputation went to the Indian village. Surrounding it they called for the murderer, who of course wasn't produced, as the Indians pretended to know nothing about it. At this the white men hauled out the chief and strung him up; but before he was dead, the Indians produced a cripple as the murderer. The exchange was quickly made, and the chief freed.

The white men knew perfectly well this was not the murderer, and the Indians knew that the white men knew; but it was life for life, and the Indians had made a good bargain, which pleased them. This may seem strange, but the psychology of the Indian made it seem only justice. In the old days in the West the Indians would have been massacred, making it a war and calling for retaliation.

Circle City at this time was an interesting place. It lay on the left bank of the Yukon at the beginning of the Yukon Flats, on a long concave bow of the Auer. It was built in the form of a large crescent, with its widest part in the middle, tapering off into straggling Indian shacks. The muskeg began where the buildings left off.

At a Miners' Meeting held by the men who chose the site, there was a discussion on what to call the town. 'Swatka' and 'Dawson' were being considered, when a man jumped up and said, 'Boys, we're going to have a round city. Why not call it Circle City?'—and the name took.

A more appropriate name still would have been the City of Silence. People have an idea of a 'roaring mining camp,' but in this town in the summer nothing but pack-trains plodded through the soft muck of the streets; there was no paving; no wagons, no factories, no church bells, not even the laughter of women and children. There was little or no wind in this part of the country. The screech of a steamboat's whistle in the summer, sometimes weeks apart, and the occasional howl of the dogs were only part of the great silence. In winter time the silence was still greater. Even the scrape of a fiddle playing for the squaw dances was bottled up, and everything was hushed by the snow.

A person approaching the town by water for the first time saw a steep bank with small boats of all descriptions moored along the edge. On top of the bank were piles of logs to be whip-sawed, and crude scaffoldings for this purpose, with their accompanying machinery of a man above and a man below. Then came a stretch of fifty feet or more which was the street, and on the other side were rows of log cabins, with a few larger buildings, also of logs. These cabins were moss-chinked and dirt-covered, with the exception

of the warehouses, which were built of corrugated iron. In the mosquito season every cabin had its little smudge in front.

This town in summer never slept. As it was daylight all the time, people ate and slept when they felt like it. It was odd to hear a man speak of going to breakfast at ten o'clock at night. This perpetual daylight, however, got very trying after a time. Flowers sprang up as if by magic in the spring, and berries were very plentiful later. What few birds we had sang day and night. The summer, though short, was very warm.

Winter changed all this. The mud was frozen up, and the brown, dirty river turned to a sheet of white. Frost and snow hung over everything, and the cold was intense. The snowfall was very light; in fact it was mostly frost, and this seemed to be perpetually falling. It was too cold for much snow, the temperature often hanging at sixty below zero for weeks, and dropping very much farther at times.

During these cold snaps there was absolutely no movement of the air, which prickled like fine needles. The air was easily inhaled, although it gave you a burning sensation in the lungs, but I never heard of a man's lungs being frozen. Frost-bites and freezings were prevalent, but they never bothered us unless they struck to the bone.

We had no thermometers in Circle City that would fit the case, until Jack McQuesten invented one of his own. This consisted of a set of vials fitted into a rack, one containing quicksilver, one the best whiskey in the country, one kerosene, and one Perry Davis's Pain-Killer. These congealed in the order mentioned, and a man starting on a journey started with a smile at frozen quicksilver, still went at whiskey, hesitated at the kerosene, and dived back into his cabin when the Pain-Killer lay down.

Coming in from the mines one bright moonlight night I was impressed by one of the weirdest effects I have ever seen. It was intensely cold, with not a breath of air stirring. Every stovepipe in the city was belching forth a column of fast-rising smoke which, when it cooled at a certain height, formed a sort of canopy over the entire city, with the smoke columns as posts to hold it up. From under this canopy the lights shone through the uncurtained windows, promising warmth, food, and rest.

Circle City was unique in some ways, and for more than one reason. Here was a town made up of men from all parts of the world, intelligent men all. I knew an Oxford man, a younger son, married to a squaw who had blondined her hair: he could quote Greek poetry by the hour when he was liquored up. Another man, who had been raised in the wilds of the Rocky Mountains, never drank and didn't have a squaw, and had taught himself to read and write. In Circle City the saying went, 'If you look for a fool you find only one.'

Here was a town of some three or four hundred inhabitants which had no taxes, courthouse, or jail; no post-office, church, schools, hotels, or dog pound; no rules, regulations, or written law; no sheriff, dentist, doctor, lawyer, or priest. Here there was no murder, stealing, or dishonesty, and right was right and wrong was wrong as each individual understood it. Here life,

property, and honor were safe, justice was swift and sure, and punishments were made to fit the case.

In the winter-time water was cut out in chunks and piled at the door, and for over eight months of the year the town was shut off from the rest of the world by ice and snow, with no means of communication save by dog-team, open only to the hardiest. The first winter I was there, only two teams went to the outside and one came in.

Letters accumulated at Juneau until some man going into the Yukon brought them up at a dollar apiece. This came rather high sometimes. I once got seventeen letters in one mail, one letter being eighteen months old. Letters were carried out in the winter for the same price and the carrier put the stamps on at the other end. This method of correspondence was rather amusing, as by the time the answer came you had forgotten what you had written about!

Locks were unknown. I remember an instance of two men arriving at a cabin which was barred from the inside. Written on the door were instructions as to how to unlock it. One of the men, a newcomer, remarked what a fool thing it was to do, and the sourdough's laconic reply was, 'Only Indians can't read and are lousy.'

Gambling was the chief relaxation, and although it sometimes led to quarrels it was on the square. Only gold dust was used as barter at the stores: this had to be weighed out for every purchase, and it was considered a matter of courtesy to turn your back while the man was weighing it. If things cost less than a dollar, you simply took more of them, making up the amount.

The saloons all ran trust accounts, and the companies gave a man his allowance of food whether he had the money or not. For some unaccountable reason a large, mounted grindstone, weighing about three hundred pounds, had been brought up on a river boat, and when all food was gone it was hoisted onto the counter as the only remaining thing to be sold. This had been the custom since the town started.

The few women who had followed their husbands into the country were a fine lot, and men looked up to them, not as their equals, but as their superiors. No man was a hero, no matter what he did, and no man was a saint, no matter how good he was. You did whatever you pleased as long as you did not bother any one else.

As an illustration of this, a man haying hit it pretty high had a bad attack of delirium tremens and got very despondent. In making an attempt to cut his throat he cut too high and laid his jaw-bone open on both sides. The men who saw it stopped him; but when he was sober they informed him that if he wanted to cut his throat now he was at liberty to do so, and that they would watch him. To cover up his scars he had to grow a beard, which was black and gave him a ferocious look. His nickname from then on was 'Cut-Throat Johnson.' The Cheechakos, not knowing the story, gave him a wide berth.

We had some killings, but no murder; one case of theft, but the man



never stole again. There were a few instances where men went back on their pledges, but these men were looked down upon and almost boycotted. Even claims were occasionally bought and sold verbally. A tourist, if one had happened to come into the country, would have said life here was hard and tough, with all the finer things left out, but in reality life had simply narrowed down to the Golden Rule.

## CHAPTER IV

### KEEPING ORDER IN CIRCLE CITY

CIRCLE CITY and the surrounding country was governed by what were called 'Miners' Meetings.' The Canadian Government, on its side of the line, had sent a bunch of North-West Mounted Police into Forty-Mile in '95, who were governing that section. In Circle City all ordinary disputes and misunderstandings, one case of stealing, a breach of promise case, and one homicide were settled by Miners' Meetings. The last meeting was held in the fall of '97, and it was the last place, as far as I know, where this procedure was acknowledged by the United States Government. The verdict of these meetings was final, and no money was involved on either side for court expenses.

The man or men calling the meeting posted a notice stating what it was called for, and it was usually held immediately. A chairman who acted as judge, and a clerk of court to take the minutes, were chosen. Then the plaintiff stated his case and produced witnesses, and the defendant replied and produced his witnesses.

In these trials the past reputation of a witness and sometimes of a principal were brought up: that is, if a man was known to be a liar or a truthful man his statements were accepted accordingly. As one man expressed it to me, 'What is the use of leading a good honorable life if a man doesn't get the credit for it when he gets into a scrape?'

After the witnesses had been produced and examined, any one in the room could ask questions. At the end the case was summed up by the chairman and its merits discussed by any one who wished to do so. When every one was talked out, a division of the house was called for; the verdict of the majority was accepted and that was the END.

After the gold rush of '98 conditions here and elsewhere on the Yukon changed. Civilization, with its religion, laws, disorder, stealing, education, murder, social life, commercial vice, comforts, and broken pledges, crept in; justice cost money and disease raged. But before '98 life and property were safe.

No firearms were carried for protection; no prayers were said for the dead; but money was raised for the widow. The Indians were treated fairly and squarely and were honest, as no liquor was sold to them. A man could be wet or dry as he liked, and there were as many dries as in any other community. Every man had a right to his own opinions, and was not taunted for them if he did not try to force them on others. There were no hypocrites

in Circle City, there was no need for them. Such was Circle City, the last stand of the Miners' Meetings.

Back in the summer of '96 an interesting event took place. There was a man in Circle City who had been in the country fourteen years and had come from Montana, where in his younger days he had hunted the last of the buffalo. But having killed a man there he left the country and came to Alaska, gradually working his way into the interior.

He was in no way a bad man in the present sense of the word, but being a product of the early West he was a law unto himself. He was not in the least quarrelsome; in fact we always found him very goodnatured. You could play almost any bid or joke on him and he would not take offense. But any insult he resented, as in the early days when the West was wild. He was absolutely honest and a great respecter of women, although he knew very few. I shall call this man Stanley, as he is still alive.

There was another man in Circle City whom I shall call Higgins. He had a very bad disposition and was generally feared when he was liquored up. Guns were not packed at that time, for everybody had to carry his stuff by dog-train in the winter and on his back in the summer, and a six-pound gun meant two days' rations. Also the climate was against quarreling.

As it happened, Stanley and Higgins got into a row, and as they were not fist-fighters they ran for their cabins to get their revolvers. Stanley getting out first, Higgins took a crack at him through his window, shooting through the glass and missing him. Then Stanley ran around behind Higgins's cabin, pulled out the moss from between the logs, squinted in, and, seeing nothing but Higgins's legs, he creased him across the calf, not doing him any harm.

There had been a duel in Circle City the year before, and the Canadians at Forty-Mile had made cracks about the lawlessness on the American side. The men of Circle City, not wanting to justify this name, called a Miners' Meeting on these two men to stop their fighting. This Miners' Meeting was held in Jack McQueston's trading post, a log building over a hundred feet long. A chairman and clerk of court were chosen as usual, but proceedings came to a halt because neither man would make an accusation against the other.

Some men spoke of their shaking hands and making it up, some wanted to see a fight and kept quiet: but the majority didn't know what to do until Higgins, stepping out from his side of the room said, 'If Mr. Stanley will come outside with me we will settle this difficulty with no trouble to any one.' This was responded to by a stampede to the door by the two principals. It was the old idea of the 'drop,' where the first man outside would shoot the other as he came out.

Jim Belcher, the chairman, then distinguished himself by jumping out of his seat, and snapping out like the crack of a whip, 'Come back, gentlemen!' The order was obeyed just as two setter dogs obey the command of their master. Stanley and Higgins walked up the room like two church deacons coming up with the plate, step and step, with their hands on their hips

and their eyes on each other, and in front of what might have been the chancel they backed off to each side of the room.

From now on the proceedings became dramatic. The chairman gave up his chair to another man, and addressed the meeting. 'Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen! I make a motion we let these two men fight. If one is killed we will give him Christian burial; if both are killed we will give them both Christian burial. But if one survives, we'll hang him!'

Another man took the cue, and stepping forward said, 'I'll make the amendment that if either man is found dead under suspicious circumstances, the other shall be hung without trial.' Unanimous verdict.

Then Higgins stepped forward and said, 'I'll not fight under any such conditions as these, as I know I'll kill Stanley and I don't want to get hung.'

This ended the trial. But to my own knowledge these two men met each other on the sixty-five-mile trail to the mines and no harm came of it. Each man knew that if either 'turned up missing,' the other would be hanged. And I actually believe that if either man had fallen down a prospect hole or into the Yukon, the other would have pulled him out. Yet each hoped for the other's death by some means or other not traceable to him. They were brave men both, yet each was always afraid the other would either forget or take the chance. ~

Later, Higgins got into a row with Kronstadt, a bar-tender, and, sending him warning through his friends that he was going to kill him, appeared in the doorway of the saloon with his uplifted gun. Kronstadt instantly drew his gun from under the bar, and, instead of raising it, fired from the level of the bar, striking his man under the eye, the bullet going out through the back of his head. By shooting in this way, he gained a fraction of a second on his opponent.

Immediately afterwards Kronstadt wrote his own notice out, calling a Miners' Meeting on himself, walked across to the trading post, pinned it up, and everybody followed him in. He was tried and acquitted in twenty minutes. Of course the ban was off Stanley, owing to Higgins's death, and to celebrate he deposited all the 'dust' he had with a saloon-keeper: it was free drinks for all as long as it lasted. Then he put on his best clothes and went to the funeral.

It should be explained that Higgins, being an old-time gunman, had used the old-fashioned 44 caliber single-action frontier Colt, and affected the fashion prevalent among some men of sawing off the trigger and filing the notch down so that the hammer would not stay up. This gun was fired by throwing the muzzle into the air, catching the hammer with the thumb on the way up, and releasing it as it came down: a man who could do this could shoot faster than a man using a double-action gun.

The one case of stealing in the country happened in this way. Men were in the habit of poking out into the wilderness in the winter, prospecting, leaving caches on the way out to use on the way back. These caches were sacred, as men's lives depended on them; but a destitute man finding one was allowed to use it, provided he replenished it as soon as possible. If he were unable to do this himself, some one else would always do it for him.

The man in question found a cache, took what he wanted, threw the rest on the ground so that it was destroyed by animals, and failed either to replenish it or to report it on his return to town. The owner coming back, probably sooner than was expected, picked up the man's trail and just managed to get in. He found out who had robbed his cache, but waited several days to give the man a chance, and then laid his grievance before the camp.

A Miners' Meeting was called and the thief acknowledged his guilt. The unwritten law for an offense of his kind was death, but, as everybody in camp would have to put his hand on the rope and help hang him, a compromise was arrived at whereby the man was given his choice of being hanged or taking a hand-sled, without dogs, and leaving for the outside over the ice. A white man, he chose the latter course. An Indian would have seen the hopelessness of it and chosen to be hanged.

The morning he pulled out everybody came out to bid him good-bye, and ask if there was anything they could do to help him, and wished him the best of luck and shook hands all round. He could be seen for about six miles, till he rounded a bend in the river, the speck getting smaller and smaller as he made his way up. It was early in the season and the river was partly open, making traveling very rough and difficult. What the man's thoughts were God alone knows. Two men coming back down the Stewart River, where they had been prospecting the summer before, met him three hundred and seventy-five miles above Circle City, and were able to spare him some dried moose meat. Not knowing anything about the meeting, they tried to get him to go back with them, which of course he refused. Had he got out we should have heard of it from some of the men who came in from Dyea next spring.

There was another interesting trial, which, however, could hardly be called a Miners' Meeting. It was a breach of promise case, and, as there was a woman involved, it was decided to give it a trial by jury.

A half-breed girl and her boy cousin, who had been educated in the States, were living at this time in Circle City. A saloon-keeper proposed marriage to the girl; but because he was twitted as a future squaw-man, he crawfished. The cousin, feeling it a slight on the girl, called a Miners' Meeting to make him live up to his obligations. She was a nice girl, and the white women of the camp took her part. Interest ran high.

The trial was held in one of the large saloons.

As a compliment to the girl the bar was draped with the American flag, and the entire town turned out. A judge, lawyers, and jurymen were chosen, making a full-fledged court.

The six white women of the camp occupied one bench and sat up very straight and prim. Before court opened a man sitting next to me called my attention to the white women, most of whom were witnesses, with the remark, 'My God! Look at the mouths of those women and tell me what chance Bill's got!'

Everything went smoothly until Stanley, who happened to be on the

jury, thought that something the opposing lawyer said was 'disrespectful to the lady,' and rising from his seat exclaimed, 'If you make another crack like that, I'll kill you so damned dead you'll stink!' Then realizing he had made a break he sat down, very red in the face. All proceedings stopped, and the men's faces wore varying expressions, but the women's only smiles of approval. Then the court gradually resumed business. Everybody knew that Stanley was a man of his word.

When the trial was over, the jury gave a verdict that the saloon-keeper should pay the girl six hundred dollars and marry her, or not marry her and pay her five thousand dollars and spend a year in jail. There was no jail, so another impromptu meeting was held to discuss building one in case it should be necessary. The man married the girl.

To show the diversity of cases tried here, one of the hottest ones I ever saw, which swung back and forth between laughter and tears, was on the rightful ownership of a young dog which had changed its color. It had been lost all summer and two men claimed it. The party which suffered most in this case was the dog, from frequent examinations for identification marks. The real issue of this meeting wasn't the dog, because it was worth very little; it was the principle involved, which was that justice should be done.

Gambling was always going on, and this with the squaw dances was the only amusement. As far as I know, at the only white dance that was given there were not enough white women to go round, and some dry joker invited all the squaws to come in and help out. Some one drew a chalk line down the middle of the floor, and the squaws danced on one side and the white women on the other, apparently oblivious of one another. The men, seeing the joke, danced first on one side of the line and then on the other.

These squaws danced very well, but always did so with perfectly sober faces, and, as it was beneath the dignity of the bucks to dance at all, they sat round the walls of the hall in stolid silence. I don't think there is jealousy, as a white man knows it, in the Indian's character.

An Indian woman had the misfortune to lose her young baby this summer, and while she was getting it ready for burial and had her back turned, an Eskimo dog came into the cabin and snatching up the baby started through the heart of the town with it, with the squaw in wild pursuit, yelling at the top of her lungs. All the white men were called out by the racket and joined in the pursuit, and, as soon as the squaw saw she had helpers, she calmly turned round and went quietly home.

The men, after a mad chase, headed the dog off and made him drop the baby, and they buried it in a cheroot box a saloon-keeper gave them. The reason the white men had put themselves to the trouble of chasing the dog was because they didn't want the white women to know of it. This incident shows the indifference of the Indian woman to life and death.

A year or so after the rush I met an Indian who knew a little English, and always eked out what he couldn't say with signs. He met me one day in a great state of excitement and tried to tell me of a new animal he had seen on the trail. The conversation ran something like this: The Indian repeated,



'Horse, no horse! Horse, no horse!' and when I said, 'What?' he made signs with his hands of long things coming out of his head. So I suggested 'Cow.' But 'Horse, no horse! Cow, no cow!' was all he could say. If he hadn't got down on all fours and let out a very good imitation of a bray, I shouldn't have known to this day what he meant.

While on the subject of Indians, I should like to say something about the natural honesty of the Indians on the river before they were spoiled by civilization. On one of my trips up the river, I had cached some food for myself and my dogs at an Indian village called 'Moss Houses,' which was deserted, as the Indians were off on a hunting trip. It was a small village of three or four houses, built of tiny poles laid one on top of the other, as the timber was very small in this section. The poles were notched together like those of a log house, and made into double walls about eighteen inches apart. The intervening space was crammed hard with moss. The roofs were covered with moss and a small amount of earth, with a smoke-hole in the middle. These made warm and comfortable dwellings.

On my return trip about a month later, I drove up from the river with my dogs, intending to stay for the night and pick up my cache. I had hardly stopped my team before the Indians swarmed out of the houses, pushed me aside, and began to unload my stuff, unharnessing my dogs and carrying everything into their houses, where they gave me a wild though sincere welcome. They built my fire for me that night, and cooked my dog-food, and we spent the evening in exchanging tobacco and talking together as well as our tongues and hands would permit. The next morning when I went to get the food out of my cache, I noticed it was gone, and the Indians, seeing me searching for it, pointed to another cache where they had carried it for safety. I liked these people until they got civilized.

I remember a custom that had been in vogue in Circle City years before I got there. The squaws all collected on a given day with a large square made of several moose-skins sewed together, and proceeded to toss all the white men in town, one at a time, much to the astonishment of the Cheechakos, who were kept as nearly as possible in ignorance of the custom.

After the toss you were supposed to throw edibles into the skin, off which they had a 'potlatch' after the ceremony was over. It was amusing to see a Cheechako rudely yanked out of his cabin, roughly thrown into the skin, and repeatedly snapped up into the air until he didn't know which end was which. Other men, who had the chance, took to their heels and were chased all over the town by this mob of yelling squaws. No man would either help or hinder another, and it was certainly a case of 'when a fellow needs a friend,' as the squaws were none too gentle.

One remarkable case was that of Jack McQueston, who was called the 'Father of the Yukon,' as he had lived there twenty-six years. He was always honored by being tossed first. He was first allowed to escape, and then brought to bay, when a great fight ensued which lasted until he was finally conquered. When tossed up high enough so that he could turn over in the

air, he always landed on his feet, and toss how they would he had never yet lost his balance. The last time the ceremony was gone through, he was thrown on his back for the first time, and the whole bunch of squaws came up and patted him with their hands to show their sympathy. He was over fifty years old at that time.

A great discussion raged this winter as to which was the warmest, to wear your furs with the hair inside or with it outside. Some men were very decided in their opinions, and a good many arguments were advanced on both sides, but one man capped the argument by saying, 'Of course it's warmer to wear the hair on the outside; if it weren't the Lord would have grown the hair on the inside of the animals.'

The year before I came into the country, a sad thing happened, showing the pluck of the white man in the wilderness. Out at the Birch Creek Mines there is a large dome-like hill which is of exactly the same shape on all sides. A great many men have been lost on it. Birch Creek makes a circle of almost a hundred miles around this dome, and most of the branch creeks head up on it.

A man by the name of Waldron Jackson went up Preacher Creek for about twenty miles to the top of this mountain for a look at the surroundings so as to be able to prospect later. It was nearly winter, and he had no dogs. Becoming confused while on top, he dropped down the headwaters of Birch Creek instead of the creek he had come up, and evidently didn't discover his mistake until he had gone too far to retrace his steps.

As he didn't come back for several days, some men followed him up with a dog-team, and as usual the trail told its own story. In one place where he had meant to build a camp-fire and spend the night, he had somehow managed to get the matches out of his pocket, but was unable to light them on account of his frozen hands, and the matches lay scattered in the snow.

From there he seemed to know where he was, and following the creek down they could see where he had stumbled and fallen, then where he had crawled on his hands and knees, and at the last where he had wriggled along on the snow. He had got to within twenty miles of his destination before he died, having traveled over a hundred miles.

One evening about the middle of December, '96, I had just got back to Circle City from a trip to the mines, and had barely lighted the fire in my cabin (I was living alone at the time) when a man came in and asked me if I wanted to make a trip to Forty Mile, two hundred and forty miles up the river, with a passenger. I answered 'Yes,' if there was enough in it. He said he would give me two hundred and fifty dollars, and when I said I would go for three hundred and fifty dollars he agreed.

After the money was paid over, he informed me that I must say nothing to any one about the trip, start the next morning at three o'clock, and get as far as possible the first day. I thought the whole thing queer, but it was none of my business.

That night I didn't go to bed, but spent it in getting my outfit together,

and went over to his cabin at three o'clock as arranged. He took me to an isolated cabin on the outskirts of the town, and a figure came out wrapped in furs. To my astonished exclamation of 'My God! It's a woman!' he replied, 'Yes, young man, and you're already paid for taking her up there!'—and I realized fully for the first time what a scrape I had got myself into. Even if I were doing something against the camp, a Miners' Meeting would have condemned me if I had gone back on my word; but to say I was surprised and chagrined is putting it mildly.

I was a green driver, and had expected to get more or less help from my passenger. The trail was absolutely unbroken, no one having been so far up-river that year. As there was no help for it, my passenger got on, sat on top of the load, and we started, my heart several degrees below zero.

I had heard tales of trips of this kind over bad ice, and many stories flashed into my head of the uncertainty of the river, as this was the first trip of this sort I had ever taken. I remember to this day how bright the stars seemed and how bleak and mysterious the river looked.

I had thought there were only six white women in camp, and here was a seventh. I had no idea who she was or for what reason a woman would want to make a trip of this kind.

This trip being a fairly short one, I took only two sleds. The front sled was loaded with provisions, dog-food, and the passenger; the other with the camp outfit. The first mistake I made was to take a slough that ran back into the country, making a wide detour, so that by nine o'clock in the morning, when all the stars had gone in, I was only six miles from Circle City by the river, and the dogs were all tired out with breaking trail.

Nothing of any interest happened until we had gone about a hundred miles up the river; my passenger alternately riding or walking behind, when, happening to look back, I discovered another team coming up on our trail, about five miles back. I called the woman's attention to it and she appeared to be frightened, which didn't cheer me any.

She asked me to wrap her up in the robe and throw a lash-rope over her: but do what I would, I could make her look like nothing but a corpse. The other team was gaining fast on me, and it didn't relieve my spirits when I found that one man was Kronstadt, who had killed Higgins the summer before, and the other one Red Thompson, rather a hard customer. When they caught up with me they asked no questions about my peculiar load, although I could see them glancing at it, and Kronstadt said that as I had broken their trail for so long, they would take the lead now. · ~

This, in my ignorance, just suited me, my intention being to let them get ahead of me while I gradually dropped back, so that we should camp in different places. But things were really reversed.

They were breaking trail and going slow, and my dogs determined to keep up with them. I made all the excuses I could think of, stopping to fix harnesses and so on, but my dogs simply would not let the other team get away from them.

Suddenly my passenger, probably having lost patience, called out to me

to let her loose. I unlashed her, and she immediately sat up on the sled. My dogs making a final rush and catching up with the front team, we all four started talking as if we had been traveling together all the time.

The two men certainly must have been surprised, but they didn't show it, and my mind was immensely relieved when I found they weren't after us. From then on until we got into Forty-Mile we traveled and camped together. The trip took fourteen days, and I delivered her at Forty-Mile without incident. She didn't volunteer any information, and not wanting to know what the trouble was I asked no questions. To this day her identity is still a mystery to me.

Many years afterwards I met a retired officer of the North-West Police who had known of my trip to Forty-Mile to deliver my unknown passenger. He told me that a short time after the journey the North-West Mounted themselves hired a team at Forty-Mile to return the lady to Circle City, but for what reason my informant didn't know. It was all a mystery, and still is, as far as I am concerned.

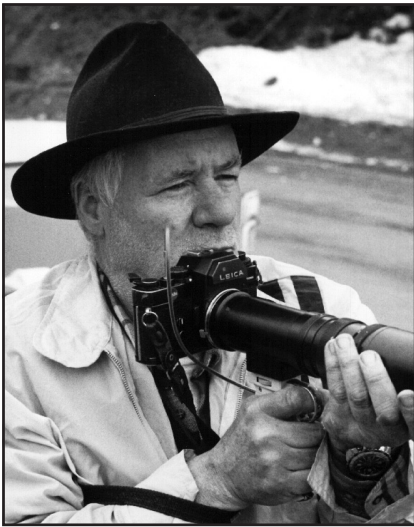
To be continued...



Ivan Bolton, at his homestead 30 miles south of Ross River. Ivan is a famous character of the north. He was once married to Skookum Jim's granddaughter and flew his own airplane around the Pelly River area. (SH photo)



## *John David Hatch, 1937 - 2000*



John Hatch, known in the Yukon as Photographic John, passed away on December 11, 2000. His photos have graced the covers and pages of this magazine and the Yukon Reader, since 1989.

John loved the Yukon, his friends, and his old cabin by the Yukon River (the oldest building in Whitehorse). His last years were plagued by the efforts of the City of Whitehorse to dislodge him from his tiny piece of land, but he never let his feelings about it show.

We will miss him immensely.

