THE YUKONER MAGAZINE

- Captain Dick & the Sourtoe
- Marsh Lake Army Camp
- Banking in the Yukon
- Growing up in Dawson City
- Teenagers' Train Ride
- The Mountie's Wife

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ISSUE No.18

Moe bought his first plane, a black and yellow Tiger Moth, when he was 19 years old. A year later he went down in it and spent five nights alone on a snowy mountain. He lost both legs below the knees but was soon flying again.

He worked more than thirty years for Whitehorse Motors, covering every job from partsman to mechanic to manager. After flying, his second love is music and you might find Moe Grant playing his mandolin at the '98 Hotel or at Macaulay Lodge, a seniors' home in Whitehorse. [photo by Brenda McCain]

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Cover: Captain Dick Stevenson and Ann Newall, at Scout Lake Road near Whitehorse, May, 2001. [S.H. photo]

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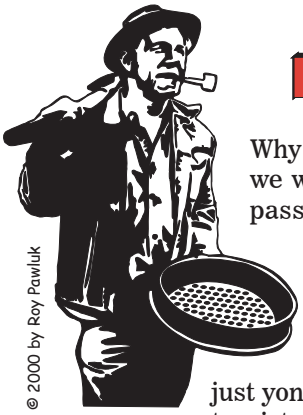

From the Editor

Why do the old days always seem better? Is it because we were young and didn't realize how precious those passing moments and experiences were? But were things really better? I don't know.

Like many of our readers, I have lived through an era of Yukon history that will never return, wish as I might.

The other day, on my way to the garbage dump just yonder from the cabin here, I saw four male German tourists standing in the ditch beside their Volkswagen van. They had their backs to me and turned their heads to see if I saw what they were up to. I shook my finger at them and waved. They waved back and they all had big grins on their faces.

I could imagine how hard it would be to find such a stopping place in Germany, said to be the most crowded country per square mile on the planet. What they took such delight in, obviously, was the freedom of the Yukon.

I can remember when it was a lot freer. Just 25 years ago, you could have a beer on the streets of Whitehorse or in your pickup while driving down the gravel roads. You could step off the highway with a rifle and gold pan and walk for hundreds of miles without seeing a human being—and without crossing any borders or breaking any laws.

The wilderness is still the same. But native land claims, new parks and other "protected areas" have sealed off many of the places that Prospector Jim, Trapper Bob and I wandered around in. And no beer in your pickup.

In the early 1980s, the civil service in the Yukon grew and grew. Before that, a commissioner and one assistant were all the government we needed or wanted. Thirteen people looked after the roads that turned into rivers of mud after a rain. The mayor of Whitehorse had a little office with a secretary and knew everyone in town.

We now have thousands upon thousands of civil servants here. They came from all over Canada and like any immigrants, brought their lifestyles and ways of thinking with them.. With their votes, they pressed for new laws covering everything from mining shafts to outhouse holes.

An oldtimer in Dawson City once wrote to the newspaper there lamenting the fact that people were building houses with boards instead of logs. What blasphemy! In the Yukon, of all places. He was horror stricken at the changes civilization brought.

But I remember so well when you could walk into Taylor & Drury's Store at the end of Main Street in Whitehorse and buy a complete prospecting outfit—a pan, a shovel, a mortar and pestle, a canoe, and a greased hat that kept the rain off and made you look like a Yukon sourdough. Main

Street today has mostly dress shops, flower shops, men's stores that carry trench coats and white shirts, and souvenir stands.

In today's Yukon, miners, and the shops that catered to them, are pretty well gone.

Miners and prospectors were a breed that characterized the Yukon since the Gold Rush. It was very common in Whitehorse to see a down-and-out prospector looking for a grubstake or trying to find enough capital to hang onto some claims. Then you might see the same fellow just back from raising money on the Vancouver stock exchange, driving a brand new Ford with a pretty blonde lady in the passenger seat.

Possibly more mining scams happened here than anywhere on earth. There was an oldtimer who often sat in the Roadhouse Saloon. He had a gold claim on Horse Creek just outside of Whitehorse. He chewed tobacco and when he took a prospective buyer out to the claim, he always spit in the sluice box (to help settle the gold flakes). When the buyer ran out of funds and patience, the oldtimer would sit in the Roadhouse, chewing tobacco, fingering the gold specks in his shirt pocket, on the lookout for another cheechako.

They were eternal optimists, all of them. A standing joke was how a gold miner could talk a bank manager out of stupendous amounts of money, provided the bank manager hadn't been here very long. I knew many of these characters, wise and tough and in perfect health from living outdoors on moosemeat and beans.

However, civilization has brought some benefits. We have a big hospital now, you can buy any sort of hamburger and doughnut imaginable right on Second Avenue, and with the latest dog bylaw, you won't hear huskies howling all over town.

Not long ago, old people had to leave for Vancouver and such places when they retired. They couldn't afford to live here, with the high heating bills and food costs, and the health system wasn't equipped to look after them. Some enterprising government bureaucrats had housing complexes built for the oldtimers so they could stay in the Yukon they loved so much.

In fact, the government sent out workers to look for oldtimers (mostly single men) who might be living in a shack somewhere by themselves They brought them into the new housing units and with Meals-On-Wheels, thermostat heat and such, some of my old buddies are astounded at how life has turned out for them.

Instead of mining trails, we are now cutting trails for tourists, and the government sends out warnings if a grizzly bear might be hanging around. A bearded bushman on the streets of Whitehorse is rare now, instead of being the normal sight. And the new Yukoners do smell better.

Yeah, I guess some things have improved. But I'm glad I was here before they started building houses with vinyl siding and plastic window frames.

So long for now,
Sam

The Mail Run

Dear Sam:

The story you published in your No. 17 issue about "The Coldest Day" was not very accurate. Here is what happened.

The winter of 1946-47 was a cold one. Just before Christmas I took a picture of the thermometer at the old post office. It was -72°F. The weather eased up somewhat after that but remained colder than usual right through January.

On the morning of February 1, 1947, about 8 o'clock, my good friend Norman Wightman brought his thermometer to my cabin. It registered -78°F. We hung it on a nail on the side of the cache back of the cabin so that I could take a picture. The next morning he was back again with his thermometer registering 79°F, and again the next morning, February 3, with the thermometer at -80°F.

The picture you published was of Wightman's thermometer which shows the temperature very clearly in black and white. So that was the one I used commercially. I sold about a hundred 5x7 enlargements of this picture and over 1000 postcards.

The official thermometer picture was okay but it was a scientific thermometer with clear alcohol instead of red colored alcohol against a white background and showed the -80°F by a telltale. Not a very good commercial picture.

However, I developed the films that night, made an enlargement of the picture of the official thermometer, took it down to the Radio Station and had it date stamped with the official date 3 Feb. 1947. That is the one I treasure. Perhaps if that thermometer had been tested in the same way the Snag thermometer was, Mayo might have had the record low.

Incidentally, the fire which destroyed the RCCS Radio Station and weather records did not destroy the thermometer which was located in a unit outside the building.

As to the wood distribution, there was another cat out delivering wood during that 80 below weather. Eddie Kimbel's little Cletrack gasoline cat with Eddie, Connie Lakness (road foreman) and Sam Wood delivered wood from the YTG woodpile to anyone in need. Frank Cantin's was used after the cold spell had broken, on February 4.

Yours truly,
Gordon A. McIntyre
Whitehorse, Yukon

Dear Yukoner:

We all love this magazine. I was in Whitehorse in September 2000 and visited Army Beach. Also went to Dawson City, Haines Junction and

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Kathleen Lake and Atlin, B. C. where my grandaughter is getting married in July 2001. That was my 9th visit to the Yukon and I hope to make my 10th to attend the wedding. In 1999, I tried the Chilkoot Trail, went 13 miles to Sheep Camp in two days and came out via helicopter in 16 minutes—a great experience!
Mildred Brandt
Magnetawan, Ontario

Dear Sir:

When I was in the RCAF in 1943, I was stationed in Whitehorse and Watson Lake-God's Country. I remember some of the old trappers and prospectors and miners: Ellis Johnson, Harry McLean, Earl Pearce, the three Harland brothers, Hardrock McDonald, Two-Man McDonald. Black Alex looked after the shack built during the Gold Rush in the back alley across from the White Pass Inn restaurant and behind the White Pass Hotel was Buzz Saw Jim. T. C. Richards owned the butcher shop and White Pass Inn. Whisky was selling for $40 and in Watson Lake it was $65. It sure was a booming country and beautiful.
Chris Laporte
Pine Falls, Manitoba

Hi Sam & Dianne:

I'm getting letters from all over and lots of good ones, lots of news. (We published Tensley's address in an earlier issue.) I'll have a lot more time now that trapping season is over for this winter. I did real good here and since I shipped my furs, I've got good news from the fur auction (much higher prices).

The rabbits crashed last fall and now we are seeing lynx starving all around. The game wardens tell me they see them all around. Kris (wildlife officer, see back cover issue #16) told me he's stopped real close to some on the road. I've cleaned out my freezer and for a week now I've fed three lynx at our garbage dump. I sure hope it helps them survive and it may with the warm weather we are having now. I got some very interesting letters from trappers, nurses and plain people all over the far north and the States too.
Tensley Johnson
Teslin, Yukon

Dear Sam & Dianne:

In the story by Jim Kirk in issue No. 16, he mentions a Paddy Houston. Small world! He lived next door to my brother in Sioux Lookout after he retired from the H. B. Co. Also he mentions his first flight from

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Edmonton was with a pilot named Jack Moir. My first plane trip was in a Fairchild from Hudson, Ontario. The pilot's name was "Scotty" Moir. I wonder if it could be the same person; we only knew him as Scotty. I was only 16 and very "air-minded" then. In October 1981, my husband and I started up the Alaska Highway with our trailer but should have known better. We were just east of Whitehorse when there was a lot of snow and we got badly stuck on a hill. A very kind young man pulled us over the hill with his jeep and refused any payment. We decided to turn back. I'm still hoping to go back some day.
Mrs. Colin Campbell
Ear Falls, Ontario

Dear Sam and Dianne:

I enjoy reading about the bush pilots who flew in the north such as Grant McConnachie and Wop May. It amazes me how Wop May flew a plane to Aklavik in 1932 in the winter and brought it back to Edmonton. In those days in Manitoba we couldn't even get our Model T out of the shed. If a plane did fly over we would watch it until it was just a dot in the sky. In 1939 when TCA started to fly, the planes were bigger and had a shine to them. I faintly remember hearing the folks talk about Albert Johnson raising hell up on the Rat River, not that I had a clue where that was at five years old. We got the news in those days from a radio with a horn on top.
Frank Forth
Lethbridge, Alberta

P. S. I've had a couple of Fordies that must have come out of the same iron mine as your Dodgie. I once had a Studebaker but I think it came from another planet.

Dear Yukoner:

Our youngest daughter lives in Faro and works there with the town office. We took the bus trip (the longest offered by Greyhound) from Whitehorse to Miami last year and enjoyed ourselves immensely, advertising the Yukon along the way!
Anne-Marie Maides
Prince George, B. C.

Dear Yukoner:

I am looking for the book "Cabin Fever," by Dick North. I understand he now lives in Whitehorse.
Kathleen Wiebe
Saskatoon, Sask.

(We suggest you call Mac's Fireweed Books at 1-800-661-0508. Apparently Dick North now spends his winters in Idaho and summers in Dawson City, Yukon but we've not heard from him for awhile.)

Dear Sam;

Thanks much for sending me a real YUKON GOLD NUGGET, the first one anyone ever GAVE to me. I am not much of a winner but you can imagine how many items I have made for prizes of one sort or another, and now I am the winner. Your last comment about the fellows who won the gold nuggets reminds me of a Ram's Head watch band that the Mobile Home Owners Association in their first year gave away as a raffle prize, the winner, "Henry the hypnotist", from Grande Prairie, Alberta.

I have seen a lot of gold as you suggested but not near as much as Butch Sealey, the gold buyer. I have helped prospectors look for gold by using a dousing rod, an art taught to me by Cec Mosier who was at one time the deputy sheriff there.

Thanks again for the great prize. I shall give it to my niece's daughter, expected any day now.

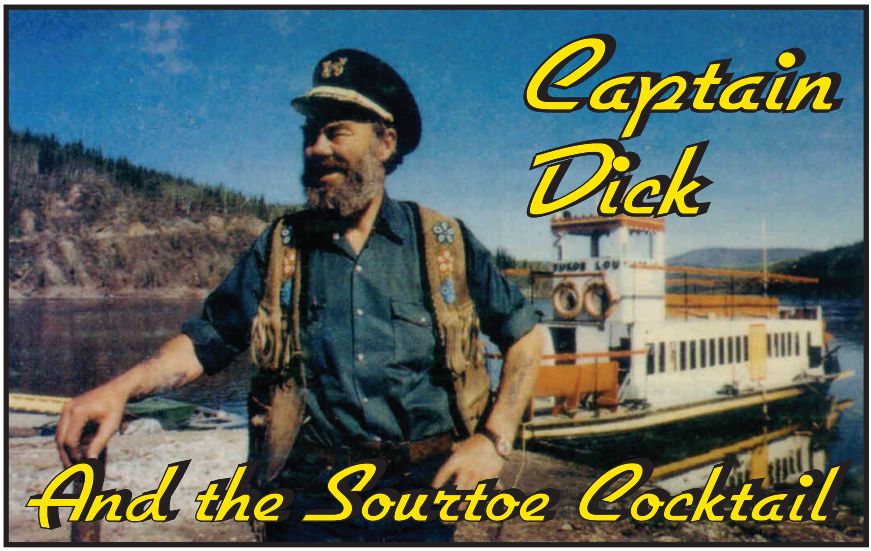
Sincerely yours
Ron Hurry
Kelowna, B.C.

Editor's Notes:

The winner of the gold nugget for subscription renewals is John Naylor of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

In issue number 17 Mervyn Kelly of Baysville, Ontario asked about the cemetery at Whitehorse Rapids where his relative, John Lee, was interred during the Gold Rush. Archie Lang of Whitehorse called to suggest that the graveyard in question could be the one above the Whitehorse Hospital.

The village of Carcross, 50 miles southwest of Whitehorse. SH photo)



By Sam Holloway

It couldn't happen anywhere but in the Yukon. In fact, it couldn't be conceived anywhere but in the Yukon. A drink so hideous that it is swallowed by thousands of people because their minds cannot fully recognize the horror of... the Sourtoe Cocktail.

The inventor of this Klondike tradition is Captain Dick Stevenson, formerly of Dawson City, also known there as the River Rat.

In Dick's own words, here is how the Sourtoe Cocktail came to life (or was it death?):

"In the spring of 1973, I bought a cabin at the headwaters of the Sixtymile River from Otto Likens, an oldtime placer miner trapper and rum runner. Otto and his brother Louie ran rum from the Yukon into Alaska in the 1920's. They would wait for a blizzard so they couldn't be tracked, then run a load into Alaska. They used a different pass each time. The Mounties knew they were running rum but they never got their man.

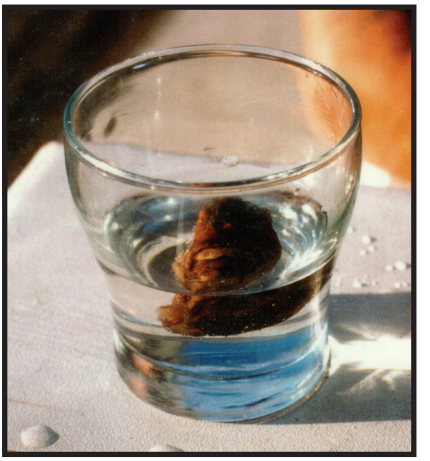
"On one trip Louie got his foot wet stepping into an overflow and froze his big toe. The toe froze solid, lost all circulation and later turned gangrenous. Brother Otto knocked Louie out with overproof rum, then shot the toe off with a 30-30 rifle. They saved the toe, preserving it in a jar of salt as a souvenir.

"Otto told me the story of the toe in 1967, while I was working as a fish warden in Dawson City. I took the tale with a grain of salt, just another Yukon tall tale. Louie, the toe owner and ultimate witness for the story, had died several years before. In 1973, while I was cleaning Otto's old cabin, I found the famous toe in an old pickle jar, preserved in salt.

On Discovery Day (August 17) of that year I was chatting with Dennis Ball (C.P. correspondent) and Don Sawatsky (author of Ghost Town Trails

of the Yukon). We were sitting in the Eldorado Hotel and invented a cocktail featuring Louie's toe. It was a real challenge, one beer glass of champagne with the toe in it. The Sourtoe Cocktail was born."

Captain Dick admits that the idea for the drink was inspired by Robert Service's famous poem, "The Ballad of the IceWorm Cocktail." However, the subsequent history of the Sourtoe might have been too much for even Service to swallow, had he heard the whole tale.



The Sourtoe Cocktail

By the summer of 1980, 725 Sourtoes had been imbibed by folks from around the world. Then a gold miner, slightly drunk, tipped back his chair in order to bring the toe to his lips (this is a requirement in order to receive a Sourtoe Certificate). The chair collapsed and when the miner hit the floor he swallowed the toe. Of course Captain River Rat was very sad that he had to do without a toe: another career gone sour. However, in February of 1981, an understanding lady in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, sent him Sourtoe #2, via parcel post. Alas, this too was lost during renovations to the hotel in the summer of 1982. The Captain's predicament was known to many Yukoners.

Otto Likens' cabin at the headwaters of the Sixtymile River, where Dick found the pickled toe.

"The following February (1983), a local doctor hailed me on the street. He told me he had a parcel for me at the hospital. When I picked it up it, contained one human male big toe in a jar of alcohol. A trapper in Faro, Yukon, had frozen his toe and had to have it amputated. He told the doctor in Whitehorse to send the toe to Captain Dick in Dawson. This became Sourtoe #3."

That same summer, a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment, celebrating Discovery Days, pocketed the toe and it was gone again. Fortunately an anonymous volunteer quickly donated a big toe. The Canadian Armed Forces returned toe #3 and now Captain Dick even had a spare.

This was not to last, however. In 1985, toe #3 was irretrievably lost. On August 17, a big native fellow from Inuvik deliberately swallowed the toe, right before the eyes of its flabbergasted owner. Here is how Captain Dick told me about it shortly after it happened:

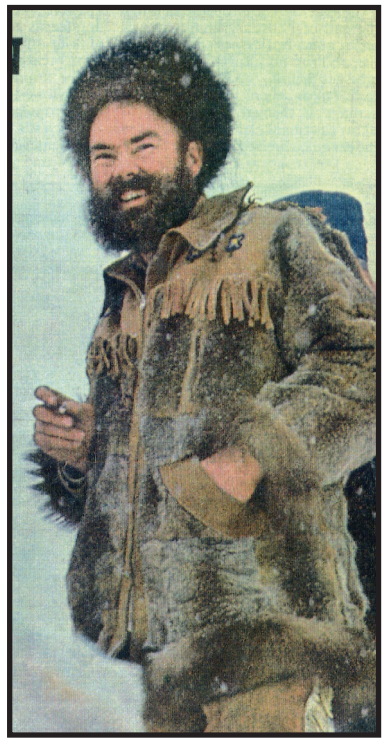
"I saw the guy swallow the beer in the glass and he had the toe in his mouth. He poured some more beer in the glass and with a supreme effort gulped down the toe. He looked a little green around the gills after that but could still talk. I asked him why in God's name did he do it? His reply was that his Inuvik friends told him he had to swallow the toe in order to receive the certificate. I forgave him then and there. The nice part was that a reporter from the *Anchorage Times* in Alaska was sitting at the same table. But now I have no spare and it's a kind of a worry on me."

Then, in the fall of 1986, disaster. Someone stole the toe out its box at the Watson Lake Hotel. The RCMP did a two-week investigation but did not recover the toe. The story of Dick's missing part was reported in the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Vancouver Sun* and on CBC's Midday program.

The toe was seen in a bar in Texas that winter, being served by some people who had signed Dick's log book in Watson Lake, but they would not return it.

(I saw Dick that winter in Whitehorse. He looked like a man who had lost everything in life and had no hope for the future.)

He went all winter worrying about



Dick Stevenson at the 1965 Sourdough Rendezvous in Whitehorse. This photo appeared on the cover of *Weekend Magazine*.

the coming tourist season. By this time, 4,569 nine people had drank the Sourtoe Cocktail.

In the winter of 1987, an old Yukoner froze two toes and had them amputated in the Whitehorse Hospital. He sent them to Dick in the mail, on the condition that the donor and the doctor's name were to be kept a secret. However, the nurses at the hospital were to get a free Sourtoe Cocktail as part of the deal.

These new toes were very soggy and still quite bloody. Even the most jaded Yukoners might not be able to handle this fresh version of the cocktail. Dick's landlady had a peek at the toes and ran out the door to be sick. So Dick worked hard, pickling and salting them until they looked... well, just right.

Then he had a great time selling Sourtoe Cocktails in bars all over the west.

He got a call from the Mounties in Watson Lake. They had received toe #4 by mail from Fort Worth, Texas. It seems they were ready to lay a charge against the thief for "transporting a stolen part of a human body across an international border." The toe came back before actual charges were laid. The RCMP were able close the case.

That summer, two ladies in a camper brought Dick another toe. They had read his sad tale in a newspaper and carried the toe all the way from southern Canada.

In 1989, Dick received yet another toe. It had been donated by someone who had used a power lawn mower while wearing sandals.

Dick never ran out of toes again.

And so it went over the years. The Captain is retired now and living in a cabin outside of Whitehorse. A friend in Dawson City has the franchise for the Sourtoe (Captain Bill Holmes).

I visited Dick and his wife, Ann Newall, just a couple of weeks ago. Ann is a very fine artist. She and Dick have been married since 1991, when she came to the Yukon to answer an advertisement that Dick had placed in the *Yukon News* for summer help. He was the man of her dreams.

.... Captain River Rat arrived in the Yukon in 1956. Born in New Brunswick, he left home at 18, was a cowboy in Alberta, a hardrock gold miner, and worked in logging camps at least once a year. He came to Whitehorse to drive truck for the White Pass & Yukon Route's freight division. In 1960, he inherited $19,000 and lost it in a sports fishing venture on Aishihik Lake. He had a nice setup but no customers because nobody had heard of him. He would never make that mistake again.

He then became a predator control officer for the Yukon Game Department and poisoned wolves for five winters. In 1967, he went to Dawson City as a federal fisheries guardian, looking after fishing on the Yukon River. Dick is a man who loves people and he rarely laid charges against anyone. Duty did prevail once though, and when the men charged with a fishing violation came out of court, they took the Captain to the nearest bar where they drank in fine fellowship all afternoon.

He was a natural to get into the tourist business and in 1968 Dick

started a river tour operation, complete with island restaurant serving smoked, barbequed salmon. He sold this business in later years but was kept on as captain of the "Yukon Lou" for many years.

The River Rat has had other, wilder schemes: In 1982 he staged the first nude beauty contest north of the sixtieth parallel. When pet rocks were in vogue in the south, Dick sold "Yukon Wild Rocks" in Dawson. One of his more practical ventures was the sale of eight-foot square mining claims at $5.00 a square.

Such is Captain Dick Stevenson, inventor of the Sourtoe Cocktail. Aside from his scheming nature, this intelligent, softspoken man is an expert woodsman, prospector, poet, gardener, and who knows what else. In his wilder days, he could hold his own with any character from the past, such as Swiftwater Bill Gates, Arizona Charlie Meadows, Big Alex McDonald, and their like.

Dick and Ann live a quiet life these days. They have a greenhouse that turns into a garage in winter, and a 4X4 truck that is showing its age but sounds good. They go to town once every two weeks for mail and supplies, watch TV programs from a satellite dish, and feed their many animal friends around the cabin.

They have a big scrapbook with stories and pictures of the Sourtoe and the Yukon Lou. They have done their part to make the world a happier place.

I have many fond memories of Captain Dick and the Klondike. It was my observation that many people in Dawson City never really appreciated how much colour and romance the Captain brought to their town—and how much he took away when he retired to Whitehorse. ❐

Left, Canadian icon Pierre Berton becomes a member of the Sourtoe Club. Above, Dick, with the spare toe in his teeth, encourages a young lady to raise her glass high. Captain Dick and his wife, Ann, are on the cover of this issue.

Tales of a Yukon Banker

By John Skelton

Over the years, hundreds of bankers have been transferred in and out of the Yukon. I was one of them, and although their stays were normally brief, many quit their respective banks to either stay or return to the Yukon.

I was born in Santa Cruz, California in 1938 and moved with my family to Fiji and New Zealand during the war years; however, before the war ended, we returned to California where my father was assigned to the British Army staff in San Francisco. When the war ended, we once again moved, this time to B.C., where my folks purchased a dairy farm a few miles from White Rock.

I graduated from high school in 1955 and immediately joined the Bank of Montreal at a annual salary of $1,450. Aside from taking the occasional cash parcel to the post office with a huge Webley revolver stuck in my pocket, the duties were routine. We were not expected to use the revolver but were required to carry it for insurance purposes only. I recall that in those more relaxed times, we stopped for coffee on the way and plunked down the cash parcel on the cafe counter.

Tricks were often played on the new recruits and one incident that comes to mind was one in which the new lad was asked to zip over to the Bank of Nova Scotia and ask for their general ledger. Normally, when this happened, the employee at the other bank would start laughing and tell him to get lost. In this instance he happened to ask another new employee who hunted around, found their general ledger and handed it over. We knew there would be hell to pay when he returned with the ledger containing all the information you would ever want to know about the opposition, so we rushed the ledger back as quickly as possible.

In 1957 I was asked if I would like to transfer to Dawson City. Not being sure where it was or how to get there, I dropped in on the local travel agent who showed me where the town was located and advised me that there were two ways of getting there. I was able to convince the personnel department in Vancouver that time-and-cost-wise there would not be too much difference between going by boat and train or flying all the way. The ferry trip was fine although everyone but me and a couple of

young kids seemed to be in their declining years. I was amused that they had finger bowls on the dinning room tables.

After a great train ride, we arrived at the White Pass station where the mosquitoes were waiting for us. The agent asked where I was going, and when he heard I was with the bank, he insisted on phoning the Whitehorse branch and getting someone down to pick me up, and get me settled into a hotel. The fellows at the bank were great and gave me a tour of town that evening.

My first view of Dawson City was an eye opener. There were scores of old cabins and shacks as one drove into town and it did not get too much better downtown.

The Bank of Montreal, a two story building, was formerly the Bank of British North America, and when the Bank of Montreal closed down in Dawson in the late 60s, the building was taken over by the Parks Service and the original name given back. I had the whole upstairs of the building to myself at a monthly rent of $7.50. Pat Murphy, a schoolteacher living at the Downtown Hotel, did nearly all the cooking on our old wood stove. It was several months after my arrival that I began having stomach problems and saw Dr. Rooks. I thought I had an ulcer because of the pressures of work during a extremely busy summer. Dr. Rooks, who also had a ulcer, said it was more likely that it was Murphy's cooking, and he gave me some pills and a quart of fresh milk that he had flown in several times a week for himself. We started to eat less fried foods and the problem cleared up.

John Skelton with Jim Cunliffe (manager) wieghing gold at the Bank of Montreal, Dawson City, 1958.

The thrill of seeing gold bars wore off immedi-

ately when I found out that I had to weigh, wrap and seal them with wax before hauling them off to the post office. All this while trying to handle my other duties on a busy Friday, which seemed to be the day of choice for the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation to deliver them to us. We would receive approximately twelve bricks and the total weight would exceed 200 lbs. All the gold we received whether in the form of bricks, nuggets or dust, was sent to the Royal Canadian Mint. Our customers were given a percentage of the estimated value of the gold and received the balance when payment was received from the mint. The YCGC. (Yukon Consolidated Gold Corp.) had had a turbulent history, and it was only in the latter years that they were actually profitable. At the time, I had no knowledge of YCGC's past and always considered them to be "as good as gold." There is at least one book covering the history of the company that is well worth reading and is probably available at the Whitehorse bookstore.

Dawson still had its share of old-timers; Madame Zoom, Bombay Peggy, Black Mike and Ruby Scott were still active. Shortly after my arrival, I was shocked to find Ruby Scott's occupation listed on her bank account as "Madam." This would never have been done in the southern branches.

In the mid 1950s curling was the only winter sport, as there was no school gym and the hockey rink had been condemned years earlier. My first attempt to throw a rock was a disaster because I slipped in the hack, and my broom flew back and through the observation room window. Luckily no one was cut mainly because the windows were much smaller than they are in today's modern rinks.

I believe that Dawson was the only branch in Canada that did not have a posting machine but still posted their accounts by hand. We had one hand-cranked adding machine, and the vault had one light bulb, which you turned on when entering the vault and off when leaving. The manager left for lunch at 12 o'clock and returned shortly before closing time, I expect most folks knew in which bar they could locate him. We had no telephone contact with the outside world, so we had no qualms about shutting down the branch for curling bonspiels as there was no way that our head office would know.

During the middle of winter I was experiencing difficulty opening the vault door, and each morning it seemed to be worse. Either the vault was falling, or the floor rising. We engaged the services of Black Mike, who discovered that the boiler was leaking water, which in turn was running under the building and freezing. Mike fixed the boiler and steamed out the ice allowing things to return to normal. We wondered afterwards how high the building would have been lifted had we not discovered the problem.

I had two scares in Dawson. The first involved the two Jimmie's (Gaundroe and Strachan). Jimmy Strachan was only 19 at the time, yet he owned two trucks, a fairly new Chevy and an old Maple Leaf, which

was likely, older than I was. I thought it would be fun to drive out in the Maple Leaf to pick up a pole trailer loaded with logs that would be cut up in town for firewood. Everything went according to plan until we reached the first steep hill on the return trip. We almost made it before powering out, but then slowly started to slide back. I looked out the window to see that we were getting close to the bank and a steep drop off and yelled at Jimmy Gaundroe to stop. He said the brakes were not holding on the ice. At this point, I again looked out to find that we were closer than ever to going over. I turned once more to yell at Jimmy only to find that he had jumped out on the driver's side. It didn't take me long to crawl over the rifles, etc. that were piled between us, and bail out just in time to watch the truck disappear. I guess we were pretty shaken up as we both started to laugh at the sight of the truck. The trailer had a long heavy pipe sticking out of the back, which was part of the frame, and this dug in partway

Inside the Bank of Montreal, Whitehorse, in 1962. The all-male staff is dressed for Rendezvous. The man on the left, top, (talking on the phone) is having a cigarette at his desk.

Jim Gundroe and the Maple Leaf truck, November, 1957.

down the bank keeping the trailer from tipping over, and jack-knifed the cab up into the air. Jimmy Strachan was not amused as he drove up in the Chevy. He knew he would have to return the following day and recover the Maple Leaf. The second time was in the spring when I accompanied Jimmy Strachan across the Yukon River to what was to become the Clinton Creek mine to pick up bags of ore samples. When we drove across the ice bridge, it looked pretty rotten, and by the time we returned that evening, the bridge had about a foot of water on it. As Jimmy drove across, remembering my last trip in one of his trucks, I held the door partially open ready to jump if we broke through the ice.

We did have some excitement in the branch when an old miner, Scotty Munroe, came in and asked for some money from his account. We explained that he did not have an account with us, and this seemed to satisfy him. However, he was back the following week with the same request. Once again we told him he did not have an account. Scotty was not happy with our response. He told us that he had sold his claims to the YCGC many years before, and they had deposited the money for him at our branch. I checked with Emma Seeley at the YCGC office, and she confirmed that this was true, so I checked through our old records. I found that true enough he did have an account in the 1930s but had withdrawn most of the account over a few years, and then he had transferred the balance to the Bank of Commerce. The next time he was in, I explained everything in detail and showed him our records thinking this would finally put the matter to rest. However, he returned a few days later to let us know that if we did not find his money, the next time he came in he would have a gun and would use it. Our only female employee, Athol Retallack, had lived in the Yukon for many years and said she was scared that he would indeed return with a gun. We then contacted the RCMP, who were also unable to convince Scotty that he had spent the claim money. As a result they got a court order and had Scotty relocated to southern B.C.

Part way through my stay the bank had a change of managers; .Jim Cunliffe arrived with his wife but minus two Springer spaniels that were dropped off by mistake in Dawson Creek. They arrived a few days later no worse for wear. Jim was a very big man with a booming voice and everything he said, even in his office, was heard throughout the branch. He was a nice person and people sensed this. One young lady came in to ask his advice as she had discovered she was pregnant. He asked why she had allowed this to happen and her response was that there was little else to do in Dawson City. She later married the soon to be father although I felt she deserved better.

I spent a little over a year in Dawson and when I was transferred, was actually homesick for the place—something that I had not experienced when I left home. Transfers to Quesnel, Cloverdale and Nanaimo followed. In 1961, I was asked if I would like to transfer to Whitehorse. This was a hard decision because several weeks before, I had purchased

a brand new car and knew of the branch manager's bad reputation. A man by the name of Jim Boyce was the manager and was known throughout the BC and Yukon division as a real terror to work for. Once again I returned to the Yukon to find that Mr. Boyce's reputation was well deserved. For some strange reason he and I got along quite well, perhaps because we were both vertically challenged, or perhaps because shortly after my arrival, he received a letter from his beautiful niece, who I had dated several times while she was on summer holidays in Nanaimo. Shannon had mentioned that her uncle, Jim Boyce, was the manager of the Whitehorse branch, and I had enough sense not to tell her what I had heard about him even though I had no idea that he would be my boss in a few months. I can still recall the rather dour expression on his face when he said to me, "Shannon says to say hi." Two years after my arrival, he recommended that I receive the promotion to accountant at Port Alberni, B.C.

Mr. Boyce had started with the bank as a lowly messenger and worked his way up the ladder to manager. He used extremely colourful language in the office and did not seemed concerned that the customers heard it. The first day that a 20- year-old Ross Mavis reported to work, Mr. Boyce called him into his office and in a very loud voice read him the riot act in his usual course language, explaining what would happen to Ross if he was seen in any of the local bars before he turned 21. This included everything but stringing him up. Poor Ross emerged from the office white and shaken. Actually Mr. Boyce had some justification, as a year or so earlier there was a stabbing at the Regina hotel bar, which at the time was a real dive. When the trial came to court, one of the witnesses was a Bank of Montreal employee who was found to be under age at the time. Ross was rather rotund, and on his 21st birthday was required to have a medical prior to joining the bank's pension plan. Some hard-nosed doctor would not pass him until he lost some weight, so while the other four of us ate steaks and chops, Ross got by on Metracal. He lost the required weight in no time, passed his medical, and was back up to his previous weight in short order.

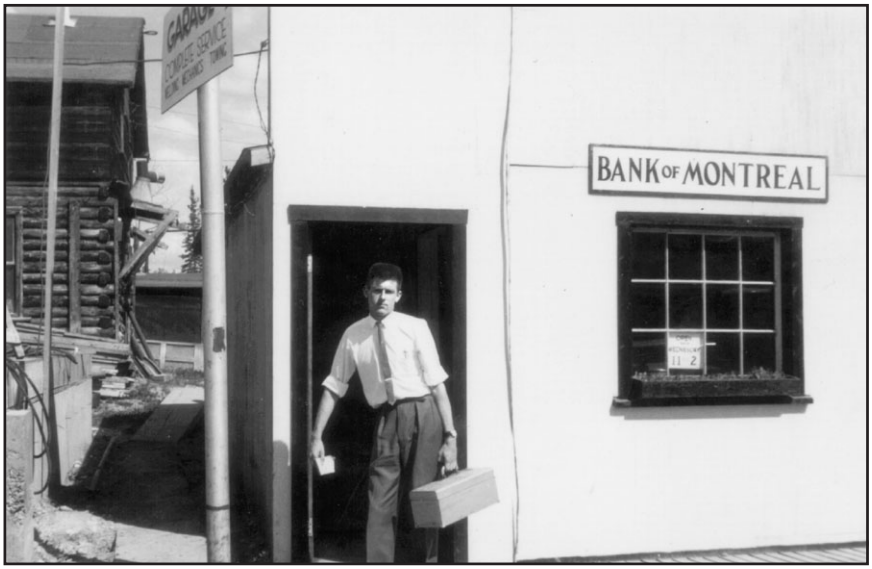
The single male staff had quarters above the bank and at times the air wafted with the smell of home made beer and potato champagne. Neither was very good; however, Nick Stromberg, who should have been a chemist, had no problem distilling the champagne.

We ended up with a highly potent drink, which burned with a pretty blue flame, and which Nick christened "Creme De Propane." One day Mr. Boyce found the back door of the bank unlocked. He called Marv Barham, the accountant, into his office and informed him that if he ever saw a stranger coming through the back door, he would start shooting, and if Marv was in the way, so much the better. In those days, the managers had revolvers in their desk drawers, but I had never heard of one being used. Likely the last thing a manager would think of during a robbery was to use his gun.

The start of January is the time when the locals start growing their beards for the Sourdough Rendezvous, so Marv asked Mr. Boyce if it would be okay for the five men on the staff to grow beards. However, he was told, "No bloody way!" Later in the week, I was alone with Mr. Boyce and mentioned that I, like nearly all the other men in town, planned on growing a beard. To which he said, "Okay." I never mentioned this to the other fellows, who after a day or so noticed my heavy beard starting to show, and were all waiting for the axe to fall. They could not understand why I was not given hell. Consequently, after a week, they, one by one, started to let their beards grow, and we soon became a very scruffy looking bunch of bankers.

On Christmas Eve, the Edgewater Hotel located at the far end of the block caught fire. It was feared that the whole block could go, so we put everything we could in the vault including jewellery and silverware belonging to Chappie and Mattie Chapman, who were staying at the hotel at the time. A few years later, I ran into them again in Watson Lake, where Chappie was manager of Northern Metallic. The fire had knocked the power out and our planned Christmas meal in staff quarters was delayed until late Christmas Day evening. An old friend, Albert Borgford, who grew up on a farm near ours and was now living in Whitehorse with his wife Sharon, phoned to say that they had a propane cook stove, so I ended up having two Christmas meals.

Although Mr. Boyce gave Marv a very rough time, he stuck it out for two years and had the good fortune to marry Stan McGowan's lovely daughter Heather. Marv retired in the mid '90s from a senior position at the bank's Toronto head office and has been back to the Yukon for visits on at least two occasions.



Nick Stronberg outside the Bank of Montreal at Haines Junction, 1962.

Not long after I left Whitehorse, Mr. Boyce, who was not fond of minorities, was transferred to our China Town branch in Vancouver as co-manager with a Mr. Tommy Mah. I can only surmise that someone who had previously worked with Mr. Boyce was now working in the Personnel Department and considered it payback time.

The bank transferred in a young fellow from Duncan, B.C., which I knew from my time in Nanaimo was considered a rough town. Bob, at a skating party at Ear Lake, after numerous bottles of beer, proceeded to demonstrate how toughs in Duncan fought with broken beer bottles. We were soon off to the hospital where a nurse much tougher looking than Bob, and who was not amused at his condition, proceeded to scrub out his badly cut hand with what looked like a bristle brush before pouring on the antiseptic. Unfortunately, not long after, I again took Bob to the hospital, but this time with a broken nose. The bank decided to let Bob go before he got into more trouble. Unfortunately, he drank away whatever funds he had and remained in town becoming a public relations problem for us. A week or so after Bob was let go, I received my transfer notice to Port Alberni. Since I was driving out, Marv implored me to take along Bob, who was flat broke. I agreed but only on the condition that they have Bob ready to go at 8.00 a.m. and in a reasonable condition. Bob slept much of the way to Watson Lake and was ready for a penny ante poker game that evening with the Watson Lake bank staff. Bob limited himself to one beer and shared the driving for the rest of the trip and, as he remained sober, he was good company. He had a free trip home as the bank covered our accommodation and other travel expenses. I heard that in later years he was involved in a bank hold-up.

The Whitehorse branch maintained a one-day per week sub agency at Haines Junction. It was a year round operation until Mr. Boyce hit a horse one cold winter day. After this accident, we only operated during the summer months. Staffing this agency was a plum assignment. Nick Stromberg and I drove out every Wednesday to open the branch from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It was a beautiful drive and a pleasure to get out of the hectic Whitehorse office; although, our desks were usually piled with work on our return.

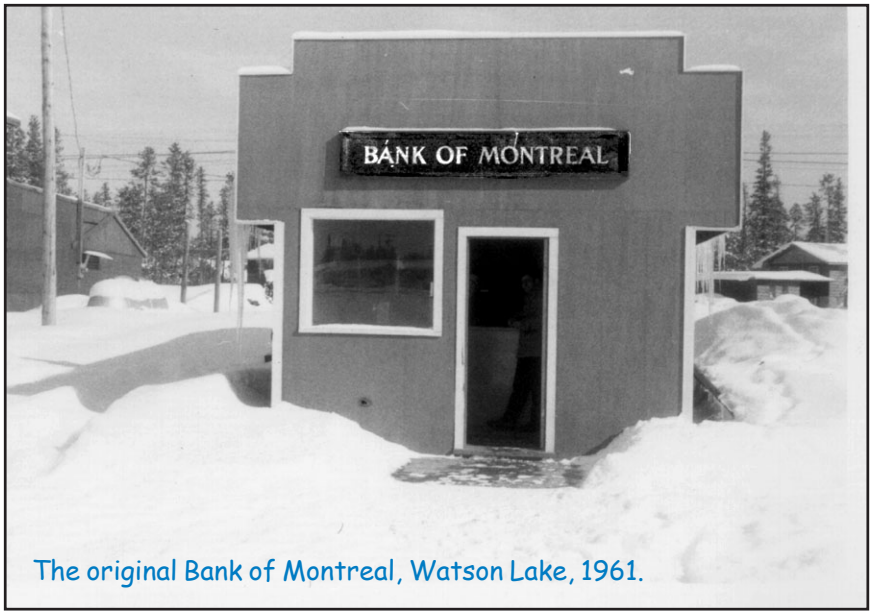
Nick, Ross, Jerry Kubiski and I decided in February to drive out to Snafu Lake for a weekend camping trip. I awoke Saturday morning to find the temperature was -25 F with a brisk wind blowing, so I decided not to go. Nevertheless, the other brave souls left as scheduled. The campers had not returned by Sunday evening, so the three of us who had remained behind piled into my car to attempt a rescue. We reached Jakes Corner to find that the Atlin road was snowed in and that there was no way that my car would be able to proceed. The owner at Jakes Corner had a four-wheel-drive power wagon, but after driving a little over half way to the lake and having a couple of close calls, we decided that we had better turn back. Another reason for returning was the thought of Mr. Boyce showing up to work Monday morning and finding all five of us missing.

We contacted the RCMP the following morning and they flew their plane out and informed us that everyone appeared okay. Later in the day, the road was graded and the campers were able to drive out.

Whitehorse was quite a party town in the early 1960s. The Bank of Commerce, teachers' residence and our branch had large recreation rooms and the three groups took turns as hosts. Consequently, one could find a party to attend almost every Saturday night during the winter months.

After one such party, in the dead of winter, Ross and an unnamed individual drove several teachers back to their residence. Driving into the yard was fine; however, backing up to turn around prior to letting the girls out proved to be a problem. As the car reversed, there was a thud and a flash of light. The girls cried out, "What was that?" Ross answered back, "A freak electrical storm." This seemed to satisfy the girls; though, they must have had second thoughts, as they found upon entering their residence they were without power. Power and heat were restored the following day, but this was just another example of poor telephone pole placement.

After two enjoyable years in Port Alberni, I received a letter informing me that I had been appointed manager in Watson Lake. For the first time, I was not asked if I wanted to go, and given a choice, I might not have returned to the Yukon. Especially after I learned from the bank inspectors, who were doing an audit of our branch in Port Alberni at the time, that the Watson Lake office was a real mess. Apparently the ledgers had not been balanced for months and a number of large unauthorized loans were on the books.



The original Bank of Montreal, Watson Lake, 1961.

I arrived in Watson Lake in October 1965 to find that everything I was told about the branch was true. I did not let the former manager leave until he had completed the annual report covering loans and overdrafts over the manager's discretionary limit while I took over the day to day running of the branch. As soon as the branch opened at 10:00 a.m., friends of the previous manager dropped in to let him know that the bar was open. After a day of trying to work on his report, he packed up his papers and typewriter and managed to find a quiet spot at the nursing station, where he hid out and worked for a week until the report was finished. After several days, I discovered that my second officer was spending his morning and afternoon coffee break at the beer parlour. Our office was

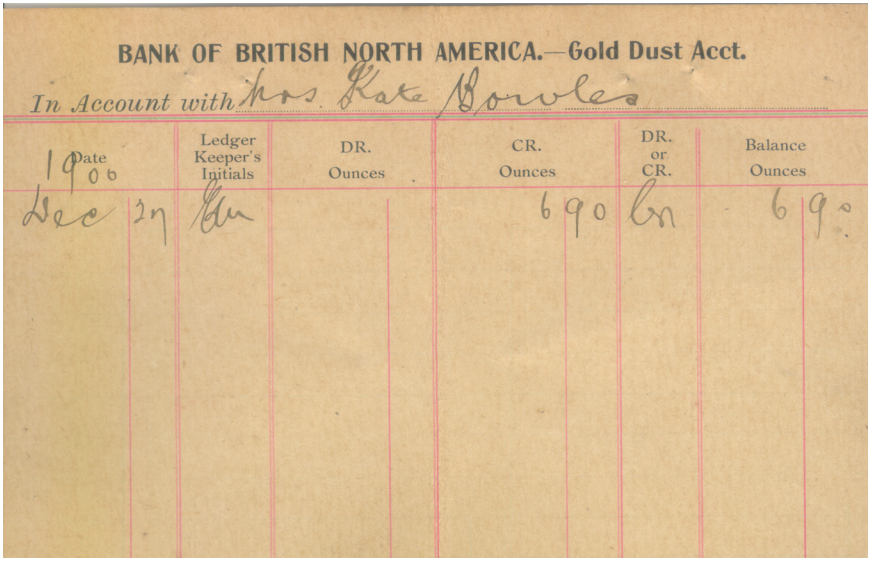
RICHARD SUGGESTED WHERE THE CUSTOMER MIGHT PUT HIS GUILDERS...

located in the Belvedere Hotel where the bar and beer parlour were very convenient. My second officer was transferred out within a month and liquor was never a problem after that.

The winter before I arrived in Watson Lake the community hall burned down and the community club had arranged for a bank loan to help rebuild. The loan was approved shortly after I arrived; however, at the time the maximum rate of interest that the federal government would allow banks to charge was 6%. The banks had devised a rather sneaky way of getting around this regulation; they would increase the size of the loan by 20 to 25 %, and place the funds in a non-interest bearing account, which would be used as the final payment on the loan. The customer of course had no access to these funds and it effectively raised the true rate of interest by approximately 2 %. I was not looking forward to a community meeting, which was to be held in the local theatre where a large attendance was expected. After I had explained the conditions of the loan, I expected cries of outrage and was astonished to be roundly praised for making the loan available. It was a nice welcome to the community.

Not long after my arrival a former Yukon banker, Richard Unruh, arrived in Watson Lake and joined the staff at the liquor store. He told me that he had left the bank after a problem with a customer. Apparently the customer wanted to cash in some Dutch guilders and as Richard was working at a small Richmond, B.C. branch, he suggested the customer take them to the Vancouver main office. The customer became very irate so Richard suggested where the customer might put his guilders, effectively ending his banking career.

Richard and Hans Maichen were instrumental in developing the Watson Lake ski hill, although Richard left for Faro before the hill was fully developed. One incident involving Richard that I found amusing happened one hot summer day when he and Eddy Johansen, a co-worker at the liquor store, decided part way through their lunch break that a nice cold beer would be welcome. They did not want to be seen drinking



BANK OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA.—Gold Dust Acct.

In Account with Mrs. Kate Bowles

Date 1906	Ledger Keeper's Initials	DR. Ounces	CR. Ounces	DR. or CR.	Balance Ounces
Dec 29	Gn		690	Cr	690

in town, so they drove to Lower Post, B.C. even though they knew that they would not be back when the store reopened at oone o'clock. They knew that their boss would be able to open the store, and by the time they got back, they would have thought up a plausible excuse for being late. Imagine their surprise when they walked into the beer parlour only to find their boss there ahead of them! They did an abrupt turn around and raced back to town. Richard spent many years in Faro and a number of us in Watson Lake lost a good friend and an old fishing buddy when he passed away shortly after retiring.

Watson Lake was a great sports community in the days before TV, with hockey, curling, broomball, badminton, softball and basketball all going strong, so there was little time to be bored if one enjoyed sports. I was overdue for a transfer when I got a visit from the district manager, who informed me that the bank was thinking of closing out either their Watson Lake or Dawson City branch. If they picked Watson Lake, they wanted me to stay and try to have our customers transfer their accounts to our Whitehorse branch. I told him that he had better get someone else to close the branch as I was not about to advise my customers that they should deal with a branch 280 miles away. As it turned out they closed the Dawson City branch, and it was not until the mid '70s that the Watson Lake branch was closed. Our bank seemed to have trouble staffing many of their small northern branches. In many cases they sent single young men, who were not interested in sports or the outdoors and seemed ill suited for life outside the city. In a lot of cases they became alcoholics. Their branches and eventually their careers suffered as a result. Now many of the smaller branches are totally staffed by women, many who have grown up in or have family ties to the community, and this in turn has pretty well eliminated the staffing problems.

After three years of hard work, the branch was in good shape, albeit with the help of the other bank in town, which for some strange reason had taken over two of my largest and most troublesome loans. Several months after taking the loans over, the bank called them, forcing the two companies into bankruptcy.

In August 1968, I was transferred and, having had no holidays in over three years, I calculated that I had almost three months coming, so I wrote to our district office requesting confirmation. They replied that their records did not go back that far, so had no choice but to give their approval. I guess I should have asked for four months. Shortly after, a Canada wide circular was issued to the branches stating that annual holidays must be taken by the following April or forfeited.

My next and final branch was Marine Building in Vancouver, B.C. with the position of credit officer, a job I did not enjoy. After slightly less than a year, I left the bank in 1969 to try my hand at some outdoor labour, log scaling to be exact, much to the amazement of my friends, and co-workers and the dismay of my parents.

I spent 14 years with the bank working at nine different branches during which time I had the good luck, some may say misfortune, to be posted to all three Yukon branches, two of which no longer exist. I have had, looking back, no regrets about joining the bank as it always treated me fairly. I have also had no regrets about leaving to try my hand at other occupations. I found the bank managers and staff to be very good people to work with.

Not long after I left the bank, I ended up back in Watson Lake but that's another story. ❒

John Skelton has lived in the Yukon for 37 years and makes his home in Watson Lake.

Don't drink and fly!

By Les McLaughlin

Winter in the Mountains Basketball on the Coast

As I stuffed my black and gold basketball uniform into the card board suitcase, I had a sense of foreboding. With good reason. Two reasons really. First, we were heading to Alaska for a weekend series of basketball games against those dreaded long, tall American teenagers who lived and died for a game I thought belonged to them. Second, we were travelling on the most unlikely railroad ever built.

If I had known then that a Canadian from the Ottawa Valley invented basketball and another Canadian, also from the valley, built the White Pass and Yukon Route railroad, I may have been less apprehensive. However, like other kids of the 50s, I thought the train and the game were American.

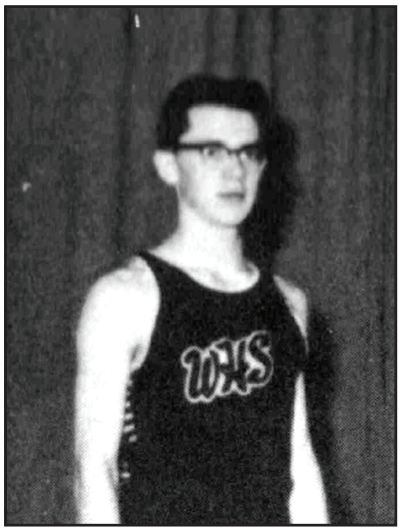
Friday, February 6th, 1955 was a typical Whitehorse winter morning. Clear, crisp, dark and minus 42 Fahrenheit. The train station looked like a Yukon train station should. A long spruce log building heated by a pot bellied wood stove. Outside, the locomotive heaved a heavy haze of black smoke into the dry cold air.

When I pushed open the station door, I saw our basketball coach standing beside the stove rubbing his still gloved hands over the cast iron top.

"Close the door quick, Leslie," he muttered.

Wally Malott could easily be mistaken for one of the players. Like us, he was short, young and afraid that if the train didn't get trapped in the mountains of snow in the White Pass, we'd be eaten alive by the long, tall American kids on the basketball courts of Skagway.

"Winter on the White Pass is not a time or place for passengers," said the gruff looking engineer as he stepped inside the station clapping his heavy wool and leather mitts together.



Les McLaughlin, high school yearbook photo.

He looked like he had been around long enough to know. The narrow gauge line had been built back in 1900 to deliver freight to the Klondike gold fields. The White Pass Railroad was the improbable vision of Michael J. Heney. Heney had laid a lot of steel since the summer of 1879 when, at 17, he ran away from home in the Ottawa Valley near Stonecliffe and headed for Lake Superior and the construction camps of the CPR where he signed on as a mule skinner and grader. In those north of Superior days he could never have imagined a railway grade like the White Pass. Straight up mostly in a country better suited to mountain goats than mules.

In 1898, when the great Klondike gold rush was at its peak, Heney was in the frightful Alaskan port called Skagway. The wild frontier town lay at the foot of the imposing White Pass. Tens of thousands of poor misguided gold seekers milled about waiting their turn to tackle the White or Chilkoot Passes by foot, eager to get to Dawson City where a fortune in gold supposedly lay on the ground ready to be picked up like chicken eggs in a henhouse.

Nothing could be further from the truth, but the would-be prospectors in Skagway didn't know and Heney didn't care. He had a plan that would make their futile trip a little more pleasant than climbing the snow-filled, rock strewn, mule killing White Pass. Heney, the railroad builder was in Skagway to convince a group of wealthy British investors that not only could he build a railroad through this moon scape of solid mountain rock and snow, but that the scheme would be a money maker.

He was right on both counts and in the summer of 1900, the White Pass and Yukon Route train chugged into Whitehorse on the first of what would be untold trips over the 110 mile long narrow gauge railway between Whitehorse and Skagway.

In just two years of construction, Heney and thousands of workers built this little railroad that travelled through some of the most inhospitable, yet beautiful land on earth. By 1900, multinational mining companies who were digging the gold ground with massive machinery controlled the Klondike gold fields. All that equipment was delivered on board the little railroad.

The White Pass company tolerated passengers on the train especially during the summer tourist season, but year round, it was a no nonsense, hard driving freight operation that delivered heavy goods first to Whitehorse, then by river boat or winter road to the Klondike.

"Train leaves in five minutes, " said the engineer. "Hope you kids enjoy the ride."

It sounded like us seven high school basketball players might not enjoy the ride.

"Nice to have passengers in the winter" he said. "Don't happen often."

We knew that. Summer was passenger season, not winter.

"Big blizzard on the summit last night when we were coming through to Whitehorse. The front end rotary snowplow could hardly push the stuff off the track."

Mr. Malott grabbed his gear bag and waved at us seven short, stalwart Whitehorse High School students to follow him into what passed for a passenger car. It was the caboose where the four men operating the train ate their lunch and kept warm near a pot bellied wood stove.

The train lurched forward, its steel wheels squealing and grinding in painful contact with the narrow gauge track. Steel grinding against steel at forty some below has a way of saying it is cold.

Inside the caboose, we settled into ancient hard backed wooden kitchen chairs, the kind that today would bring a fortune on the antiques road show. In 1956, they were old hard backed wooden chairs that slipped and slid over the uncovered wooden floor of the caboose.

"Hope you kids brought a lunch," said one of the trainmen.

"They were told to, said Mr. Malott. "I know I did."

Two steam engines pushing the rotary plough through the White Pass. The rotary plough has just been rebuilt and the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway put on a demonstration of it this spring at Bennett. [US Army photo, 1942]

"Gonna be late, " the trainman added," won't be in Skagway 'til midnight. Too much snow on the summit to make any time."

Eighty miles out of Whitehorse, at the highest point on the 110-mile line, the land is treeless.

The snows that are older that history glow brilliant white but are dotted here and there by massive outcroppings of deep brown and pale black rock.

So far, the ride had been uneventful. We watched as the boreal forest gave way to high mountain snow-covered tundra. High in the Yukon/BC land where the mountains are nameless the slow-moving train ground to a stop.

"This is Lake Bennett stopping station but there's no one around. No one stays here in the winter." said our by now very friendly caboose riding trainman.

"You kids get off and walk around for a while, but bundle up. It's minus 63 here."

We did. It was. A searing cold with a strange warmth pierced our parkas. We knew about Lake Bennett where Klondike gold seekers camped in tents during that dreadful winter of 1897-98 before the railroad was built, waiting for spring breakup and a chance to ride the frigid ice choked waterways down to Dawson.

The scene was surreal. Noon. The land and sky so bright as to blind you, yet the sun still hidden behind the craggy White Pass mountains. So quiet you could hear a gray jay fly. But there were no gray jays. They all knew better than to be here, now. We stood awestruck by a land only 80 miles from our comfortable hometown of Whitehorse, yet a land so unknown to us as to be on some distant planet.

"Hasn't snowed since we came through yesterday' said the trainman. "Looks like the track will be open all the way down the hill to Skagway. Might get there on time after all."

It is 25 miles from the highest point of land to sea level at Skagway. Twenty-five winding miles down and around the White Pass Mountains. We hopped back into the caboose and the train lurched out of Bennett Station. Another surreal scene. A sheer rock mountain face on the left side and a sheer drop of 2000 feet on the right.

"You kids stay on the left-hand side of the train," said the trainman, "otherwise we'll tip over and tumble down that side hill."

Mr. Malott said that was impossible. But just in case, during the ride around and down the face of the White Pass mountains, he, seven basketball players and the trainman sat on wooden chairs on the left-hand side of the caboose, clinging to the window railing lest the chairs shift to the right.

My clearest memory of that trip down the side of the White Pass is a slow moving, black rock face passing by our window to the left with an occasional glimpse to the right and the white gorges from hell below. Men and mules actually climbed this Pass in the dead of winter. Such

was the desperation that drove perhaps forty thousand souls to scrabble and muck like a slave for the yellow metal called gold.

The big steel wheels ground to a halt on Broadway, Skagway's main street, the same place where in 1898, hell on earth flourished. The gold rush brought gold seekers all right. With them came hustlers and mugsters and other flotsam and jetsam from the lawless American wild west.

Soapy Smith was the lead gangster and most notorious of a bad lot. Skagway was a place to get out of as fast as you could back in 1898. Soapy stayed and was gunned down on the wharf by a city official in a civic revolt against the madness and mayhem of crime out of control. We Whitehorse kids knew all about that. In our Yukon isolation, we thought things could not have changed much.

Yet here in 1956, at the log train station on Broadway, the Star Spangled Banner flew along side the Red Ensign. An American High School band in uniform played the Maple Leaf Forever. The long tall American high school basketball players looked down on us from withering heights and smiled a smile you could see a mile, their parents with their 1955 Chevys idling beside the station hugged and kissed us everyone.

One parent asked why we didn't have a coach. Mr. Malott smiled a gracious smile and said the coach was afraid to ride the White Pass rails in winter so we came without him.

In a brand-new school with a spanking new hardwood floor, we played the all American game against all American boys in front of an all American audience of pompon carrying cheerleaders, the high school band, and just about the entire town of five hundred hardy Skagway souls, each with their Chevy idling in front of the school. The game score was incidental and long forgotten. What is certain is that we did not win.

The closing banquet was filled with a round of rousing speeches, of gift presentations, and an announcement by the Skagway high school Principal. He said the head cheerleader would choose the Canadian team's most valuable player and, with the playing of Elvis Presley's latest hit Mystery Train, she and he would have the first dance.

The prettiest girl I had ever seen, an honest to God American beauty, chose Mr. Malott.

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North to the Yukon

By Diana D'Amico

I will never forget the expression on my children's faces when I gathered them together in the kitchen. I had just told them we were leaving for the Yukon in August. I had to remind them that this was my dream come true, they knew it was coming, and the time was near. They had been raised with stories I had been telling them from the time they were knee high to a cricket. I had lived here in Whitehorse in the '50s with my family. My dad was in the army and had been posted here for three years. I fell in love with this land at a very tender age and knew I would be back.

I was so excited.

I had been a single mom; sometimes working two jobs to make ends meet. My new husband was also standing there quite speechless. I could hardly contain myself. At last it was all coming together; my dream was becoming reality. Looking at all four faces, I saw the shock and fear... it was all coming apart. My never- ending bedtime story was fast becoming their nightmare. They would be leaving the only place they had ever known, this sleepy little town on Lake Ontario. My spirits were not dampened; my dream was finally a reality, and come hell or high water, we were going north.

My daughter and I left with a friend in an old but reliable green van with our dogs-Ayla, a blind Siberian husky and Maxwell, a mixture of I don't know what. We had a bed in the back and a set of dresser drawers and of course, shag carpet for the critters to lie on. The boys were to finish off the Jeep and join us within a few weeks. They considered that somewhat of a temporary reprieve.

My daughter was 14 at the time and besides not talking to me, she spent the whole way crying. I thought she would never run out of tears, even when she fell asleep she would be whimpering. I felt great pangs of guilt but I knew in my heart of hearts that she too, would learn to love and appreciate the North as much as I did. The love of the North had encapsulated me for over 30 years.

We decided it was best if my friend drove at night and I drove during the day because I was night blind. We slept on opposite shifts. We woke each other up a lot because there was so much that we didn't want the other to miss. We were somewhat sleep deprived upon our arrival.

Just on the outskirts of Whitehorse, there was a sign for the Quanlin Mall with 14 stores to serve you. Thinking that this would make my girl happy, I woke her up and she stared at the sign and cried.

We pulled into Robert Service Park and that night we witnessed the most beautiful, yet at the same time frightening, array of northern lights.

The sky appeared to open up with every color in the spectrum, and the lights were thick, boiling and churning. I remember thinking that if this was the end of the world, how truly blessed we were to see it like this. It was really quite something to see the three of us standing there, holding on to each other. Of course my thoughts were that this was a welcome home sign for me, a good omen so to speak.

That was August 18th, 1989. Never since have I seen the lights looking that majestic. I remember telling my daughter that night, I truly believed they were dancing for us as and we were meant to be here. Amy slept like an angel that night and was a very different young lady the next day.

We moved out to the Hot Springs within a few days and met some wonderful people. They invited us to their home for hot showers and home cooked meals. The old owner took a shine to us and let Amy ride his horses. Gee, this wasn't going to be so bad after all. Horses and free swims and the odd job doing dishes and making some money to boot. Yup, the smiles far outnumbered the tears these days.

It was six weeks before the rest of the crew got there. When they finally did show, we had met yet another friendly Yukoner and after a bit of chit chat he offered us a school bus that had been altered into a wonderful home on wheels.

I had so much to be thankful for and I truly was. I was finally home. Now we just needed work and a house to rent. Time went on and the kids were taking the school bus from the Hot Springs. I got myself a job at one of the banks in town, I knew I wouldn't have a problem finding work.

September came and went and we were into October and really feeling the cold. We had come by a little TV and we had to scrape the ice off it at frequent intervals and a few times the kids hair was freezing to the sides of the bus. No house to be found until finally one came up in Riverdale. We moved into it on the 15th of November and I do have to add that there were some record low temperatures that fall.

My oldest son David headed back to Ontario to go to Lake Head University. This was not his cup of tea, he told me that in no uncertain terms. The other two were starting to accept the fact that they had better like it because there was no other choice. Not until they were of age to do something about it. I was in the Yukon but I didn't travel all the way here to live in some fancy house. It was great for the time being but I really had a yearning to be out in the bush. We had a year's lease on the house but, come fall, I was going to start to look for a cabin.

I found the poorest excuse of a building in the bush and when my husband and I went to see it, I can still see the look on his face when I turned to him and exclaimed, "It's perfect."

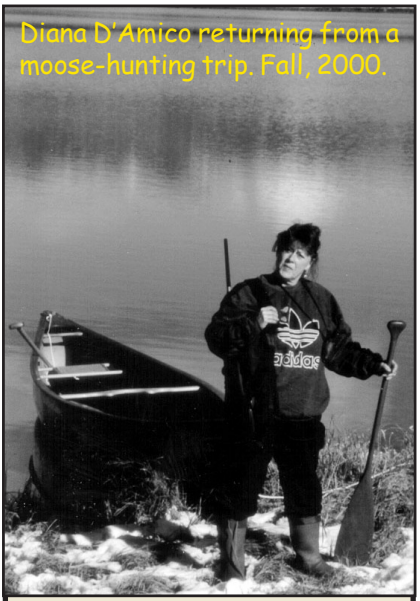
I told him to look beyond the broken windows, the truckloads of junk in the yard, the old barrel stove. Yup, it had potential all right and I was full of TLC. I found out who owned this cabin and asked what he wanted for rent. He had that same look that was on my husband's face. It was going to cost us $200 a month, the only contract being a handshake and, of course, the money up front.

I was elated now to go home and once again share the exciting news with the kids about my dream, part two. I chose the kitchen again. After all, it worked the first time, the only difference here was they were irate and even considered having me committed once they found out there was no running water, no electricity and the bathroom was outside. I went on to say that Morgan was going to fix the broken windows and they were going to take all the junk to the dump. We moved in after many hours of scouring, doing windows and replacing the rotten stovepipe.

Little by little it took on the look of the cozy little home that I knew it would be. I felt truly blessed to have such a wonderful, warm, cabin. I just had to get used to which way was open for the draft on that wood stove and how to regulate the heat. That would come in time and so would a lot of other handy things to know.

I have always believed that if you want something bad enough, worked towards it, and kept focused, it would come your way. I was raised that way and raised my kids that way, and I believe things happen for a reason, fortunate or unfortunate. When I used to think about returning to the North, I always believed I would get myself a horse. I would name it "Northern Essence." That didn't happen for a few years but I did receive a beautiful Great Pyrenees dog that was passed on to me by a friend who had rescued her from the pound. We took to each other right away, and I brought Essie home to the cabin where she fast became my bush Angel.

Julie passed her registration papers on to me a few months later.



Diana D'Amico returning from a moose-hunting trip. Fall, 2000.

Some of our readers might recall hearing about the author of "North to the Yukon." During a bitterly cold December in 1983, Deedee (Diana) was a single mother living in Cobourg, Ontario. She couldn't find affordable housing for herself and three children so she pitched a tent in front of the town hall and moved in.

The authorities pleaded with her to get out of the cold but for five days she refused to budge. She was also fighting for all the other moms forced to rent unsafe and expensive homes.

The "tent lady" made news headlines all across Canada. A sympathetic businessman rented her a house at a reasonable rent and the citizens of Cobourg went into action. With Deedee, they formed a task force, found some land, and built the first of what would become 256 townhouse units for low income families. Deedee stayed with the project until the last home was complete. She has lived in the Yukon for the past 12 years.

Lo and behold, there in big black letters was her registered name, "Northern Essence." The hair stood up on my arms and I knew that she did in fact belong to me.

I know what you are thinking. She wasn't a horse but she was a huge dog 29 inches at the shoulder and 130 lb. and proved over and over she was worth her weight in gold. I had lots of cats at that time and she took over protecting us all beginning the first day of her arrival. I was never afraid to go anywhere in the woods with her, day or night.

She always worked the midnight shift. She would come straight to the bottom of the stairs when I came out and would come to the outhouse with me and wait to walk me back. Yes, she was my gentle giant unless there was something or someone she thought might pose a threat. There were times we were out together and she would start to bark and run off. After a few times I realized whatever was out there, she was going to it and I was to go back the way I came and she would join me shortly. A few times she would come home bleeding and I knew that she had gotten into a fight, with what I didn't know because she never did bring it back my way. I would fix her up and give her a special treat, just to let her know that my love for her was also unconditional.

After a couple of years, I was on my own again. My husband went back to Ontario and the kids grew up. Eventually there was only Essie, the cats, and me. My son and daughter ended up leaving the cabin life and for life with running water and hydro in town. They eventually met their mates, married and are still here; imagine that!

I sure enjoyed those years out there. I ended up buying that little

The beloved cabin on Hot Springs Road near Whitehorse.

cabin and a few friends along the way helped me build an extra large bedroom, a porch and heck I even was taking showers there by filling up one of those shower bags. I bought myself a little baby pool to catch the water and I used the water for my garden.

Anybody that came to visit was welcome and they always complimented me on how cozy it was and how warm it felt. That always made me feel so good. It wasn't always easy for me to remain here; often I had to overcome one hurdle after another. I had many trials and tribulations. The kids were concerned about me being out there on my own and would really have preferred that I move to town. Needless to say, that always went over like a lead balloon. I wasn't going anywhere near town except to work and get food. I was not going to be anywhere but in the little cabin that I loved from the first day I saw it.

Over the years I have written about a lot of my experiences in the form of short stories, some hair raising, some quite comical but all true. Unfortunately I lost everything in a fire that destroyed my cabin. The journals and the folders are gone but the memories are forever with me.

It will be 12 years on August 18th since I came to the Yukon and my family from Ontario has just started to come for visits. My brother who hated the Yukon and made bets with everyone back home that I wouldn't last a year, came for a visit in July of '99. He took home the best and the most frightening story of his life. Have I told you that one yet?

Two friends of the editor, Floyd Johnson and Dave Acker, relaxing in front of Dave's shack at Carmacks. (SH photo)

My Dawson Memories:

The Seasons of Childhood in the 1920s and 30s

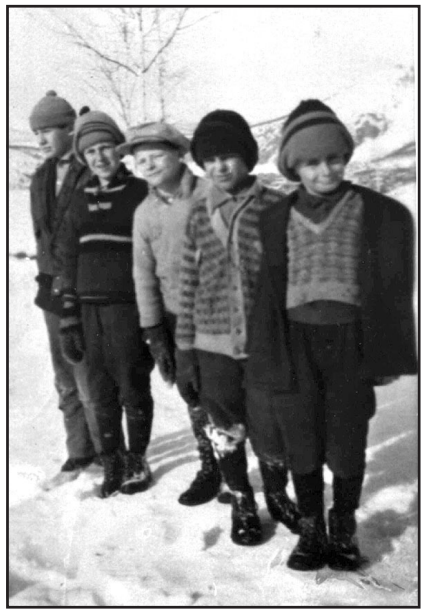
By John Gould

I went to school in Dawson from 1925 to 1933. The winters were spent in Dawson, the summers we were out at our mine on Nugget Hill on Hunker Creek. The only time we were in Dawson during the summer was on the 17th of August, for the Discovery Day celebrations. If it rained the first part of August we wouldn't be in town as Dad had to work. Dad owned a 1914 Elgin car, which was kind of cranky and wouldn't always work, in that case we went to town by horse and buggy.

We lived in a small log cabin on Harper Street; the cabin is still there, between 7th and 8th avenues. There were two bed rooms, one upstairs in the dormer and one down for our parents and little sister. We lived there until 1930 then moved to a BIG house on the corner of Harper and 5th where the Aurora Inn is now. In this house there were four bedrooms upstairs.In these two houses there was electricity but the water was delivered and poured into a large 50 gallon drum in the kitchen. There was an outhouse at the back of the house.

When we moved into the big house, that was when we got skates. There was a big pile of them in the attic, so each of us managed to get a pair that fit. Mine were the long racing type skates.

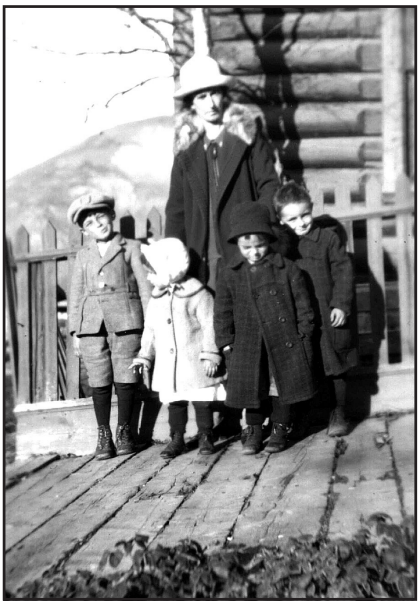
In those days there was very little automotive traffic; I don't believe there were half a dozen cars operating during the winter months. Only the school bus from Bear Creek, Government, and the dredging company would have vehicles operating. The grocery stores made the winter deliveries with a horse and sleigh. In the evening or on



A group of Dawson boys back from a hike to Sunnydale, where we had gone with Reverend Flemming, the pastor of St. Andrew's Church, in about 1931. Left to right,-John McCuish; John Gould; Charlie Mills, Bob Gould, Allen Gould.

weekends we would take our sleds or toboggans and coast on the street in front of the house or any other street We skated in the Dawson Amateur Athletic Association (D.A.A.A) rink or, if it was busy with a hockey game, some of us, Ronald McCuish, Pierre Berton and brother Bob, and others, would clean off a dredge pond out of town, where the new ball diamond is. There was also a small pond (where the Westmark Hotel is now on 5th Avenue) that we could skate on. We often built a big bonfire and once in a while we roasted marshmallows or wieners. It was great fun.

One of my brothers and I used go up on the hillside and snare rabbits, which we sold to the F.&F. Cafe, where the Westminster beer parlour is now. We got two bits (25 cents) for each rabbit.



The Gould family in front of the Red Log Cabin on Harper Street between 7th and 8th avenues. We see Mrs. Gould, John. Bob. Allan and Lenore about 1928-29. We lived here from 1924 to 1930.

Occasionally we would go across the Klondike and hike up the hill, where there was a good trail. This was where an old timer named Charlie Farquarson lived. He always had hot chocolate and cookies for any visiting youngsters. He only came into town once a week; some times he would take his big telescope and have a look at the movie bill board on the Family Theatre at the D3A, and see what was playing. If he thought he would like the show he went to town.

We also visited a man who lived at the top of the A.C. Trail (Mary McLeod Road now), Earnest Kemp. He was a taxidermist and there were small birds and small animals in his cabin that he had mounted. Rev Fleming, of St Andrews Presbyterian Church, would take a bunch of us on a hike over the river to Sunny Dale to visit the few old timers that lived over there.

At Christmas time my brother Bob and I would take our toboggan down to Winaut's store. We would deliver Christmas parcels for him. For this we each got a dollar.

When Eaton's fall catalogue arrived, we perused the two pages of toys picking out what we would like for Christmas, and hoped that they would arrive in in time. If it was a cold winter and the rivers froze over early enough so that the overland stages could bring the mail and other supplies from the outside, then maybe we would be lucky.

When spring came there were always lots of ponds around town, many of the streets had deep ditches along side the sidewalks. Also the slough behind St. Andrews Church was full of water. We built rafts and would float from 5th Avenue To Front Street next to St. Paul's Church and then back again. This was the time of the year that all the ponds would have frogs in them; you could hear them croaking all over town.

When the ice went out of the river the fire whistle would blow. If we were in school, out we went and down to the river. The teacher didn't stop

John, Bob and Allan Gould about 1925 in front of the barn on Nugget Hill where Mr. Gould mined.

us; they also went to watch the ice go. Every once in a while the huge blocks of ice would wreck the White Pass docks.

Later, when the first steamer came round the bend up stream and was in sight of Dawson, the boat would blow its whistle several times. Again the school emptied. Every one in town went down to welcome the first steamer. The same in the fall of the year: Everyone was down to the docks to wave good by to the last boat, and the passengers that were leaving, many for the winter and some for good.

Many of us children would go and visit the cooks on any of the steamers that came in. There was always a piece of pie. The boats brought fresh fruit that we hadn't had all winter. "Apple" Jimmy Oglow,had a fruit stand across Front Street from the docks and there was fresh fruit of all kinds, especially watermelon.

Evening entertainment at home was listening to an Edison gramophone. There was a stack of old cylinder Edison records, with all types of music: hymns, songs like "A Wee Deock and Doris" by Harry Lauder, "the Preacher and the Bear", "Old folks at Home". We also had books. I remember two English ones, *Boys Own Annual* and *Chum.*

Dawson's population wasn't that big in those days, possibly 800 plus, but there were six hotels open year round, four cafes, two butcher shops, two grocery stores, two theatres, the Orpheum on Front street and the Family theatre on Queen street in the D3A building. There were also two doctors at St. Mary's Hospital at the north end of Front Street run by the Sisters of St. Anne.

Of course at that time there were lots of people living out around the creeks at places like Bear Creek, the Arlington, at the mouth of Hunker Creek, Gold Bottom up Hunker, Paris on Dominion, Granville at the junction of Sulphur and Dominion creeks, and Grand Forks on Bonanza , as well as those who were living along the creeks. There were also a number of Road houses around the creeks: Gene Fournier's at Bear Creek, Skistad's at the Arlington, one at Gold Bottom, Joe Fournier's at the Hunker Summit, one at Paris, down Dominion Creek and at least one at Granville, to name a few.

Every one and every business plus the Government buildings were heated with wood. As a result there were thousands of cords of wood brought into town every fall. Huge rafts would come down the Yukon river and be hauled out on the beach in front of town. There also were a number of wood dealers operating in Dawson, such as Henry LePine, John Sipkus, and "Little" Dave Godin. Wood sold for 12 to 18 dollars a cord, depending on the length. In the fall of the year the buzz saws could be heard cutting wood around town. The average home owner probably needed 10 cords for heating and cooking to see them through the year. The federal building used 100 cords or more; the hotels would use at least 50 cords depending on the size of the hotel. The school also used a lot of wood in its two big boilers.

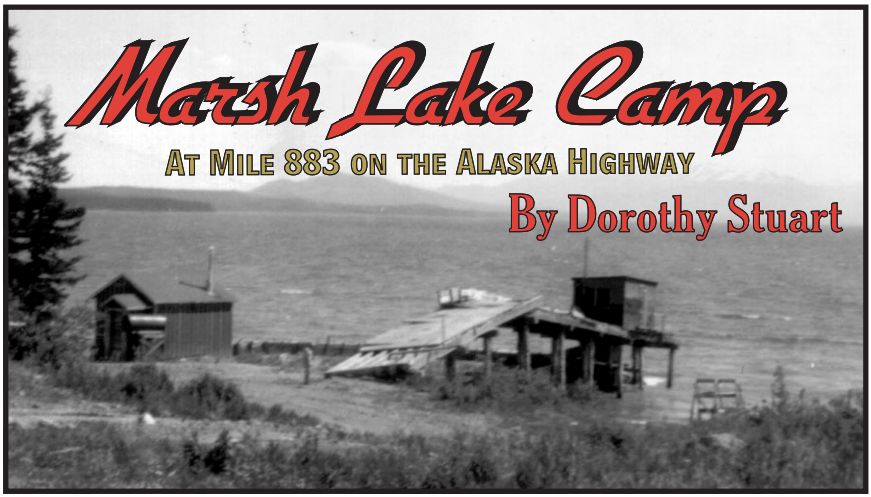
There have been tremendous changes in Dawson over the years:

better housing, great improvement to the streets, no more deep ditches full of water a good part of the summer. There have been many bad floods over the years that have done a lot of damage to many of the homes and business establishments, as well as the White Pass steam boat docks. The dyke has helped to control the river, keeping the water out of town. The area on the city side of the dyke is becoming a wonderful area with trees, lawns and flower beds. The streets are nowhere as muddy as it they once were.

I like the Dawson of today. The new recreation centre is going to be a great asset to the community. There wasn't one in Dawson when I was a youngster. There was curling, but only for adults. There was no gym in our school. During the summer there was baseball, not the slow pitch, not the softball, but baseball or hard ball as we called it. So it is great to see a rec centre and a swimming pool.

With the increase in Dawson's population, with people living across the Yukon, a considerable number of placer mines in the Sixty Mile area, and tourist visitors on the increase it is time that a bridge was built across the river. This winter the river is wide open as it has been a few times in the past number of years. ❐

A photo of Dawson in 1974. On the left is the Palace Grand Theatre, on the right the old post office and Madame Tremblay's Store. The buildings shifted on the permafrost, causing them to lean this way and that. Many of these buildings have been restored by Parks Canada since this photo was taken. [S.H. photo]



Marsh Lake Camp

At Mile 883 on the Alaska Highway

By Dorothy Stuart

Charles and I got married on May 6, 1949 at Edmonton, Alberta. My new husband had just signed on to work for the NWHS (Northwest Highway System) in the Yukon, as a heavy equipment operator. The NWHS was under the authority of the Canadian Army. As there was a shortage of housing, I had to stay behind.

We spent a few days in Calgary before Charles flew north, leaving me standing at the old airport at Edmonton. I waved a sad goodbye, feeling very alone.

I waited anxiously for his letters. Charles was sent to Marsh Lake at Mile 883 on the Alaska Highway. The camp was about 30 miles south of Whitehorse.

These camps, left behind by the Americans who used them during WWII, were very self-contained. They had their own water, heating and electric power systems. Marsh Lake was a small camp with only five families, counting Bill the bachelor.

Charles had to move in with Bill until the apartment next door, which was to be our future home, became vacant . Charles set about cleaning and painting the place. First Bill then Charles had to exterminate the mice who had taken up residence.

Then to Charles' dismay, the Army moved another family into the apartment that he had worked so hard to fix up. He wrote me the sad news. He too had been counting the days when I could join him.

I was so upset at the delay that I decided to take action. I phoned the head Army man at the N.W.H.S. headquarters in Edmonton. He was kind enough to grant me an interview. I told him my sad story, how we were just newly wedded, and how Charles had fixed up the apartment that was supposed to be for us.

I must have made a good impression. In a few days I got a phone call to get ready to fly north. The few possessions we had fitted into three trunks, which followed later by army truck up the Alaska Highway.

Mary Nolan in front of the Marsh Lake Lodge, 1949.

Charles met me at the Whitehorse Airport with an old camouflaged army pickup, left behind from the war days. Dear man that he was, had got all the groceries and had them put away in the cupboard.

The apartment consisted of a small kitchen with a wood cook stove, small front room with an oil heater, and two small bedrooms with army cots in them. We paid $10 a month rent which included oil heat, electricity and water. Wages were low in those days but better than "Outside" at Edmonton and other places.

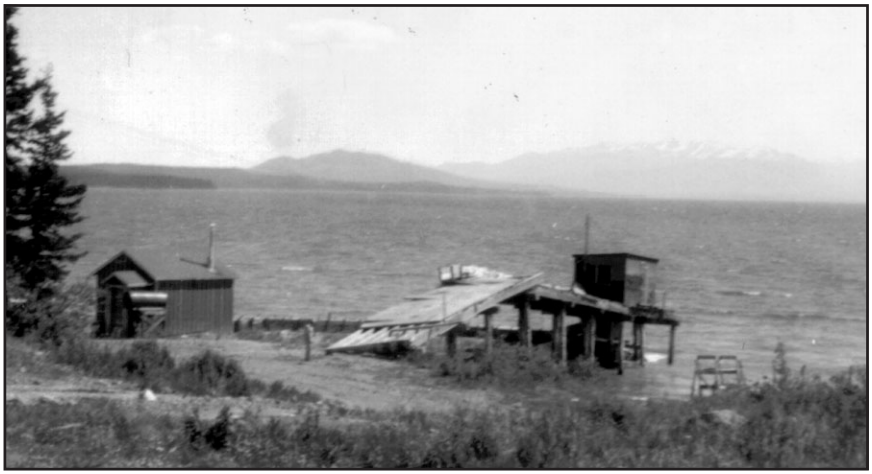
Ron and Didt Moss

We made do with old army furniture that we scrounged from around the camp. Next to our PMO lived Ron and Didt Moss. They had been on the highway when the US Army was running things. Ron was from Saskatchewan and Didt from Prince Edward Island. They were lovely people, so goodhearted. Mrs. Moss took me under her wing and they did so many kind things for us. I will always love and remember them.

In 1949, when Charles went to Mile 883, they were building the road from Mile 872 over to Atlin, B.C., a distance of about 60 miles southwest. Johnny Johns, the big game outfitter, had a motel with cafe and rooms near the corner of the Alaska Highway and the Atlin road. It was eleven miles south of the Marsh Lake Camp.

A view of the Marsh Lake Army Camp from the lodge.

Some of the equipment used by the men on the highway.



Marsh Lake Camp water pump setup.

Charles beside one of the graders he used.

No one at our camp had a vehicle of their own. Once a month we could borrow the camp pickup to go into Whitehorse for groceries and anything else we might need. We didn't get to see much of the Yukon that first year.

The men didn't get their hair cut very often. Charles thought it good idea to send to the Eaton's catalogue for a barber set. It took forever to get it because the order went from Winnipeg to Vancouver, then by boat to Skagway, Alaska, then by White Pass train to Whitehorse, then to Nolan's Marsh Lake Lodge, where we picked up our mail.

After all this, when the clippers arrived, they had a tooth broken out of one of the blades. We kept them anyway as it would take too long to send them back. They were the kind you had to work by hand. So I became a barber, like it or not. My hand didn't always work as fast as I pushed the clippers so Charles hollered a lot at times and he had a few missing patches of hair. We persevered and his hairdo's got more presentable as time went by.

Charles and I decided we would have to save enough money to get a new car. We saved every penny we could. During that first winter, the war was going on with Korea so there were a lot of American convoys going to Alaska. For some reason, the soldiers in the army trucks would push out boxes of canned goods, such as fruit, butter and stuff. When our men came along and saw these, they brought them home to camp.

Maybe the soldiers just felt sorry for us poor folks living away up north in no-man's land. At camp, some of the men had shot two young moose so we all lived quite cheap that winter.

Once a month the paymaster from army headquarters would go up and down the highway paying the men at the camps. On one occasion when Charles got paid, we borrowed one of

Charles and I with our dear little Chev car.

the old army pickups from camp and drove to Johnny Johns' cafe for supper. Halfway back to camp, flames shot up through the floor boards of the truck. Charles bailed out one side and I out the other side. We got the hood up and flames were everywhere.

Charles tried to find the fire extinguisher and I found a shovel in the back of the truck. I started shovelling snow and gravel into the engine. By the time Charles found the extinguisher, I had the fire out. We had to walk back to camp.

It took the men a few days to get the snow and gravel out of the engine. The cause of the fire was that somebody left a can of wood alcohol (used to keep the fuel lines from freezing in extremely cold weather) on top of the engine with the cap loose. So it splashed on the hot engine, causing the fire.

At last, on April 27, 1950, we got our new car, a five-passenger, light green Chevrolet. We bought it at Taylor & Drury Motors Ltd., from Bill Drury. Now we had our own wheels. We could take in a show at the old Capital Theatre in Whitehorse if we felt like it.

We also visited our good friends, Gord and Jean Carefoot. Gord was a sergeant with the army in Whitehorse. Jean was from my old home town in Alberta. Every chance he had, Gord went fishing and so we had many nice meals of fish due to his skills.

That July, Charles and I took a trip to Anchorage, Alaska. We made other trips to Alaska, but that was the one I remember the most. We also went to Atlin, B.C. and Carcross many times.

I must tell you of our first encounter with Polly the Parrot at the old Caribou Hotel in Carcross. We were having lunch at the cafe when all of a sudden this high-pitched voice started singing, "I love you truly." There in the corner sat old Polly singing away. If we hadn't heard it with our own ears, we just wouldn't have believed it.

I will always remember those years spent at Marsh Lake, the first place I went as a young bride. It's hard to put on paper all the things that took place.

After leaving Marsh Lake, we went down to Moncton, New Brunswick, Charles's home town. We came back to the Yukon and spent nine years in Whitehorse.

When we left Marsh Lake Camp in 1952, Mary and Mike Nolan, who built the lodge there, had a farewell party for us at the lodge. Mike was an ex-RCMP and Mary had been an army nurse during World War II. They met at Whitehorse, got married, then built the lodge. Mike also had a big game outfitting business and took out hunters from all over the world.

In 1992, I flew back for the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Highway. The little house we built at 309 Hoge Street was still there but everything else had changed so much. It gave me a sad feeling because I want to remember it the way it was when we lived there so long ago.

Charles passed away in 1976. I have since remarried and my husband Les also enjoys reading about the Yukon. ❐

I Married the North

By Elizabeth Reid

More Tales of the Arctic 1945-53

Fort Liard, N.W.T.

Electricity

How we loved getting fresh meat! After eating very salty, canned boiled dinner or canned sausage for three or four months anything fresh had great appeal. Even the vegetable supply was dehydrated and the best of that was cabbage flakes. We made up instant potatoes, mixed in a can of corned beef and the reconstituted cabbage—suddenly we imagined we had a real Jigg's dinner.

The windmill

Once I roasted a beaver in the oven. We ate it cold but it was a bit stringy. Another time we were given a piece of caribou from the purser off the Hudson's Bay boat, what a gift— much like pork tenderloin. It really didn't provide an overabundance of energy but it was one grand treat. Of course, there was a bountiful supply of fresh fish. In a lake about 40 miles away there were lake trout weighing 40 or 50 pounds but these giants had a very strong flavour, resembling the smelly fish oil our children took to keep them healthy. No wonder the natives used them for dog food.

nature's way of preservation.

Things started to pick up with the arrival of—you'll never guess—a wind-charger. Arriving crated up with our annual supply of rations and essentials it was a delightful surprise. The other folks, including the Independent Fur Trader, Jack Sime, and the Bay manager, John Forrest, had generators but we finally went modern with a windcharger. Now we'd see some progress. The propeller stood at the top of the 50-foot metal frame erected onto a newly poThe weather was still quite warm, leading us to protect the fresh meat from hordes of flies and assorted interested animals. Jim took the large cut of meat and hung it up near the top of the windcharger where it was safe. Flies didn't seem to fly up that high. The strong wind and sun parched a protective casing around the meat—

When we needed fresh meat, Jim climbed the ladder and deftly cut off a portion.

We were fortunate for these meals and the natives had a good reserve supply of canned food if game proved to be scarce while working on the traplines. With the addition of electricity we had contact directly with the outside world by radio - especially through the "Northern Messenger," a program beamed at the north from Edmonton, Alberta. Every Friday night we congregated at one house around the radio, receiving news from home, family and friends. Messages written to the CBC in Edmonton were read on the air by the announcer Reed Forsee. These moments kept us in touch with fellow R.C.M.P. members in the eastern Arctic and we felt much less isolated.

Of course reception depended on the Northern Lights. They danced up and down, changing their shimmering colours in the Heaven's peak in a gorgeous display that wreaked havoc on radio reception. In summer, radio reception was out of the question—darkness was needed to receive a radio signal and it was daylight nearly all night. About 12:30 midnight it got dusky then scarcely an hour later the sun poked out again and invariably it poured with rain for half an hour. This deluge made you think you saw plants actually growing in front of your eyes.

It felt great to be alive. I said to Jim, "This life makes a person feel a little humble, don't you think?" He replied, "Don't feel too humble, it's not that great."

Refrigeration

"Do you know what I really miss here, so far from everything?" I asked my neighbour Bea Forrest.

"I miss having an ice-cream soda and having my hair done."

"Dream on," said Bea. "Without a freezer or a hairdresser, you are sunk."

Resigned to my fate, I changed my clothes and prepared to help Jim saw some logs. We used either a cross-cut or a Swede saw, one of us at either end. At first I tried too hard and the saw balked and stuck but after a little scolding and a lot of praise, I learned just to let the saw do the work. We cut quite a number of logs and it was wonderful exercise. And I had the muscles to prove it.

Luckily, I didn't have to split the wood. Finally, Jim acquired a couple of prisoners. Thank goodness, now the work could be split up—no pun intended. One chap had bought a can of malt and brewed a batch of beer. It was legal to buy the malt and sugar and hops at the traders' stores. Of course he made the beer one day and drank it the next. And got loaded. He threw all the furniture and pots and cooking utensils out of his cabin and was generally obnoxious to all of his friends.

So they complained and poor chap, he got hustled off to jail. Of course, the definition of jail was Jim's office. No other facility was available. He

sobered up there and after breakfast the next day Jim stated the work order for the day. It was to build an ice house. Because of the permafrost, the ice house would be built underground. Jim, Willie and Vallee, the prisoner, dug down ten feet making a square hole. One man would stay in the hole and fill the pails which in turn were hauled up with ropes. Finally when it was empty of earth, they lowered logs down and formed four walls, lining the spaces between the logs with moss, chinks packed tightly to make them airtight.

Next. a ladder was attached to one wall, allowing a person to go down to the floor and a heavy, wooden cover finished the "ice house," keeping out the elements. In the late fall and early winter the men took cross cut saws and cut ice blocks, hauling them by the dogteam to fill the ice house. These blocks lasted through to the next summer and were they ever welcome. It was very hot during the summer, well over 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and a drink of ice water was very refreshing.

I would make Jell-O and it actually set in the summer. You can imagine how popular I was. I made the stuff for anyone who could find a package of it. We tried to make ice-cream with Jack Sime's ice-cream maker but although everyone took turns cranking the machine, after half a day we quit and gave the ingredients to the dogs.

It was a sore spot with me, this dog feeding bit. When the men went on patrol by canoe in the summer, I was left in charge of the dogs. If Jim had been assigned to the detachment alone, he could have hired someone to feed and water them but since he had brought a wife-me—I was expected to do it gladly and gloriously and freely, which meant no pay. I'd haul water from the barrels at the four corners of the dwelling house and carry it about 300 yards to a little log building where a huge cast-iron pot sat on a solid frame. And at least three trips were necessary to get enough water to mix with the dog meal. I didn't make a fire under it in the summer. If there was no water in the drums at the house, I'd have to take the yoke and two pails and get water from the fast flowing river. I still resent not getting paid, even a small tip, like half of the fifty-cent northern allowance daily rate but it was deposited directly into the bank.


Sawing ice for the ice house

We never used currency while in the north. If we wanted something extra, we'd charge it at the Bay or Sime's Trading store and pay the bill off each month by cheque. I remember (when we eventually returned to Ottawa) that I would al-

ways forget to take money with me when I went downtown. But it wasn't long before I wised up. I couldn't buy much with an empty purse.

The Autopsy

It was one day in February when Jim and his hired man Willie were away on a routine patrol that two native chaps came across the river to the Detachment. They said they had brought in a young man who had been murdered in the mountains, and they had left him in his widowed mother's tent.

His body had been placed beside a small camp stove which supplied heat for the living quarters, and the mother, very upset and saddened had sent word over to the police that she wanted to see them right away. Through the messenger I sent word that the police was away, but she replied that I should go and see her and her boy and to come quickly.

The two men took me across the river to the camp by dog team, and I was led to the mother's tent. As well as I could, I tried to tell her how sorry I was and asked if I could do anything to help her. She said she just wanted the police to see the boy and to see the boy's nails, which had a bluish hue. She thought too that he had marks on his neck, I couldn't see any marks of violence but I didn't make any comments about the condition. I did suggest, however, that she have the lad's body transferred over to the mission, out of the very warm tent.

On inquiring two days later, if the body had been moved I was informed she hadn't transferred him. I sent word over the river that if an investigation was to be held it would have to be done at the Roman Catholic Mission, where there was room. She complied finally and the remains were placed in a separate building on church property. At the time I fleetingly wondered why he was placed in a shed instead of in the actual church but later realized if he had been placed in the church that the natives would never have gone in there again.


A working prisoner

In their culture, the mystery of death was feared but respected. When one of their members died all his or her possessions were destroyed, often their sleigh dogs were shot, and their harness thrown up in the trees. Dishes and pots were either buried or burned. We were surprised to learn that if a person died and left money in the vault at

the Hudson Bay store, the surviving family wouldn't touch it and it was left there. What eventually happened to it was never discussed or revealed.

If a person was expected to die, that individual was moved out into a tent, thus saving the house from destruction. A tent was less valuable and easily replaced.

Jim came back off patrol at the end of the week and was made aware of everything that had happened. Immediately he radioed Fort Simpson and contacted the Doctor who was also the Indian agent and coroner. The good doctor sent back word that he had previous commitments but as soon as weather permitted and a plane available, he would fly into Fort Liard.

It was nearly six weeks before Doctor Truesdale finally flew in. He came directly to the Detachment to pick up Jim and go with him to perform the autopsy, and determine if there was any foul play. The Indians had heard so many stories that the lad had been murdered during a brew drinking party that Jim wanted a medical report from the Indian agent.

The Doctor asked me if I would go along as witness to the procedure. I readily agreed and we set off on our walk to the Mission. On the way Dr. Truesdale said he would like to drop into the Bay store and pick up a new skinning knife which he could use.

We continued our way through the willow trail and came out at the Roman Catholic Mission—the autopsy was to take place in a former hen house.

It should be noted that during the lapse of time when the chap's body was brought in from the mountains to the time of the actual autopsy, several Chinooks had passed through and the body had thawed and frozen several times.

Dr. Truesdale made a "T" incision on the chest and lifted the breast bone up. He checked the lungs and the lobe of the right lung was full of ice crystals and the doctor said he had died of double pneumonia. The intestines were dotted with many T.B. tubers, a condition, our medical friend informed us, that was alarmingly prevalent among a high percentage of natives. Digging around he said. "And here's the appendix", but a few seconds later he corrected himself and said "oh no, here's the appendix over here." Both Jim and I glanced sideways at. each other, secretly glad it wasn't an operation on either one of us.

Next the doctor punctured the stomach to see what his last meal consisted of and the horrendous odor that assaulted us made the doctor act quickly. The body was stitched up and carefully wrapped in a clean white sheet, preparatory for burial.

The mother later expressed relief knowing her boy had not met with fou1 play. The next day a funeral service was held in the quiet little cemetery behind the mission, attended by friends and his best friend, his mother. ❐

Editor's Note:
Please refer to Issue No. 13 for the opening story in her series.

You Know You're from the Yukon When:

- You design your Halloween costumes to fit over a snowsuit.
- Your idea of a traffic jam is ten cars waiting to pass a road crew on the highway.
- "Taking a Vacation" means going to Whitehorse for the weekend.
- You know several people who have hit a moose more than once.
- It takes three hours to go to the mall for one item, even when you're in a rush, because you have to stop and talk to everyone in town.
- Your grandparents drive at 100/km per hour through three feet of snow and raging blizzard - without flinching
- You carry jumper cables in your car and your girlfriend knows how to use them.
- Many of your friends have elaborate saunas,but no running water.
- You have more miles on your snowblower than your car.
- Your tires are only round in summertime.
- You have two windshield scrapers: a long one for the outside and a short one for the inside.
- You have 10 favorite recipes for moose meat.
- The hardware store on any Saturday is busier than the toy stores at Christmas.
- Every street person you see in Vancouver looks like a neighbour.
- You live in a house that has no front steps, yet the door is one metre above the ground.
- You've taken your kids trick-or-treating in a blizzard.
- Driving is better in the winter because the potholes get filled with snow.
- The first thing you ask when buying a new car is if the warranty covers the CV boots.
- You think your dinner host is incredibly inconsiderate if his outhouse does not have a styrofoam seat.
- You think sexy lingerie is pink Polarguard socks and a flannel nightie with only eight buttons.
- You owe more money on your snowmobile than your car.
- The local paper covers national and international headlines on a page, but requires six pages for sports.
- At least twice a year, the kitchen doubles as a meat processing plant.
- When hiking, you can't decide whether to load your shotgun with slugs to protect from bears or #7 shot to repel mosquitos.
- A single visit to any bar guarantees that you will die of lung cancer.
- You think the start of moose season is a national holiday.
- You frequently clean grease off your barbecue so the bears won't prowl on your deck so often.
- You send Christmas gifts of

your precious premium moose jerky to your uncle in Toronto, and he gives it to his dog, who rolls in it.

• You know which kinds of leaves make good toilet paper.

• The mayor greets you on the street by your first name.

• The only flower you can grow outside a greenhouse is fireweed.

• There is only one shopping mall in town.

• While canoeing on the Yukon River, you automatically say "Guten Tag" to all passing canoeists.

• You buy an umbrella while visiting Vancouver and have to read the instruction manual.

• You can't carry passengers in your back seat because it is full of survival gear tangled in a 100 foot extension cord.

• You find minus 60 degrees a mite chilly.

• You visit a beach at a Mexican resort and go into sexual shock.

• You can drive from Whitehorse to Faro with a litre of ice cream in the back seat,and it is harder when you arrive than when you left.

• You attended a formal event in your best clothes, your finest jewels and your Sorel felt pacs.

• You can play road hockey on skates.

• You know the four seasons: Almost Winter, Winter, Still Winter, and Construction.

• All of your heavy extension cords are scarred up from being dragged by a car.

• You freak out whenever you see prices for food in Vancouver grocery stores because everything is so cheap.

• You were once knocked down and run over by a dog team on Main Street.

• The drug store doesn't sell a single lady's razor between September and June.

• Your freezer breaks down but nothing thaws.

• You've never been to a concert.

• You visit a friend in Vancouver dressed in your best and he says he keeps smelling wood smoke.

• You have over 100 channels on your TV.

• You have to wait until 2 AM to light your fireworks because that's the dimmest part of the day on July 1.

• You drive to and from work in the dark.

• You have burned up at least one car trying to warm it up with a tiger torch.

• You suspect that many men are carrying a full day's worth of frozen survival rations in their beards.

• You could care less about Clinton's impeachment trial.

• You put extra chlorine in your drinking water when you see what's melting out ofthe spring snow.

• You measure distance in hours

• You use a down comforter in the summer

• You actually understand these scenarios, and forward them to all your northern friends.

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

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

CHAPTER IV
KEEPING ORDER IN CIRCLE CITY (continued)

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.

CHAPTER V
THE GOLD STRIKE ON THE KLONDIKE

THE night we arrived at Forty-Mile we heard for the first time of the richness of the gold discoveries on the Klondike, and the news hit us like a bombshell. Thompson, Kronstadt, and I were sleeping in the same cabin. The news excited the other two men even more than it did me because they were miners and knew the full significance of it. No one slept a wink that night.

Kronstadt and I decided to go up to the new diggings together, and combine our teams. The fifty-five miles of trail from Forty-Mile up to Dawson was extremely good, as the travel between the two towns had been heavy.

The Forty-Mile diggings lay about eighty-five miles up Forty-Mile Creek. The dog-freighters had begun as usual to run their freight out as soon as the creek was frozen over, and had accomplished more than half their work before the richness of the Klondike discoveries had been brought to light. Then of course the Forty-Mile diggings were deserted and the freight had to be hauled back again and taken up to the Klondike, and naturally freight rates jumped. This created a famine for the time being in the Klondike, and a great deal of time was wasted, and incidentally a lot of food was lost, as it had to be carried two hundred and forty-three miles in all.

When we arrived at Dawson, which was to become the headquarters of the Klondike diggings, it consisted of one small cabin built by Joe Ladue at the junction of the Yukon with the Klondike. This man Ladue had come down from Sixty-Mile, and was an old-timer, having lived in the country fourteen years. Up to this time he had never had any money, but

he had foresight enough to stake the only available point on the river for a town site, and was already selling house lots, which rose to fabulous prices the next summer.

To enable you to understand the conditions of the country and how Circle City and the Klondike were linked together, I will have to give a little history of the district.

The first town of any importance on the Yukon in the early days was Forty-Mile. When the Birch Creek diggings were discovered, and their accompanying town of Circle City founded, two years before I went in, half the town of Forty-Mile went down to locate claims there. As men generally worked in couples as partners, one half of the partnership stayed up at Forty-Mile to work the old claim, while the other man went down to the new diggings. In this way Circle City was really half owned by Forty-Mile.

The men who stayed up at Forty-Mile, and some Cheechakos who had come in the spring before, went up the river to the new diggings on the Klondike, which had just been discovered by George Cormack, in the latter part of the summer of '96, and staked claims. Cormack was an old-timer. He had been advised to prospect in this section by Henderson, who was prospecting on Indian River.

Cormack struck the headwaters of Bonanza Creek, and, following it down, made his discovery at the junction of the Eldorado and Bonanza. This creek had never been found before because it comes in behind an island in a swampy slough, about two and a half miles from the mouth of the Klondike River. I know a man who cut a raft of wood on this island, and never even knew of the creek's existence. Jack McQueston told me he had gone down the creek about twenty-six years before, but at that time he was looking for fur and not for gold. Cormack made his strike, as hundreds of similar discoveries in that country were made, by prospecting on the bars of the abeam and guessing what was in the bedrock. ,

Cormack's Bonanza strike was made in August, I think, of that summer of 1896. There were dozens of new discoveries being made all over the valley of the Yukon, a large majority of which never amounted to anything at all. They were called 'grub-stake diggings.' After making his strike Cormack reported the discovery to the men at Forty-Mile, but nobody thought much of it. However, since FortyMile was more or less of a dead camp at this time, and since his strike was only a short distance away and easy to get into, most of Forty-Mile went up there and staked claims on the chance. This was done on the strength of the surface gold that Cormack had discovered. The real richness lay on or near bedrock, twelve to fourteen feet down, and could not be tested out until later.

Just when bedrock was first reached I do not know, as no report had got down the river to us in Circle City. This was partly due to the difficulty in traveling on the early ice; also to the disinclination of the men to leave the wonderful find. When I reached Forty-Mile with my passenger at the end of December, 1896, none of the rest of us had heard of its

richness. When I went back to Circle City in January, 1897, I helped to carry down the first word of it.

The rush from Circle City started at once. Later, people began to arrive from the outside by way of the passes, coming on down the river as soon as it opened. This was only the forerunner of the influx that came in 1898. The latter was a tremendous rush. It was estimated that between thirty and forty thousand people came into Dawson and that vicinity alone. This rush of 1898 was the turning point in the history of the Yukon River and in the history of Alaska. Everything dates from it each way. Old-timers, referring to an event in Alaska, spoke of it as happening 'ten years before' or 'two years after' the 'Rush.'

The new Klondike claims could not be prospected or tested until the freeze-up, as the gold lay at a depth of from ten to fourteen feet, under an overlay of muck and gravel. After the ground froze the miners could burn down to the gold level without fear of being flooded out, as they would have been in summer, and this is why the men who owned these claims only discovered how rich they were after the cold weather had set in.

In comparing the richness of the Birch Creek Mines with the Klondike, it is interesting to know that a prospect at Birch Creek which had yielded twenty-five cents to the pan was considered above the average, while on the Klondike they found as much as five hundred and six hundred dollars to the pan.

While the Klondike was one of the richest strikes in the world's history, the wealth which came out of the country was greatly exaggerated. Most of the gold was eventually shipped out via the mouth of the river, and the reports were made up from the data of the pursers on the steamers. These totals, it must be remembered, also included the money originally brought into the country. Practically every one brought in from one to five hundred dollars, which usually changed hands until it was shipped out by the traders.

The center of the Klondike diggings was about sixteen miles up Bonanza Creek, where Eldorado Creek comes in. This place was called 'The Forks.' Nobody was living at Dawson at this time, but after we had spent three or four days at the diggings I was forced to go back for food, Kronstadt promising me half of the first claim he staked if I would bring him supplies. He ended by staking a discovery on Last Chance Creek, and giving me my half later.

Life at the new diggings certainly was crude. Most of the men lived in tents next to their prospect holes, and worked so hard they didn't even take time to wash.

While making a trip on foot up a branch of Eldorado Creek to see if there was anything to be staked on it, I saw a rather interesting thing. I had just got above the last fringe of timber at the head of the creek, where the valley opened out into a kind of semicircle, and, looking up to see if I could locate any more stakes ahead of me, I saw a large moose coming down at a swinging trot, and twenty or thirty feet behind him was a large wolf, loping along.

They went out of sight on the other side of the timber. I looked around to see if they had crossed the belt of timber below me, when another wolf sprang up from the woods, with the evident intention of heading the moose off. On the way home, one of my large Eskimo dogs, who had been following me, saw the tracks in the snow some distance ahead, but standing lower than I did he hadn't actually seen the wolf. He made a rush ahead until he got the fresh scent of the wolf, when he hustled back to me with his tail between his legs. This shows the fear of the Eskimo dog for the wild wolf. I had heard about wolves relaying each other in the chase of moose, which like all the deer family run in circles, but I had never before seen it with my own eyes.

Later on this same winter, I had been following the trail of a band of Indians for several days, who had been going my way on the Yukon, and finally I picked them up while going around a bend in the river. The custom of these Indians when traveling is for the squaws and old people to travel on the river with the dogs, while the able-bodied hunters prowl in the hills on either side for game.

When I caught up with them they were very much excited, showed me a dead moose just killed, and told me he had been driven onto the river by three wolves, who had killed him when he reached the rough ice. The moose was hamstrung on both sides and his throat torn out. One party of hunters arrived soon after the moose had been killed; they had struck the trail of the wolves and the moose, in the hills, and as it went toward the river they had followed it up and got there just in time to save the meat.

Other men got in, and as no others arrived he gave each one an undivided half-interest. But here Fate stepped in and played them one of her tricks: the claim proved to be blank! I believe some novelist has written a story with these facts as a foundation.

Everybody had been so excited and busy trying to get down to bedrock, to find out what he had on his claim, that there had been no communication with the lower river. As a large proportion of men working at the diggings had partners in Circle City, they were very anxious to get letters down to them, and, as I happened to be the first man to go down after the new discoveries, I went back with quite a large mail, each man howling to his partner to throw over everything and come up and be rich for life.

I made the back trip without tent and stove, having sold mine on the creeks. This is the way they used to travel in the early days, and it was called 'siwashing.' When I was about a hundred miles from Circle City, I was overtaken by Hughie Day, the first United States mail carrier with the first official mail ever carried into Circle City. Not daring to take the time to go up the creeks, he had stopped at Dawson only one night, where he met men who had told him about the richness of the country. But he had no letters to verify it, as I had them all.

He was a wonderful traveler. Being spurred on by starvation, as he had been unable to replenish his food supply at Forty-Mile, he overtook

me, and, as I had enough food to get us both in, we traveled together for some days. When within a day of Circle City he asked me to lend him a couple of my best dogs, and not to hurry that day, as he wanted to get in as far ahead of me as possible. He also asked me not to say anything about his having been with me, as he was proud of his reputation as a traveler and was rather ashamed of having loitered along with me. The upshot of it was that he got into town two or three hours ahead of me.

Here he made the great mistake of telling the news of the wonderful discoveries in the Klondike. But as he had no vouchers for it, nobody believed him, which made Hughie mad. He happened to overhear some one say that 'the cold had got Hughie at last' and this made him furious. The men were sure his brain had been affected. This was the state of affairs when I got in: pity on one side, and rage and exasperation on the other.

On my arrival I went into Harry Ash's saloon, slammed my letters down on the bar, and called for a drink of beef-tea. (Dog-drivers don't drink whiskey in the winter-time.) I well remember Harry Ash, as he disregarded my order for a drink and ran through a batch of letters until he came to one for himself.

By this time the men had heard of the arrival of another down-river dog-team, and began to come into the saloon to get the news, or maybe Hughie had mentioned me, and they came in to verify it. Harry Ash finished reading his letter, and then jumped over the bar, exclaiming, 'Boys! Hughie is right! Help yourselves to the whole shooting match. I'm off for the Klondike!'

Then began the wildest excitement, as man after man got his letter and thought he was rich for life. Harry's invitation was promptly accepted and a wild orgy began. Corks weren't even pulled, and necks were knocked off bottles. I never got my beef-tea, so I went to the cabin of a friend of mine to get something to eat, and had hardly started when the whole rabble was after me. Then for forty-eight hours there was no peace: it was questions, questions questions.

The next morning Harry Ash pulled out, and the big stampede to the Klondike had started. My batch of mail had killed Circle City in less than an hour. Cabins had been selling at a flat rate of five hundred dollars and dogs at from twenty-five to fifty dollars each. I was almost immediately offered three fine cabins for any dog I chose to designate. This either meant that a dog had gone up to fifteen hundred dollars or, what was actually the case, that cabins had dropped to about eight dollars.

Forty-eight hours afterwards, I started back to the Klondike loaded to the gunwale with food at a dollar and twenty cents a pound, and I continued freighting all winter.

Every man that started out for the new camp had to transport, in one way or another, a pretty heavy load. He had to carry several months' supply of food, knowing that it was impossible to replenish his supply until about the middle of July, when the first boats would arrive. Not only

his food had to be carried, but his mining tools as well, which consisted of a pick and shovel, gold-pan, and high rubber boots, besides camp outfit and paraphernalia for each pair of men.

What dog-teams there were went first. These men made it all right, and by sending the dogs back they could bring in more men: but the high price of dogs made this very expensive. Sometimes a man brought back two or three teams empty, to be split up on arrival at Circle City: in this way the dogteams became smaller and smaller until they got down to one dog for each man, a lay-out that is called a 'one man's dog.'

Last of all came the men without any dogs at all, pulling their own outfits. It is impossible for an ordinary man to haul more than two hundred pounds in such cold weather and average his fifteen miles a day. Two men usually went together, but each with his own sled, rigged up with a gee-pole. The two divided the camp outfit between them.

Next to packing, this is the most heartbreaking work there is. The colder the weather the harder the steel-shod sleds run, and wooden-shod sleds could not be used as they were quickly cut to pieces by the sharp ice. Some of the men relayed their stuff, and some pushed right straight through, and of course they had the advantage of the trails broken by the other teams.

Theoretically it is impossible for a man to haul his own food and live for eight months on it, but it was done, and not a single human life lost. How they got through till the eighteenth day of July God alone knows! They were all the pick of the pick, and that counted.

I made three round trips during that winter, with my freight team, hauling food. I passed these men as I was going to the diggings, met the same men on my way back, passed them again on my second trip, and I even met some of them, still on their way, when I made my last trip out in the late spring. But they all got out to the mines before the middle of May. A few days after this the river broke up.

In the spring traveling was totally different. Now it was daylight all the time and almost oppressively warm. The surface of the ice on the river had gradually become smoothed off, but as the water rose, the ice in the middle of the stream rose with it in a hump, the sides remaining frozen to the bank, and this made it look like a gigantic road with gutters on either side, down which the water rushed on top of the ice. All traveling at that time was of course done in the middle of the river. When night came we had to leave our sleds, cross these rushing gutters with the camp outfit, and camp on the banks so as to get wood for a fire. This was not so bad as it sounds because we had a fire to dry by and the nights were not excessively cold. We always looked for a shallow place to cross with our dogs, but occasionally that could not be found and both men and dogs had to swim.

Before the ice cut loose from the banks we did our traveling by day. As the water froze at night it generally allowed us to get back dry-shod in the early morning.

It was at this time, when the ice was very thin over the gutters, that Shirley became a very important factor. I used to send him across first, over the new ice that had formed overnight, and he not only tested it for the other dogs, but would kick up a great rumpus on the farther side at my command, getting my team so excited that they would pull a man across in a light sled at a run. This newly formed ice was very elastic. Often a fast-moving sled could just get across, leaving a trail of broken ice behind it. Sometimes the ice was so thin that the dogs had to be sent across with an empty sled and the driver lay down on the thin ice and wriggle his way across, flat on his face, spread-eagle fashion. This gave him much more bearing surface, and even if the ice did crack under him he was still on top of the water. We always did this where there was a current, and occasionally even on still water. A man is like a log, which, when dropped flat onto the water, hardly gets wet on the top side, but if dropped end on will go 'way down and be immediately swept away by the current.

Later on, when the shore ice cut loose from the banks and rose to the level of the water, making a dry surface to travel on, we moved by night, when it was coldest. This was ideal, except in the places where the water had cut the ice very thin from underneath. Save for a difference in color, these places could not be distinguished and were very dangerous.

It was more or less customary for freighters to carry a light pole crosswise in front of them, and keep their sheath-knives pulled around in front on their belts, so that if the loads broke through the ice they could throw themselves flat on the pole, grab the whiffle-tree, cut the tug-rope, and let the dogs drag them onto firmer ice. A man feels a fool, though, when he does this and it proves to be a false alarm. But when you feel the ice settling behind you, you take no chances.

With the exception of a change in color, the river remained this way until the final break-up. The break-up of the Yukon was even more spectacular than the freeze-up and was looked forward to by everybody with impatience, as it opened up intercourse with- the outside world and the river boats brought in new faces. The old-timers, in fact everybody who could, would come down to the Yukon with an excuse, real or imaginary, to see the breaking-up.

At first the river was white and smooth, with a little open water showing along the banks. As it was daylight all the time, somebody was always watching it, and so at some moment, one day, as the ice started to move, very, very slowly, the cry went up: ' Y—U—K—O—N—B—R—E—A—K—I—N--G— ! and it was taken up by everybody within hearing. The excitement even seemed to communicate itself to the native dogs, who joined in the din and barked and howled along the banks.

The slowly moving mass of ice gradually increased its speed until it jammed on some island or between high banks, when the whole mass crinkled up and formed a dam, against which the green rushing water would rise ten feet in as many minutes. As more ice came down it was

piled onto the dam. Presently one of the huge ice-barriers that had been formed in the fall would come rolling and plunging down the river and hurl itself on this ice-dam, crushing and grinding it to pieces. The whole mass would then float down the river and form itself into a new dam, to be again swept away. This went on along the whole course of the river, and the grinding roar that accompanied it was simply terrific.

The river then formed itself into narrow lanes of rushing water between ice-canyons, the walls of

which were ground and polished smooth by the descending ice. Traveling too soon by boat after the break-up was dangerous, as in some of the icecanyons jams had formed which were cut out from underneath, forming a bridge. If a boat got sucked under, it was smashed to pieces. Also huge blocks of ice kept dropping off the side walls, the wash from which would swamp a boat, even if the ice itself didn't strike it. A,few days after the break-up of the Yukon in Moo, I was obliged to travel a hundred miles through these ice-canyons before I could make a landing.

The ice did not last long, however, once it had begun to break up. In a short time all of it disppeared, and the brief, hot, dry summer began. In the course of the year the temperature ranged anywhere from 80° below to 80° above.

CHAPTER VI
DAWSON BEFORE THE RUSH

BY this time in Dawson, besides Joe Ladue's cabin, a large saloon had been built and other buildings had been started. Every one was living in tents, and, as most of the mines at this time of year were flooded and closed down for the summer and the population had streamed down to Dawson, there wasn't enough food to go around. We were all on starvation rations: in fact by the time of the break-up we were down to a diet of straight flour, and very little of that.

When the river rose and ran bank-full the one idea of every one was the arrival of the first up-river steamer. Of course we didn't know where these steamers had wintered, as there had been no communication with the towns below Fort Yukon. We couldn't tell whether they would be up at all or whether they had been smashed in the ice. One steamer that supposedly had wintered in a safe place at Forty-Mile had been completely wrecked by the ice; and whether the others, wherever they were, had met the same fate or not, we couldn't tell.

As the days wore on food got scarcer and scarcer. If a steamer didn't arrive soon, the whole town would have to go in boats or rafts or anything they could get hold of to Fort Yukon, where there was supposed to be plenty of food. The amount of help given that winter in sharing food that money couldn't buy was remarkable. Food was priceless, but there was no price on it. This was the 'Starvation Camp' that the people on the

'outside' never heard of. The next winter, when food went up to terrific prices, there was no such scarcity.

On the eighteenth day of July, a memorable day for us, the whistle of a steamer was heard below the bend in the river, and it was answered from all over town by yells from the men and howls from the dogs. Every one knew that the camp was saved. In less than an hour the old Bella was tied up to the bank, loaded equally with liquor and food, which were rushed ashore immediately. What few saloons there were opened up with free drinks: the ban was off, and everybody got drunk. This included the temperance men. But the crowd was good-natured, and there were no fights except among the dogs, who seemed to realize that something of importance was up and celebrated in their own way.

During the famine the dogs had fared the worst, and had lived on boiled green hides and everything that is inedible for human beings. In fact, all but the best were killed to reduce their numbers. It had been the custom in Circle City for the white men to shoot all but their very best dogs when sledding broke up, rather than let them go through summers of starvation and suffering as the Indians did. The dogs were replaced by later boats which brought fresh dogs from the mouth of the river, where there was plenty of seal and salmon during the summer.

Activity in Dawson now became very great, as more steamboats came up the river bringing more people and more food. These boats were of the old stern-wheel type, but of modern construction; the side-wheeler being unfit for this river. Some of these steamers, the old Bella among them, were able to push barges up in front of them. A barge was never towed, as short cuts were often taken across sand bars and it was apt to get stuck. A draft of four feet was about the limit for all craft that had to get across the shallow Yukon Flats.

The deck hands and pilots were Eskimos and Indians, and twenty or more pilots were used on the eighteen hundred miles of river traversed by the steamboats. An Indian or Eskimo knows his own stretch of water better than any one else, but is almost worthless when you put him on a new piece of river. Later, white pilots were used entirely, and these under all conditions were more satisfactory than the natives.

Practically all the white pilots came up from the Mississippi River. The owners of the boats also tried having Mississippi River mates as well as pilots, but these were not a success, as they didn't understand driving the Indians and Eskimos, who had to be handled quite differently from the negroes.

Crowds of small boats were pouring into Dawson from the upper river also, bringing women, supplies, horses, and mules, the forerunners of the rush of the coming summer. The town of Dawson was growing by leaps and bounds, and building was going at top speed. It was still a canvas city, but houses were being built around the tents and business went on uninterruptedly. Some of these buildings were probably the largest log structures in the world, often being three stories high and fifty feet by one hundred and fifty feet, the full size of a house-lot.

Dance-halls, saloons, and gambling-halls were running at full blast. Dawson, being in the Canadian Yukon, was under the jurisdiction of the Mounted Police, a new detachment of which had just come in, and this wonderful body of men kept very good order. There was none of the lawless element that came in later. Like Circle City this town never rested, day or night.

Our laundry work was seldom done and to get our clothes washed cost almost as much as new ones. Clothes were not especially high at this time. So it became our custom, if we were in town near the source of supply, to wear our clothes till they were dirty and then throw them away. One day a French Canadian came around with some second-hand shirts that were nice and clean and mended, and sold them to us; but soon a man discovered that he had bought his own shirt, and we made the chap own up that he had been collecting the dirty shirts that had been thrown away, washing them, mending them, and selling them back to us. In most cases I guess he earned his money.

The situation of Dawson offered more natural advantages than that of any other town site on the river. It was in the shape of a flatiron, with the nose pointing downstream, ending in high bluffs. Along the front was the Yukon; on the other side a range of hills ran back to the Klondike River, which cut across at the heel of this flatiron and flowed into the Yukon.

The Klondike was a clear, swift stream, and, as I remember it, was about a hundred yards wide at its junction with the Yukon. This cross-current coming into the big Yukon made a heavy back eddy all the way down the front of Dawson until it struck the bluff at the end. This made it very convenient for the landing of steamboats and rafts.

Bonanza Creek, on which the mines were, came into the Klondike two miles and a half above its mouth, on the opposite or left bank, which made it necessary to cross the Klondike sooner or later to get to the mines. At first this was done by ferries run by the current, or boats rowed across: later a suspension bridge was thrown over, and of course in winter the river was crossed on the ice.

The Klondike was swift and froze up later than the Yukon. The ice was smooth and black at first, but soon was covered with tufts of frost that looked like miniature frost-trees. These turned the surface of the river to a sheet of white. One morning we saw the track of a man drawing a hand sled down the middle of the river, and then a jagged black hole in the ice which had just frozen over, and no tracks leading out, telling its own story. Who this unfortunate chap was nobody knew.

My best friend, Fred Fay, had a harrowing experience here, though it turned out all right. He borrowed my team of dogs, which he had never driven before, went around the mouth of the Klondike on the thick Yukon ice, and up to the mines. Next day, coming back, he took a short cut and struck the Klondike about ten miles up, intending to follow down the left bank. He was lying on the sled with his feet toward the dogs and leaning

on his elbow, when my wolf leader, instead of following the trail along the bank, which was used at this time of year, swerved out onto the newly frozen ice in the middle of the river.

The whole thing was done in an instant, and as my partner couldn't manage my dogs, before he realized what had happened or could check them they were scurrying down the middle of the stream. Once on the smooth ice they struck a tremendous pace. Glancing back he saw the water creeping up behind him over the ice, turning it black, and knew that if he stopped or slackened his pace he would break through. Knowing my dogs were unmanageable, he didn't dare to try and turn them toward the shore.

The dogs traveled ten miles before they swerved off of their own accord to the town of Dawson. He never would drive my dogs again, and said he was so frightened all the way down that he didn't even shift his position on the sled.

This same winter Bolton, the confidential clerk of the gold commissioner, did one of the noblest acts I have ever known of. Men would often bring in the legal papers of claims so late at night that it would be impossible to record them until the next day. As they were too valuable to leave in the office, Bolton would take them home with him to his cabin rather than run any risk of the men losing their claims, which they would do if the papers were lost before the claims were properly recorded.

His cabin lay across the Klondike River in a small angle named Klondike City. We called it 'Louse Town' because an Indian Village had stood there years before. Starting home one night after dark, evidently thinking the ice was firm enough to hold him, he broke through about halfway across. Knowing something about traveling in that country, he had evidently thrown himself face downward when the ice cracked under him, so he wasn't dragged under, and thus worked his way to the other shore, breaking the ice in front of him until he got into shallow water on the other side.

Here he became exhausted, and being afraid that he would be swept away, threw the papers, along with a picture of his wife, onto the firm ice ahead of him. He was found next day with his head and shoulders out of water, frozen in solid. I think this made more impression on me than any other brave act I ever heard of in Alaska.

This summer, that of '97, I was working for the Alaska Commercial Company as head stevedore. It is rather amusing how I got this job. I was skidding some house-logs down off the steep hills at the back of the town for a friend of mine, and as it was a very rough, hard slope the task called for a good deal of loud language. In that still country my voice must have rung over the whole town site.

Joe Ladue asked who it was, and, on being told, said: ' I would like to have that man work for me. A man who can swear as loud as that ought to be able to do something.' Just then a new superintendent came along inquiring for a foreman, and I was recommended to him, my only recommendation being the strength of my lungs and my language.

As the river steamers came in, it was my job to see them unloaded as quickly as possible, regardless of expense, so that they could get started down-river for another trip. As there were no facilities for unloading, everything had to be carried to the warehouses on men's backs, and so there were two lines of men coming and going all the time, and the pace was a very fast one.

The system of keeping the men's time was unique. Men were hired on the hour and the half-hour, and tabs with their name and the hour they began work were given them. If a man became tired or wanted to stop for a meal, or if he slackened in his work, he was immediately discharged and his quitting time put on the same tab and signed. If he wanted to go to work again later, after eating or resting, a new tab was given him. Very often before the boat left a man would have three or four tabs, which he cashed in at the company's store for gold dust. This method saved ffme, as no books were kept. Wages were $~.50 an hour.

When a boat was nearly unloaded, and it wasn't practicable to let the tired men go and hire new ones, the whole crew were stimulated with free drinks from the company, to get every last ounce out of them. With a large crew we once ran off in this way about eight hundred tons in thirty hours. This was in no way 'rigger-driving.' The men came from every walk of life and all parts of the world, and were the last men in the world to be driven. Indeed they liked it, as they were free to stop work and begin again whenever they wanted to, and they were well paid.

In spite of all the food that had come in during the summer before navigation closed, the companies saw there would be a scarcity that winter. The river having dropped very low had cut off the last few boats that would have come in over the Yukon Flats. At this juncture I was ordered to go down on one of the boats to Fort Yukon, with a picked crew, and try to get up with a light load of food that had been cached there.

I picked out twenty-six men, the very best. They were chosen for their brawn, their capacity to stand hard work, and their quickness, and, strange to relate, six of them were lawyers. Captain Hanson, the superintendent of the company, went down with us. His purpose in making the trip was to get a rest.

The trip down was uneventful, except for the songs, dances, and story-telling. The Eskimo deck hands were enlisted for these dances, as there were no women on board; but, as it was beneath the dignity of a male Eskimo to impersonate a woman, the white men had to tie bandanna handkerchiefs around their heads and be the women. This was rather amusing, as the Eskimos ran from four to five feet high and one of the lawyers was six feet seven inches tall.

I took a case of whiskey down for the crew, when the work of loading should begin. But I soon noticed signs that made me examine my stock, whereupon I discovered that only two bottles were left. These I threw overboard.

Arriving at Fort Yukon, we made a record loading and starting up the river, but after about twenty miles we stuck on a sandbar, as the water had gone down still more. We tried every scheme possible, such as working the boat over with 'sheer legs'; running a cable from a point on an island back onto the capstan; turning and trying to back up with the wheel ahead to fan the channel, which tends to drag water down under the boat and lift it up. But all to no avail.

So with a worn-out crew we ran back a few miles and unloaded half the cargo on an island, where we cached it; then we tried the sandbar again with the same result, as the water had dropped still more. So there was no course left but to run back to the island, unload completely, and try to get back empty. But we stuck again, as the water was steadily falling. Then we went to Fort Yukon to hold a council of war.

Captain Hanson decided to hire Indians to take him the three hundred and eighty miles to Dawson in a birch-bark canoe. He wanted to warn the people of Dawson that no more food could get up the river that fall, and that those who didn't have enough food to last them through the winter would have to leave and go down to Fort Yukon.

Three of my crew owned claims in Dawson and had to get back. These men built a poling boat and in a few days followed Captain Hanson. The rest of the crew were promised free transportation to 'Frisco, if they would go down the river on our steamboat and catch an ocean steamer at St. Michael's.

That left two of us, another man and I, as free lances, to go up or down or stay where we were, as we liked. As my wages were fifteen dollars a day, regardless of what I was doing, until I got back to Dawson, I decided to stay down there, buy a lot of dogs, and drive back over the ice loaded with provisions as a speculation. But first I would have to go up to the island where we had cached our cargo from the steamboat, and make the cache fit for winter.

The only boat we had for this latter purpose was one of the steamer's lifeboats, built in the shape of a mud turtle and about the most unhandy kind of a craft that ever was taken upstream. It was impossible to pole this boat, so it had to be towed the whole way, and when we struck swift water it reared up in front and took most of the river along with it. It was a great test of temper and we all lost our chance of going to heaven on this trip.

We were at the end of the Yukon Flats, where the river is tremendously wide and is blocked by thousands of long narrow islands. Between

To be continued...

From the Publisher

An avid gardener since he was six years old, subscriber R. S. Craggs of West Hill, Ontario writes," I know that "the Land of the Midnight Sun" grows bumper crops of vegetables. I would like to read about them in more detail."

Aahh! The myth of the gigantic cabbage—promoted, no doubt, by photos of gardens in Dawson City or Mayo. In those central Yukon communities, the soil is good, the sun is warm and the air is calm and humid. Elsewhere in the Yukon, growing bumper crops of anything but rhubarb and potatoes is nearly impossible, but each spring Yukoners get out in the chilly winds and sow their seeds anyway.

The traditional time for outdoor planting in the Yukon is the third weekend in May. Usually the ice disappears from Marsh Lake then but this spring has been especially cold and there were still ice cubes crackling in the cold water on Victoria Day.

Where I live, smart gardeners grow their crops in raised beds made of planks, logs or square timbers so the sun can warm the sides of the planter boxes and the soil inside. Some growers use PVC hoops covered with plastic to shelter their plants from night-time frosts that can occur at any time.

Summers in Whitehorse are dry and windy so keeping the garden watered can be quite a chore, especially for folks who are not connected to the city water supply. Most cool-weather crops grow well enough outside but tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, peppers and other heat-loving plants have to be grown in a greenhouse. Mine is an 8' x 12' lean-to made of old wood-framed windows salvaged from military housing. It gets very hot inside in the daytime, even on a cloudy day, but at night the temperature can drop to freezing. I use an electric heater and a ceiling fan, both controlled by a thermostat on the wall, to keep the night-time temperature at eight degrees Celsius. Some folks heat their greenhouses with wood and during April and May they are up at all hours stoking the fire.

Last year my greenhouse produced only green tomatoes. Not a single tomato ripened on the vine. Each year I threaten to give up planting tomatoes and each year I try again. Yukon gardeners may not be too bright, but we are optimists.