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$3.95

THE YUKONER

MAGAZINE

NO. 8

- Memories of Black Mike
- The Yukon Baby
- Gold at Dease Lake
- The Log Skyscraper
- The Trail of '98
- The Goldseeker, Part 3

The print shop in fall colours.

THE YUKONER MAGAZINE

Issue No.8
June, 1998

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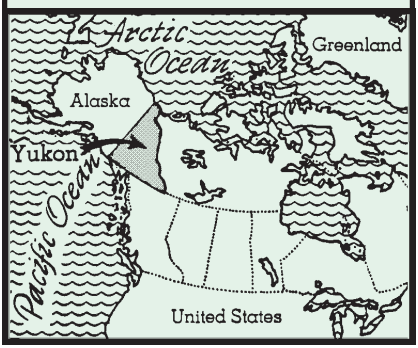
Cover photo: The headwaters of Takhini River at Kusawa Lake. Photo by Richard Harrington. Courtesy Yukon Archives, Harrington Collection.

THE YUKONER MAGAZINE

Published four times annually by:
GreenInk Publishing,
P.O. Box 5585
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 5H4.
Canadian Publications
Mail Registration
No. 08098
Postage paid at
Whitehorse, Yukon
For advertising rates,
call 1-867-668-1030.
Publisher: Dianne Green
Editor: Sam Holloway
ISSN 1206-6974
Subscriptions,
$24.00 for six issues

Back issues are available at $3.95 each, including postage, no GST.

The Yukoner is produced entirely on the premises at Army Beach, Yukon, using computer-to-plate from an IBM 486 computer running Windows 3.1, to an A.B. Dick 360CD press.



From the Editor

Well, this issue, although I haven't printed it yet, should look better. We now have a bigger, higher resolution, laser printer/platemaker. I can print four pages up instead of two up, which cuts the printing time in half. But I won't know how it will work out until I get this issue on the old press.

The person on the left, top, on the cover is our collator, Rob Alexander, also an author of some reknown. He and his wife might leave the Yukon and he is IRREPLACEABLE. So, we'll probably have to go into hock for a machine to take his place. But a machine won't find blank pages, ink blobs and general screw-ups. We're gonna miss you, Rob. But all the best in your new adventure.

I drove New Dodgie (my '84 deluxe model) up to Burlbilly Hill a while back. On the big mountain past Haines Junction, the brand new motor in it started to rattle. The oil pressure dropped to zero and I shut her down. Two o'clock in morning, there we were, my boyo and I, just below the summit of Bear Pass. We coasted and pushed all the way down the mountain to Haines Junction.

Then I had to take Old Dodgie out of retirement and tow New Dodgie home. How sweet it is to be driving my old truck again.

Bill Bett's saga of Robert Campbell didn't make this issue. That's so we could put something in about the Gold Rush of '98. But we'll have it in next time and soon we will be putting that story together in a book. Till next time...

So long for now,
Sam

The Mail Run

Dear Mr. Holloway:

Please send a subscription starting with Issue #8. I am also interested in finding a copy of Yukon Gold and a book about the Mayo-Keno area.

I first came to the Yukon in the spring of 1951. We came from Winnipeg where we were hired to work at the Bellekeno Mine by a hiring agency. Three of us, Archie Leach, Leo Lavallie and myself went by train to Edmonton. We had our medicals and X-rays done and had to wait three days before we could get a flight to Whitehorse (the airline was very busy that year).

We stayed a night at the Whitehorse Inn and flew to Mayo the next day. We had to wait until late evening before the taxi would take us to Keno City. The driver said he had to wait for the glaciers to freeze over to be able to cross them. We arrived at Keno City and were told to wait for the company truck, a Dodge 4X4, to take us up to the Bellekeno Mine.

The owners of the hotel were Jack Foley (once a prizefighter) and Fred Matthews (an ex fur trader). When the company truck came for us, I found out the manager was Glen Campbell, who was a shift boss when I worked for Central Patricia Gold Mines at Pickle Lake, Ontario, a few years earlier. We crossed Lightning Creek, there was no bridge, and got up to the mine.

I left there in the summer and coming down to the hotel, I was stopped by a man who wanted me to work at a mine called Brewis Red Lake (I think). He offered eleven hours pay for eight hours work. I said I needed some time off so didn't accept the job. There was a shortage of men for work that year. A few days later I was talked into going into the taxi business with Joe Murphy. The hotel had a taxi and license and their license was for sale.

We went to Whitehorse and bought a 1949 Chev car. Joe got a job at the Bellekeno Mine and I was to drive the taxi.

Sometime in early September, I had a fare to Whitehorse. Five fellows from Keno Hill Mines wanted to get out and the plane was booked for a few days. So I took them and about 75 miles from Mayo the car broke down. I had to return all the fares and finally found rides for them to Whitehorse. I went back to Mayo and got the garage man to tow me to his garage. We found a broken piston but the cylinder wall had only one small scratch about halfway down. It was not a serious matter but it would take me over a week to fix. I got a ride to Whitehorse, then a three-day trip to Edmonton by bus and then by train to Winnipeg.

Needless to say, after drinking Yukon water, I was to spend most of the next seven years in the Yukon. I worked at the No Cash Mine and at Calumet up to 1957. I went back one more time in 1964 but only stayed a few months. I read the stories in your magazine about Ruth and Gordon McIntyre and I remembered many of the people mentioned in those stories.

The Mail Run

Yours truly,
Robert Leftrook
New Denver, B.C.

Editor's Note:
You can get a wonderful book about the Mayo-Keno area (Gold & Galena) published by the Mayo Historical Society. Check the bookstore ad on Page 13.

Dear Dianne:
Enjoyed the stories in the Yukoner, which I borrowed from an old miner who lives in Burnaby.

My wife and I have travelled to the Yukon twice and look forward to another trip this year. We have fond memories of the Chilkoot Pass and Atlin. Please send all the back isuses and a two-year subscription.

Yours truly,
Colin Ramsay
Campbell River, B.C.

Hello Sam:
So glad to see the magazine is continuing. I have all the previous issues.

Sybil Britten
Tagish, Yukon

Keno City, 2004 (SH photo).

The Mail Run

Dear Sir:

Please send me your magazine. I was amazed when I read one at our camp in Ranger Lake. It was an old issue. All my life I've wanted to live in the Yukon. So far I haven't even been able to visit.

Thank you so much,
Marie Korpela
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

Dear Sam:

I am a past reader of the Yukon Reader. Last night when I was in the Red Rose convenience store, what do I see but a couple of copies of this magazine.

Angel Kitchen
Fort Nelson, B.C.

Dear Sam:

Keep up the good work. I lived in the Yukon from 1949 to 1963. That was north of Whitehorse. Give my love to my old friend, Edith Jerome. Your magazine is original and well done.

Sylvia (Brewster) Lefferson
Charlie Lake, B.C.

Dear Sam:

I am enclosing a story of Black Mike, as I knew him. I hope this account of that well known character will be of interest to your readers.

I headed north because of the Great Depression. I quit my job on Lower Sulphur Creek near Dawson on the day World War II was declared. I joined the Air Force as a wireless operator and was posted overseas in 1940. I was later re-mustered to pilot, returned to Canada for training, went overseas again in 1944. I flew with Coastal Command until the war ended. Back home in 1945, I finished high school and graduated from UBC with a civil engineering degree in 1951.

Later I might put together an account of my working with Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation and also, being a pilot, an account of some of my flights in the Yukon.

Yours truly,
W.J. (Bill) Swanson
Kaslo, B.C.

Our Yukon Baby

By Pete Esser

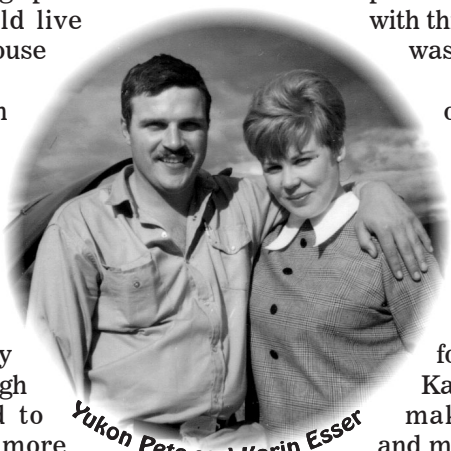
Never in my life I will forget the night of November 2, 1968. The year in itself presented a lot of changes for my family (wife Karin and five-year-old daughter Susanne) and me.

In 1967 I picked up a job as a labourer with Cassiar Asbestos Corp. at the Clinton Creek mine in Yukon Territory. The mine was 57 miles northwest of Dawson City.

By February of 1968, I moved my small family from Vancouver, B.C. to the Whitehouse cabin in Dawson City where we had rented a room and kitchen. One French bed, one table, two chairs and a leaking old gas stove for Karin to cook on. Yes, I remember there was a wash basin but we had no running water; it was delivered once a week and stored in two plastic garbage containers. A beautiful cloth cabinet dating back to the turn of the century, was taking up most of the space.

Well we could live with this.

But the outhouse was for Karin, a place of no desire.



Yukon Pete and Karin Esser

The new town of Clinton Creek was being built in the summer of '68, seven miles south of the mine and mill, at the hill side overlooking the Fortymile River. I was learning as much as possible about the production of different grades of asbestos fiber. Twice a month, I visited my family for several days in Dawson and through Karin, with her ability to fit in and to make friends, I started to know more and more people of this lovely old town with its 800 souls. Twice we moved in Dawson. In April, into a cabin owned by Joe Hanulik at the south end of the town and in midsummer into a small old house at the middle of the town.

By September of '68, Clinton Creek was 80 percent established with 57 houses, one store, a cafeteria, eight bunkhouses, one saloon. A small hospital was in the planning stages. By this time we were expecting our second child to see the light of day in November.

The good old Pontiac I had purchased in the spring for 600 dollars for travelling back and forth to Dawson was running out of steam and by September a miner in need of a one way trip south gave me 300 dollars for it and left town happily.

My promotion to mill shift boss in this month could not have come at a better time. With this position was a new three-bedroom house waiting for us, ready to move into, and we did. Level floors, running water, a proper bath and modern kitchen, and a view down to the valley of the Fortymile River worth a million.

Karin put her arms around me pushed her belly softly against me and whispered in my ear, I love you and I will never move again out of this paradise.

Karin and Susanne had left a few belongings in Dawson City. Father Marcel Bobillier, the pioneer priest and parishioner of St. Mary's Church in Dawson City (known as Father Bob), was to us a good friend. He loaded all of it into his pickup and off they went to Clinton Creek. Father Bob, who liked fast driving and always trusted the good Lord, made it his hobby to break his last speed record between Dawson and Clinton Creek.

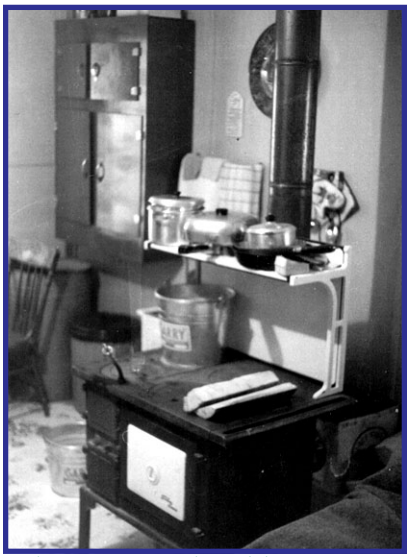
Lucky for us Dick Gillespie of Dawson was only 15 minutes behind them. Good old Dick, may he rest in peace, picked up all of our stuff, that Father Bob had lost along the Top of the World Highway while trying to make a new speed record. Well, that's life.

By the time we had the house furnished, it was the middle of October and the first snow had blanketed the countryside. It was so nice to be together again, as a family, but Karin's condition was changing very fast now. It was time to be close to a hospital and the only one around was in Dawson City.

By now we had a few friends living in Dawson and Theo, a cat operator working for Gillespie Equipment, and his wife Therese were happy to take Karin in during the last week of October.

Karin had a good time staying with them, but nothing was happening and daughter Susanne and I as cooks were not doing very well. "Daddy, when is Mummy coming home?" was one of the daily questions given to me and her face was not too happy at the dinner table. I do okay in the bush at the campfire; that's my kind of cooking, but in the kitchen I am lost.

So I called Karin. It was a Friday. "How things are? Fine. And what is with the baby? Nothing so far and it looks like it could take some time. Come on, can't you speed it up a little bit? You like to have me home Pete? Oh yeah, we are starving, and without you it is not working as well."



The stove in the old Dawson City cabin.

"Ok, I will check with the doctor and I am sure Father Bob will bring me home."

It was so nice to have her back again and Friday was to Susanne and me like a holiday. Thinking back now , we were young and danger never came to our mind. Well life has its own way of teaching and this we would learn very fast.

The plan was for Karin to go back to Dawson on Sunday with Father Bob who would be in Clinton Creek to give mass in the afternoon. Needless to say that Karin was the talk of the town, to be back without a baby in her arms.

While we ware listening to the radio and talking about the latest news from Dawson, the evening was passing by and the snow was falling and the outside temperature too.

"Pete, Pete, wake up, come on Pete, wake up."

"What is it Karin?"

"The water broke. I think the Baby is coming soon."

It went through my body like a electric shock. It was two a.m. Saturday morning and I realized we needed help and this quick. After following Karin's instructions and bringing to her what she needed to have some control on the situation, I called the night nurse at the Dawson hospital and gave her a briefing and told her what so far we had done. "Okay, this is good, but now you are listening to me, okay?"

"Okay," I replied. "Have you ever have witnessed or helped with a birth?"

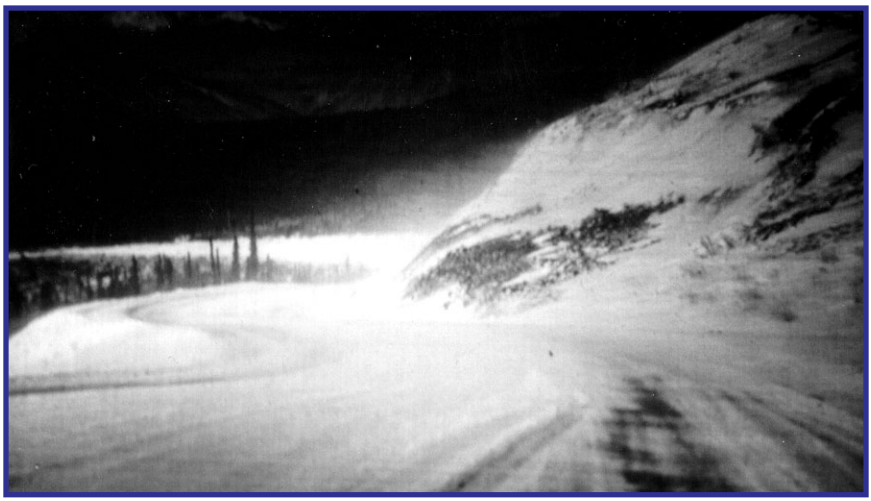
"No."

"Can you face blood?"

"Yes."

"Okay, you will have to bring her down to us ASAP, okay? Okay, good, then let me talk to your wife please.

'Keep a cool head Pete,' I said to myself, 'don't lose it.'



Top of the World Highway in winter.

I have to bring her to Dawson, but I have no car, and we need someone to take care of Susanne. I have to call Father Bob to find out if the ferry across the Yukon River is still in service.

I went back to Karin and listened to what the nurse had told her to do.

"Okay, can you get slowly ready?"

"Yes."

"Okay, than I will call Father Bob now. The clock showed 2:30 am. Father Bob, a man of action, has spent most of his life in the north and to face the unexpected was nothing new to him. I still can hear his calm voice. 'Pete just bring her down, and leave the rest in my hands.'

"But what is with the ferry, Father, is she still in service?"

"No, but she is still in the river. Like I said leave it in my hands and don't worry. Get moving, you are wasting time."

"Thank you, Father."

"Pete."

"Yes."

"You will make it, see you at the ferry. Bye for now."

Father Bobilier with Karin and our kids.

"Karin, I will go over next door and see Mike and Lorane. Okay?"

It was snowing and the wind had picked up too but at the moment, this was of no importance me.

Mike opened the door after a few minutes and looked at me like I was a ghost. I explained the situation to him while his face was getting longer and longer. Go and get Susanne I will get Lorane. In no time I was back with her and little sleepy head never woke up. Lorane bedded her down and on her face I could see, there were many questions she would have liked to ask me, but she never did. I guess she wanted not to waste our time. Mike was totally dressed with his parka on.

"Are you driving us?"

"No, I am on day shift. (Mike had the same position as I had) You will have to drive. You have a full tank and in the trunk you will find a snow shovel and a small box with candles, matches and a first aid kit. You will be okay."

Mike's car was a '68 Malibu he had picked up last July in Whitehorse. "Thank you. If something happens to the car , I will buy it from you."

"Don't worry about it now, just go and get Karin. I will warm up the car for you.

Karin was in winter clothing , had one box filled with towels and a few blankets. Her suitcase was ready, she had a small box with food and a knife sterilized and wrapped in plastic. We left Clinton Creek at 3:00 am and the snow was still falling.

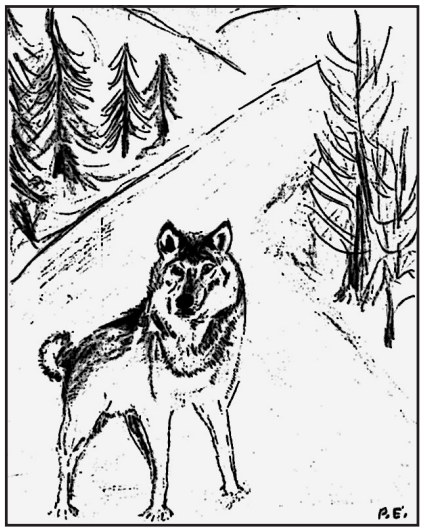
Karin was sitting beside me on towels bundled up in her parka and had her legs tied together with one of my belts. We crossed the bridge at the Fortymile River and the road started climbing and winding through wilderness. Most of the first 22 miles the road was well protected from wind by timber on either side. Snow was building up quite fast but the car was taking it well. Only the visibility was slowly deteriorating.

Higher we were driving up the road, stronger the wind got, and melting snow was turning to ice at the bottom of the windshield and building up fast. Karin was inhaling deep and slow at times and shifting her sitting position. I could sense she was not having an easy time.

"How are you doing?"

"Okay, Pete okay. Just a little bit of pain."

"Wauwww!" In front of the car was this big gray wolf and its two yellow shining eyes looking at us. We



The wolf on the Clinton Creek road. Drawing by Pete Esser.

were speechless and didn't trust our eyes. We never had seen a wolf in the open before. I had to think of the movie, Dr. Zhivago, we liked so much. The snow, wind, the wolf, the endless mysterious forest and wilderness. Is this what's happening to us or is it a dream? Before I was able to react, the wolf disappeared into the darkness.

"...Easy Pete, don't put us in the ditch."

She was right. I was quite nervous and for a moment my mind was not where it had to be...

"Well. I am not nervous, Karin."

"Oh yes, how come you are whistling off and on?"

"Habit, nothing else but a habit."

Father Bobollier

We were coming out of the timberline and close to the Government Highway Maintenance Camp when the full force of a blizzard hit us. The snow was blowing horizontal as we drove onto the Top of the World Highway. One of the most beautiful highways in the north. In clear weather, one can see to the west the Alaska mountains and to the east the Ogilvie mountains for miles and miles, close by and along the horizon. You are way up top with the trees below you. But this beautiful countryside can be hidden under sheer terror and disaster can take over with ease if mother nature likes to play it this way. The snow drifts we had encountered while below timber line were easy to take, but the big ones are in front of us. The windshield was freezing up and the wipers were scraping over the ice. I know it was minus 20 when we left, but with this wind it must be minus 40. I had to get out to scrape it off. Thousands of needles were cutting the skin of my face, but I managed to break off most of the ice. One thing was good, I had not to use the wipers, the wind was keeping the window clean.

"Eat this Pete." Karin gave me one of my favourites, a Mars bar.

"Thank you."

"What about you?"

"No, I only take some coffee, my mouth is so dry."

"Mine too, but I'd rather have a coke."

Before I could take a sip, we were stuck in the first snowdrift. It was not a big one, no higher than two feet in centre. It was useless to open the door to look back, the way the wind was blowing. So I was holding the steering in the same position as when we stopped and kept driving back and forward till we broke through the snowdrift. Some of them already were up to six feet high at the inside, tapering down to two feet. We had to get closer to the road's edge in order to break through it and this took time. How much time we had, we did not know. Karin was breathing more heavily now, but insisted she was doing fine.

When we passed Castle Rocks, the driving was no fun anymore. The only help I had left for orientation to stay on the road was given by six-foot tall sticks the road crew had put up along both shoulders with 300 feet between them. It was like a slalom race where you have to go from gate to gate. We were crawling along from stick to stick and it seemed to take forever to drive a mile. Karin was now experiencing more and more labour pain in intervals, but telling me, "I am okay Pete."

And then the wind stopped and it was clearing up with the clouds breaking and the moon was lighting the road and countryside. What a treat to see we were not far out of Dawson City. Coming around the last big bend, we could see the town lying below us, the ice floating on the Yukon River and the ferry on the Dawson side. It was for us downhill all the way and when we had the last mile in front of us, to the landing, we could see the ferry was on its way to us.

They must have spotted our headlights driving down the long road. Coming to the landing it was clear to see that there was no way the ferry could take us on. Too much ice had built up along the shore line. She gave it a good try, but it was not possible. We noticed Father Bob and the deck hand standing in the open and waving to us, indicating to walk upstream.

Good. Two hundred feet from us was a section of the river where the strong current had prevented an ice buildup. It was not easy to get there but there was no other way than to break the deep snow. The ferry pushed its landing ramp against the small rock formation and its diesel we could hear working hard to keep the Black George (name of the ferry) in line. The deck hand came up the short climb and we helped Karin onto the ferry.

I waved a thank you to the captain, thanked Father Bob and the deck hand, kissed Karin goodbye and climbed back up the hill. I could see Karin sitting on her suitcase with the two men beside her while the ferry was crossing over. When Father Bob's pickup started rolling towards the hospital , I knew she would be in good hands.

I walked back to the car and leaned against it. It was like an emotional roller coaster. I could feel this big emptiness coming over me , I felt weak, drained of my energy and sad. At the same time I felt so happy I could have embraced the whole world. We had made it. With tears in my eyes, I thanked the Lord and asked him to be with Karin.

I had something to eat and smoked two cigarettes. The dashboard clock in Mike's car showed 7:15 a.m. when I started my drive back to Clinton Creek.

Caroline was born on November 2, 1968 at 8:05 a.m. in the St. Mary's Hospital. An Australian midwife helped Karin to bring her into this world. Mother and child were doing fine.

Caroline is now living in Melbourne, Australia, married for many years and they have three boys. Whenever she calls home the first thing she says is, "Hi mum or dad. Here is your Yukon baby."

Editor's Note:

The Clinton Creek asbestos mine closed in 1978. Over the next few years the town was sold and all the buildings taken away. Now, the name of it doesn't even appear on modern maps.

Father Bob passed away in the spring of 1986.

Ode to Father Bob

By Sam Holloway

Reprinted from The Whitehorse Star, Jan. 7, 1987.

When Father Bob died last spring, the Yukon lost not only a beloved clergyman but also one of the last living examples of the old-style missionary priests. I often drank tea with him at his comfortable little manse in Dawson City; and because he knew I was an infidel with no hope of redemption, I perhaps came to know him in a way that his Catholic parishioners could not.

Father Maroel Bobillier (hence, Father Bob) was born in France in 1913, ordained in 1938, and spent most of his priestly career in the Yukon. He administered to a region bigger in size than England; and in the era before the highways were built, he travelled by canoe or steamboat, by dogteam or on snowshoes, and, shouldering a pack containing his Bible and vestments, he made many trips alone and on foot. He was sumptuously fed wherever he stopped and sometimes he was only paying a visit, but more often he had a list of christenings, weddings and funerals to preside over.

In those idyllic days, small settlements dotted the southern half of the Yukon. Bundled up on the riverbanks or scattered along the productive placer mining creeks, each little log-cabin community had a purpose or it soon became a ghost town. Some were just stop-over points along the main trails, some supplied wood to the steamboats, some were summer fish camps; and lone trappers or families lived in the wilderness spaces between. Native people were much more involved with local commerce and activities than they are today. People were isolated from the "outside" world, but not from each other.

Each traveller, including Father Bob, acted as a walking newspaper and news travelled ever so swiftly up and down the trails. That oral tradition is one reason why the few oldtimers we have left are so clear and concise in their remembrances. Father Bob loved to talk about those days and in fact had written out a 550-page manuscript about his experiences. Up Here magazine published an excerpt from those memoirs just before he died (he died in his sleep on May 16, 1986) and I believe local publisher, Burns & Morton, may do something with the remainder.

Bad news and humorous stories travelled the fastest (here I go, getting off the subject again), especially the doings of the much beloved, but not always respected clergy. Like the time Bishop Stringer, an Anglican missionary, was urging his dog team over a terrible stretch of trail when he met a trapper going the other way:

"How's the trail up your way?" he asked the trapper.

"It's a God-damned son-of-abitch altogether!" roared the trapper. "How's the trail you've been over?"

"Oh . . . about the same,' answered the Bishop.

Beside his memoirs, Father Bob wrote many articles for French-lan-

guage magazines and he had a wealth of friends all over the world who wrote to him and sent him gifts. He put together a magnificent collection of photographs (23,000 in all) which he carefully filed and catalogued at his manse in Dawson.

I think he sometimes felt trapped in his role as a priest and was frustrated with the restrictions of the Church; that his life was too much controlled by a hierarchy of men. However, he sublimated his personal ambitions and never shirked his duties. He told me there will never be a shortage of willpower among humans; it was "won't power" that was more often lacking.

I asked him once how it was to go through life not being able to marry:

"It was tough. Believe me, it was tough!" When he saw how intently I watched him, he quickly added:

"But not that tough."

We had a great laugh over that. I will always remember the intelligence beaming out from behind his black-rimmed glasses and, how, though small in stature, he always exuded a powerful presence wherever he went. I trust that for his efforts he now sits comfortably close to his Maker.

So here's to you, Father Bob; we will never see your like again.

Bombay Peggy's house in its original location at Dawson City. She was a well-known madam in the 1950s. (SH photo, 1977)

NEWS FROM THE KLONDIKE, 1897

LETTER AND ILLUSTRATIONS FROM TAPPAN ADNEY, SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF "HARPER'S WEEKLY."

LAKE BENNETT TO DAWSON

At the date we left Lake Bennett, the 9th day of Oc-tober, we had no right to expect that a boat could reach Dawson before the closing of the river. We did not realize this truth then. The 7th had been clear, and we packed our stuff across from the foot of Lindeman. A large outfit also arrived on Indians' backs, over the Dyea trail, three days out. In contrast to this, nineteen mules and horses were sent back from Bennett to find an outfit delayed at some point unknown on the Skaguay trail. A number of boats got under way down the lake, which lies between lofty snow-capped mountains, a narrow passageway stretching into the distance as far as one can see. Eight or ten boats from Lindeman had been getting started to one with Skaguay outfits. Next day it rained, then turned into snow, in the midst of which we had to repitch the boat where the warm sun had lately melted the coating off.

On the 9th a gale is roaring down the gap, kicking up a great sea down the lake; but we ventured to start, not daring to wait longer. We rig the little spritsail; Brown tends sheet, while I take a big steering-oar in the stern. In a few moments we are among the white-caps, and the seas are boarding us, so we promptly run under the lee of a rocky point a mile from the starting-place. Half a dozen big boats with huge square sails go by us at railroad speed. We wait an hour or so, pick berries, which are very plentiful in patches among the rocks, and then push off again. We square away in great shape. There is so little freeboard amidships that if we should get in the trough of the sea we would swamp instantly. Our mast is tough pine, but when the wind snatches the rag of a sail it bends as if it would break.

Now begins the fight. The little sail, small though it is, begins to pull us to one side, and it takes all the strength of one pair of arms on a twelve-foot ash steering-oar to keep her head on. Now and then a big comber comes over the stern. In a few moments we have to bail out. There is not a cove or shelter in sight, and the sea keeps getting worse. Fresh water, being lighter, kicks up higher than salt, and we have every bit we want.

A little way on we pass a camp on shore where they are drying goods—a capsize, no doubt. Pretty soon, under the lee of little rocky capes, boats are drawn out on shore and parties are camped, driven in by the storm. The raw wind and the spray begin to make the fingers cold, but it is impossible to let go and put mittens on. We are overhauling the little boats, and pass three or four, but the big ones show us clean heels.

About twelve miles down, the lake narrows to about half a mile, and here the waves are terrific, and the cross-wave break over the tarpaulin covering the goods amidships. In the midst of it all the mast goes overboard

with a snap. Brown gathers in the sail, and still scudding, we drop in behind a point fortunately close at hand. Here we are able to get a new and larger mast. One of the boats we had passed follows us in. It contains a New York party of two. When we start again they will not follow, on account of their heavy boatload.

At evening we run into a little cove opposite the west arm of Bennett, with a smooth sandy beach, where there are other boats. A few minutes later a big Peterboro canoe containing two men in yellow mackinaws runs in under a small sail. It is the United States mail for Circle City. Around the camp fire that night eager questions are plied these two men to know just what is going on at Dawson; for they had left Dawson only thirty-odd days before!

The boats had not got up when they left, and flour was six dollars a sack.

"Would there be starvation?"

We get this reply, spoken slowly and deliberately: "I have been eleven years in Alaska, and there hasn't been a year yet when everybody wasn't going to starve, but no one has starved yet."

"How cold is it?"

"Cold, but not so cold but that a man can't stand it. I spent one winter in a tent."

All of which is comforting. The mail carriers put up no tent, but lie down

Sailing down Lake Bennett

on a tarpaulin, with one over them, and are off at daylight. They have oars rigged to the canoe, and expect to reach Dawson in six or seven days.

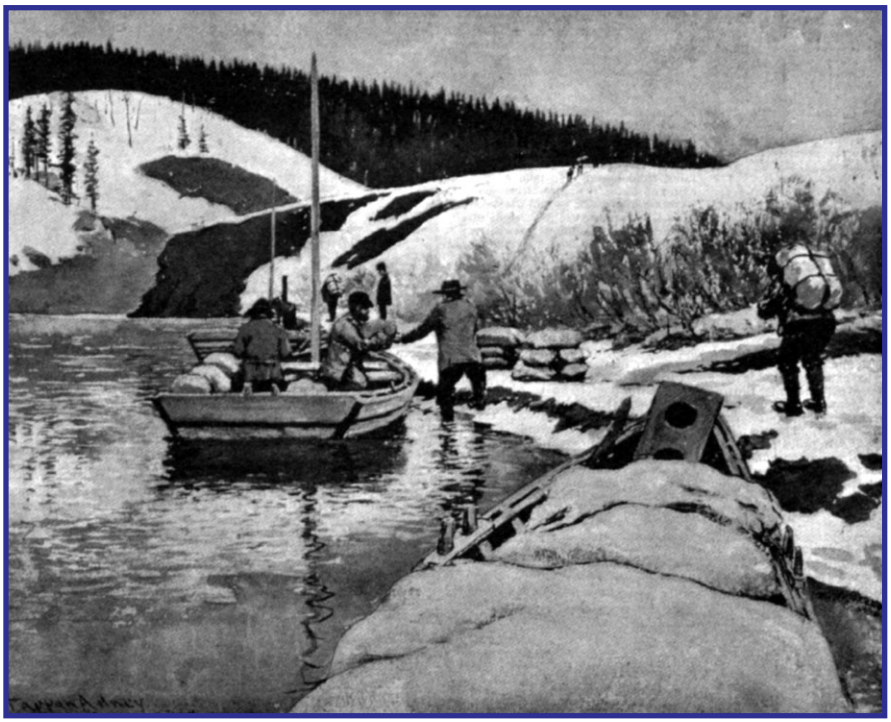
We ourselves get under way not long after. The wind has moderated, but a heavy sea is still on. The lake is wide now, and we run along easily; we pass one boat that had got out ahead of us, and are making every inch of the little sail pull in order to overtake another. The lines of the bateau give it a tremendous advantage over the clumsy whipsawed boats built at the lakes.

We are running along about a quarter of a mile from the right-hand bank, which rises high and steep into the clouds, when we see a tent pitched on the shelving beach, with blankets and goods spread out in the sun. There are a black dog and a man, and a smallish boat drawn up on the shore. As we draw near the man runs down to the edge of the water and fires off a gun, and then gets into the boat. We run in closer; and as we draw near, the man comes out, rowing frantically, and when we get near enough he calls out:

"Brown! Brown!"

We put the bateau around bow into the wind, and wait. When he gets within fifty yards we can see that he is much excited.

"My partners!" says he; "I haven't seen them—it was blowing too hard—and Pete went to take it out—and fell overboard—and McManus went after him!"



Portaging goods at the Canyon (Canyon City, just above Miles Canyon)

It is John, a Russian from San Francisco, who, with another Russian and poor McManus, had worked so hard on the trail. We had seen them all often, but did not know their full names. We gather bit by bit from his incoherent talk that their sail had been nailed fast. The yard would not lower, and in trying to unstep the mast during the hard blow of two days before, Pete had been carried overboard, and McManus had gone into the icy water to rescue him. It was nearly or quite dark at the time of this accident, and they were never seen again.

How the Russian managed to get ashore is a wonder. He had stopped several parties. They had advised him to go home, but he is anxious to get to Dawson. He offers Brown half the outfit to leave me and go with him. Brown refuses. The outfit consists of 3500 pounds of grub, and there are valuable furs and clothing. Finally, being able to do him no good, we turn on down the lake, and last see him awkwardly trying to row his ungainly craft ashore. He reported at the Canadian custom-house later, and it was rumoured, though with what truth we cannot determine, that in the endeavour to get down in the ice he had frozen his hands and feet.

By noon we are at the foot of Bennett, where, in gentler currents, between low banks a few rods apart, the green waters of the lake start again on their journey. This is Caribou Crossing, so called from its being a crossing place for the caribou. About a mile, and the stream turns to the right into a very shallow muddy lake, two or three miles long, called Lake Nares, and then through another thoroughfare into Tagish Lake.

Tagish Lake is the name given to what is almost a group of lakes, or long arms, deep-set amid high mountains. The scenery in these lakes is magnificent. The wind, what there is, is now dead ahead. We put a trolling-line out, while Brown takes the oars. As we approach the junction of Windy Arm which enters Tagish from the southward, we expect a blow, and a battle with the cross-seas, that are said never to be absent. Extraordinary fortune is with us, for we row across the mouth of Windy Arm as on a looking-glass, in which the tall hills are doubled.

There is a tug at the trolling-line—a large salmon-troll, such as is used on Vancouver Island—and when we pull it we have a fine large trout, in

Custom house at Tagish.

Paying customs

length about twenty inches belly milk white, sides a drab gray, with large irregular, often triangular, spots of light; pectoral fins blue, ventrals tipped with light yellow—a strikingly handsome fish. We only hook this one, but get several bites. Where we camp that night, with several other boats, near the end of the lake, past the Taku Arm one party had caught seven trout, weighting two or three pounds apiece. My own trout had a six-inch white-fish inside of it.

We are later than the others breaking camp next morning. We not only have a faculty for late rising, but have to reload the whole outfit on account of the leaking. All the boats are leaking badly. But our boat runs so easily that when we have what Brown facetiously terms a good "ash breeze" we can overtake and pass them all. The other boats are clumsy, and though they have often four oars to a boat, the oars are so heavy that they can only take short dips, and with a head-wind make no headway whatever. The lower end of the lake is full of ducks on their southward migration— hundreds of them. Having only a rifle, we miss a good opportunity. However, by a lucky shot, one drops while on the wing, to the little 30-30. We pass all the five boats we were with last night. The lake suddenly narrows, and we find ourselves in a slack current, and drifting about two miles, with flock after flock of ducks getting up.

We can see ahead, against a bank of evergreen on the right, the red flag of Britain and some tents, and make landing in shallow water at the Canadian customs office. We make camp, and before dark the others drop in and camp. There is a squad of North western Mounted Police here, under Inspector Strickland, who is also postmaster. There are, besides, John Godson, the customs officer, and several assistants. The police are building a large log barracks, and the scene reminds one of the timber woods of the East; for we have reached a region of small but plentiful timber and varied animal life. The timber grows littler as one goes down river, elevation affects growth more than latitude. It is a pretty spot they have chosen, commanding a view of the river both ways. The police have taken some huge whitefish in a weir. They caught on a troll one nineteen-and-a-half-pound trout at the outlet of Tagish. They tell me that a twenty-five-pounder has been taken on Touchi (or Too-tschai) Lake.

Mr. Godson explains why they have selected a point so far from the end of the trail. The first exploration party had come over the Skaguay Trail, had proceeded down Shallow Lake, thence over to Touchi, and down to Taku Arm. This they supposed to be the end of the trail. It happened, indeed, that there was no trail at all over the summit and one was free to wander whither he listed from that point on. The trail was finally made to Bennett; but thinking Taku Arm would be the route taken, they had settled on the foot of Tagish.

In regard to collection of duty on Canadian horses by the United States customs officials, Godson says he could have stationed men at the summits and taken duty on every American horse as it arrived, and done so every time it arrived. But his instructions were to use his own judgment in every particular, and, beyond asserting Canada's right to collect duty, as at Mon-

treal or Victoria, to inflict no needless hardship on the miners. Having this in mind, he knows that many coming through are short of money, and it is his intention only to make those pay who can pay. Godson goes around in the evening by the light of the camp fires and takes the inventories of all Americans with dutiable goods, in order not to delay them in the morning.

An old-timer, familiar with the river, tells us all that he doubts if we will get through.

"You will get through Lake Marsh, then the White Horse; and if you get through Lake Labarge before it freezes, you will make Thirty Mile River, and possibly Pelly River, and if you get that far you may get down with the mush ice."

What is the mush ice?

He urges us all to "hurry! hurry!" So do all the officers—to start tonight if possible, before the wind changes. The other boys, therefore, after some discussion, get their stuff aboard and start at midnight. We wait, however, until afternoon the next day, in the hope that Burnham and his flotilla of canoes may turn up, and then we too get under way. We think a good deal over what Inspector Strickland tells us—that on the 13th of October for the past three years the Klondike was frozen tight. It is now the 12th.

Marsh Lake, at whose head we virtually are now, is about nineteen miles long, narrow, like the rest, and shallow. The sky is clear, and we row on until dark sets in. It grows cold, and we have to bundle up to keep warm, except the one who rows. About nine o'clock we put inshore, and find the shore ice out twenty feet; but we discover a place where there is dry land, build a big camp fire, and cook supper. The shore ice, as it rises and falls in the gently undulating surface of the water, creaks and cries for all the world like a hundred frogs in spring-time, and it is indeed a dismal sound that bodes us no good.

"If you get through Labarge before it freezes!"

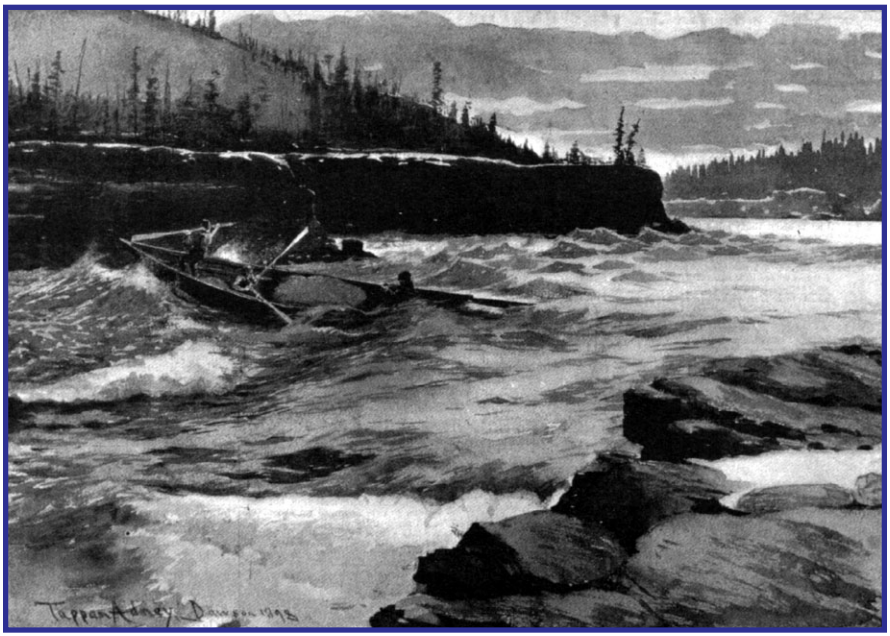
Waiting only to finish eating we put out into the lake, whose shores we can dimly make out. We head for a point about two miles off, and are about half-way there, when the bow of the boat crashes into thin ice. Thinking we are running ashore, we turn out, and come clear of the ice. Judge our dismay when again we crash into ice! We cut through this, and turn still further out, until we are cross-wise of the lake. Again we strike into ice. I am at the oars now, and keep on pulling with difficulty, each time cutting the blades into the ice for a hold, and we pass through two or three distinct belts of ice that extend far out into the lake. We are now almost in a panic, for it seems as if the outlet must be frozen up tight. When we get to clear water we head north again, keeping out from the shore, and towards morning we land and spread our blankets on the ground among some small spruces on a low bank. There are several inches of snow on the ground. After a short nap we start again, at an early hour. There are no other boats in sight. It is not a great way to the outlet, which we know by the current that begins to carry us along while yet well within the lake, and we are soon floating down a black stream several hundred feet across, with low wooded banks.

An odd thing occurs here. I fire at a teal that is hugging the shore, and miss. I fire again as it rises up stream, and the bullet drops back of it. By this time it has gone thirty feet, and the third bullet also falls back of it. The fourth knocks it into the water, and as the feathers float down, a mink runs out and attempts to get it. I go ashore, and find nothing but feathers—the effect of the softnosed bullet. Chancing to look backward, I see the mink on its haunches, looking and smelling. A shot under the chin gets him too.

Snow is on the ground everywhere. The current is easy, the river winding about among banks of sand some two hundred feet high. Along these are the holes of countless thousands of swallows, which, as Schwatka writes, are a notable feature of the river when they are back at their nesting-sites in summer.

For a day we go on thus, the river winding more and more. We do not know how far the canyon is away, so we camp on the ground under a big spruce two feet in diameter; awake wet with soft snow, and after an hour's run in swift current, during which we pass a fine boat smashed on a rock in mid-stream, we hear a shout, and see boats lined up in a large eddy on the right hand, below which is a wall of dark rock and an insignificant opening, which we are persuaded is the entrance to the canyon.

The shout warns us that we will be into the eddy. These are some of the boats which left us at Tagish, and some new ones. They are taking in the situation, and most of them are unloading part of their good and packing it around, a distance of three-quarters of a mile. We go up the trail to a spot where we can stand on the brink of the canyon and look directly down into its seething waters.

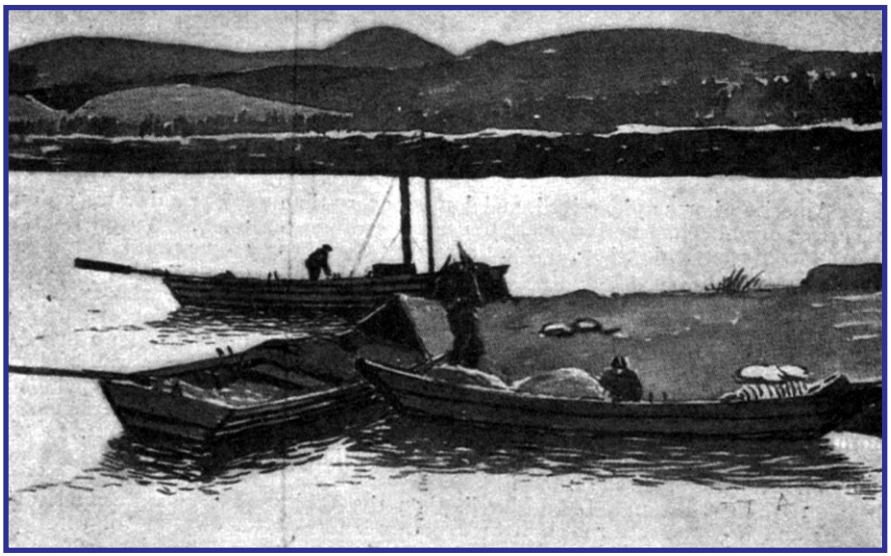


Running the Whitehorse Rapids.

It is about a hundred feet wide and fifty or sixty feet deep, the whole body of the Lewes River pouring at a high rate of speed between the steep perpendicular walls of the gorge. The rock is basaltic, and takes the original formation that is familiar to those who have seen pictures of the famous Fingal's Cave. Half-way down the canyon widens, and there is a large eddy which the boats are told to avoid by keeping the crest of the waves, and then continuing as before. A boat starts in as we are looking, manned by two men at the oars, and with a bow and a stern steering oar.

After our trip through Lake Bennett in the storm we feel pretty sure of our boat, so we conclude not to carry any of our stuff around. We tuck the tarpaulin down close and make everything snug, and when Brown has seated himself at the oar, and said "All ready," we push off and head for the gateway. I think I notice a slight tightening of Brown's mouth, but that is all, as he dips the oars and begins to make the long stroke; but he might retaliate by saying some unkind thing of me at this time. As soon as we are at the very brink we know it is too late to turn back, so when we drop down the first pitch I head her for the very seething crest. At the first leap she takes into the soapsuds the spray flies several feet off the flaring sides, and we know then we shall ride it. A dozen or two huge lunges and we land in the crest of the wave and send the water flying. All at once—it must be we are not exactly in the middle—the boat's nose catches in an eddy and we are swung around, head up stream. It is a simple matter turn her nose again into the torrent, and then we go on again, leaping and jumping with terrific force. Brown, who manages the oars splendidly, keeps dipping them, and in a few moments we emerge from between the narrow walls into an open basin.

There are a number of boats here too, but we have nothing to stop for, so we keep on; but suddenly remembering that the White Horse Rapids is



Boat in eddy below White Horse Rapids.

only one and a half miles below the canyon, we drop ashore above what is called Squaw Rapids. There are at least two dozen boats in all ashore. The White Horse is just beyond the turn where the river goes to the left along the steep hill. It will be necessary to cross to the other side. We start again into the quick water, and then, cutting across a low bar at the head of the White Horse, make a landing on a low point, from which goods are carried around below these very dangerous rapids.

A view of the rapids is the first thing to be had. The river has made a quick bend to the left and then turning to the right, goes down through basaltic walls twenty to thirty feet high and several times the width of the canyon. Lashing itself into a purple fury, it narrows into a gorge a span wide, when, with a jumping and tossing, it bursts through, and then spreads out serene, once more the wide, generous river. From a vantage-point we can see it all, the foaming crest of the final and worst pitch half a mile away. A boat is just going through, and we watch it until it emerges into the quiet water and makes a landing.

We resolve to take out part of our cargo here, so as to give us more freeboard, but undertake to drop below into a sort of eddy at the very brink of the rapids, so as to have a shorter carry. I get into the boat, while Brown drops it down with the painter. We have to go outside a reef of rock thirty feet off shore, and when we are out there the rope pulls out of Brown's hands, leaving me and the loaded boat in the fast water. I quarter the boat inshore, and then, by the hardest sort of paddling, the current swings the boat in, until I can get out into the water and take it ashore. We have taken only an inch of water in the canoe. It is an exceedingly close call.

We put all our personal baggage ashore, leaving an even thousand pounds in the boat, which gives us six inches or more of freeboard, and then turn her nose into the current.

Following the roughest water, to avoid the rocks, we are pitched into the dancing waves. The waves grow bigger, and we begin to pitch worse by far than in the canyon. We go up the sides of the waves, and when we drop it seems positively as if boat and all would keep right on through to the bottom of the river. The water begins to pour in, and it is plain that the boat will never live through. But one thought for a moment comes to comfort us: even if we are chock full of water, the fearful impetus with which we are moving must surely take us bodily through and out, and then—we can make the shore somehow. I begin to count the seconds we will be going through that last and worst part into which we now driving.

Forced from both sides, the river enters the gorge; and the effect to the eye, as one goes into the great white-caps, is that of a jumping, not only up and down, but from the sides to the middle.

Now we are into the waves. From all sides and ends a sheet of water pours over, drenching Brown and filling the boat; the same instant, it seems, a big side-wave takes the little craft, spins her like a top, quick as a wink, throws her into a boiling eddy on the left—and we are through and safe, with a little more work to get ashore.

Men who were watching us from the bank said that we disappeared from sight in the trough. Brown is wet up to his waist.

Everything is afloat. We land here, and when we have bailed out some of the water, drop the boat down to the usual landing-place, a little sandy cove, where we unload, pitch tent, and while tripping back for our five hundred pounds of goods, watch the other boats come through. They are all big ones, and all get through without mishap.

We hear of pilots, both here and at the canyon, but every man takes his own boat through. The pilots take boats through the canyon for from ten to twenty dollars, and through the White Horse for twenty dollars. Two partners stopped two weeks earlier in the season and made enough to buy in on a claim on Bonanza. Those who unload have the worst of it. The heavy boats go through best. The double-ender swings so easily that it is hard to steer, and is rather small for the business.

The White Horse is a bit of water I have considerable respect for. I ask the imperturbable Brown how he felt—if he was scared.

"Why, no," he replies. "You said it was all right; I suppose you know—it's your boat and your outfit."

The compliment is altogether too extravagant. I believe that if a charge of dynamite were to explode under Brown, he would not wink an eyelash. Many say they took more water abroad in the canyon than in the White Horse, while Squaw Rapids is worse than the canyon. There is a dog in Dawson that swam the canyon. He probably tried to follow his master's boat, instead of walking around. He is a water-spaniel, though; but he must have had more ups and downs than he dreamed of when he started in the quiet water above.

There have been no drownings in the White Horse so far as known this year, and nearly every boat was run through. The trail around the rapids is lined with trees blazed and inscribed with the heroic deeds of those gone before. They are written on trees, on scraps of paper tacked on broken oar-blades, etc. Here is one: "Sept. 8, 1997. Boat Cora and Medal 20 ft. long. 8 ft 3 in. beam. 26 in. deep. Safety shot the White Horse Rapids loaded with 4000 pounds," And this:

Gudmond Jensen
G. G. Tripp
Tom
Mike
went threw all right.

It is a great load off our minds when we are at last safely through. We care not how swift the river runs now; there is only Five Fingers, a long way off yet.

Another day brings us at dark to the head of Lake Labarge, up which a wind is blowing, with a big head-sea. Lights show up at a place on the left, and we steer towards this. It is totally dark when we get there, but when close inshore we run into fish-weirs, and hear the laughter and crying of children and the barking of dogs, and then we know that it is an Indian vil-

lage, so we turn up shore, and after a mile, off around a turn, land on a beach by a huge pile of drift-wood. Attracted by our big fire, two or three other boats drop in, and we have a merry time. In an hour four Indians come over with furs to sell or trade for sugar. These Indians are Tinne. They hunt moose, mountain-sheep, bears and fur-bearing animals. After hanging around a while they go away. I should not care to leave a boat-load of provisions in the neighbourhood of these Siwashes. Experiences later with the same breed down-river justify the precautions we take.

Lake Labarge, named for Labarge, one of the explorers for the long-ago projected Russo-American telegraph line, is about thirty miles in length, and it is rare that a strong wind is not blowing there, so fiercely that the miners are often delayed, as at Windy Arm. It is as smooth as glass next morning. The shores are of moderate height, of a diversified rounded form of gray stone. Seen as we see it, is a most picturesque body of water, and very clear. As we near the end a wind catches us, and as there is no shelter we have to keep on in the darkness. For several hours we see friendly beacons, and when we get to them we find a camp of friends who had left several days ahead of us. Next morning finds us near the outlet of the lake, and a short pull brings us in to Thirty Mile River, as the Lewes is known until it joins the Teslintoo, or Hootalinqua of the miners. The latter stream follows the structural valley of the river. The Lewes has a much smaller sectional here but discharges more water. The Teslintoo is the larger and the true source of the Yukon. Schwatka is responsible for the prevailing notion that Lindeman is the source of the Yukon because he stated that, starting at Lindeman, he had followed the Yukon "to its mouth." The Lewes breaks through a barrier of hills at right angles. Looking up river, any one would say the Teslintoo was the main river. The country seems different. The water, no longer clear, is tinged with the mud of the latter river. White birches now appear.

Making a landing below White Horse Rapids.

Big Salmon, Little Salmon, are successively passed, the latter 285 miles from Dyea. We take no account of this. Our chief diversion is in seeing how quick we can overtake a boat when once we get a sight of it, and also in keeping up with a certain other boat, whose occupants cook on board, rise earlier, and go into camp later than we do. There is now about eight inches of snow, and we have to scrape a hole and line it well with boughs when we camp.

A very short way below the Little Salmon we see (and it should be observed that we hear at the same time) a number of people beckoning and signalling from the shore. We stop at a platform of hewn boards built out in

the water, and are at once surrounded by a horde of dirty, uncouth, wild-looking savages, of all sizes and shapes, each with something to trade. They want to buy everything in sight. We have left some things uncovered; they seize on these things, and shove into our faces a dirty fur cap or a moose-hide or a bear-skin. I haven't the smallest notion what they want with my camera. I have to push them off my end of the boat, but they hang on front, back, and sides, pulling and tugging to draw attention to their wares. I have never seen such fierce trading in my life. We know nothing like it in civilized life. A person could keep himself warm at 60 degrees below, trading as they do. I try to get away, but Brown has opened up some tobacco he had, so we are in for it. There are about twenty aboard our little boat. I buy a pair of fur-trimmed mittens; and then, with astonishing finesse, the fellow tries to beat me out of the mittens, pretending he has given them to me. So I get out on the platform, take him by the arm, and forcibly extract the two silver dollars from his fist. While this is going on another boat stops, and shortly there is a hubbub; the Indians run up, and a crowd rushes down from the village on the bank beyond. I ask the trouble

"Just Injun talk," an Indian replies.

That night I learn the cause. An Indian had showed a watch, and had himself dropped it and broken the crystal. With great wit, he handed it to one of the white boys, and then raising the cry that they had broken it, demanded $5. The boys not having arms handy, and the Indian having two shot-guns, they paid the five dollars.

As we are leaving, the Indian who had tried to cheat me comes running to the boat, tosses the lost mittens aboard, and I give him the money. But on taking stock I find myself out a pair of scissors, a box of tobacco, and a candle.

Five Finger Rapids, 344 miles from Dyea, is reached in company with a small fleet of boats. We are all distinctly apprehensive, not knowing whether we are five or fifty miles from the rapids. When they come into view, the row of huge square blocks of rock standing like the piers of a bridge across the steam, they are unmistakable.

We run our boat into the eddy above the right-hand entrance, while the other boats line down from above. There is a short sudden drop and a nasty upward swirl, it is true, but nothing to care about, so we shoot in, all the rest, I suppose, following. We take a little water, and then enter a series of rapids, which shortly brings us to another object of apprehension, Rink Rapids. There is nothing here but a reef, with good easy current on the right hand. Just below, a great congregation of ravens indicates where the cattle have been driven in and butchered and rafted down.

The river is full of islands, and it is the hardest sort of work keeping off the bars. More than once we get into an inside channel, and have to wade out and tow up and around. When at length we reach the mouth of the Pelly River, it looks as if we shall reach Dawson. We have been cautioned about Pelly. On the left, below the mouth of Pelly, are an Indian village, a mission, and the house and store of Mr. Harper. We land here to camp. The camping-

place is really several miles below; but Mr. Pitts, the storekeeper in charge, will have nothing of the kind. He puts us into one of Mr. Harper's houses, with a stove, and a good dry floor to lie on, and his own kerosene-lamp, all of them luxuries. He treats us handsomely, as well as giving us the first authentic information of the country to which we are going.

We relate our experience with the Indians at Little Salmon. He tells us that those on the Yukon proper are different altogether; they are honest, and in a degree virtuous, whereas those further up river have been mistreated so long by the Chilkats that whenever opportunity offers they treat others the same way.

There is nothing left of the old Hudson Bay Fort, burned down in that raid of the Chilkats in 1852. The post, supplied at great cost and hazard via Upper Pelly and the Liard River, was never re-established. The spot is still called Fort Selkirk.

In the store there are a dozen silver-gray fox-skins and one black fox, which in this country are more plentiful than anywhere else in comparison with the red fox, of which they are varieties. Formerly one could by snowshoes and fur robes here, but this year the rush has cleaned out all but a few moose-hides, some of which Mr. Pitts is for sending to Dawson by us; but he does not, fearing we may not get there.

The thermometer registers two above zero at seven o'clock in the morning.

What do we see when we look out?

On the far side of the river, a procession of blocks of something white—the mush, or slush, ice!

It is coming out of Pelly. We take the left side of the river, where it is clear, and at night find a good camping-place. The timber seems to grow better and better on the flats and islands. The nights and days are cold.

The first night out from Pelly we make the boat fast on the side free from ice. The bank here is about twelve feet high, and the tent is several yards back. We are Lying before an open fire, about to go to sleep. The air is still, and we can hear the ominous "s-s-sh" of the ice in the river

Suddenly there is a dull prolonged roar under the bank. I jump up, and down the bank, in time to see a floe forty feet long go by having scraped the entire length of the boat, and the river is full of floes, large and small, rushing and grinding against one another. Calling for Brown, it is but a few moments' work to unload the boat and haul it out. Next morning the whole river is full of ice, rushing along like a mill-race. This is the mush ice—ice formed on the bottom, soft and slushy. It hardens into floes, and floe freezes to floe to make larger ones.

We put out into the ice, getting into the current, keeping barely clear with the paddles, and whenever a lead opens up we make the most of it with oars, and soon find that by reason of her double end we can work her about where we choose. There is no stopping at noon now; we eat a bite of cold beans and hardtack. After noon we come upon six boats ranged on the shore of a wooded island. It seems time to land, which we do at considerable risk, for the ice is setting hard against the shore.

Around a camp fire in the woods are about twenty men, some of them friends who had left a week ahead of us. They are prepared to stay, they said, until the ice runs out. I tell them that they will wait till spring; that I am going on. It is a sore temptation to stop by their cheerful fire, but I reason that the camp fire is an accidental circumstance; had the boats not been there I should have kept on. So we do. None of them followed for three or four days, when they saw other boats passing, and realized their folly. Some of the men were eager to start, but in nearly every boat was some nervous partner, That night we find a safe camping-place in an eddy free of ice, and cut a channel for the boat into the ice, which now extends a number of feet from shore.

Camp-making is now reduced to the simplest method. At first we would carefully pitch the wall-tent. Now all we do is to take the two oars and three pine poles, tie the ends together tight and fast with a rope, walk around them with the tent, and build an open fire in front. Often we dispense with the tent entirely. Bread, salt, and beans are frozen hard as rocks. We meet several parties with hand sleds and canoes working up against the ice, along the shore, going out.

"No grub in Dawson."

So that is the truth!

There is nothing to do but to drift with the ice, keeping the channel and opens, avoiding the places where it sets against the shore. The thermometer registers from 10 to 5 degrees above zero. Even at this we find six to ten feet of thick ice frozen around the boat each morning, and our first task is to chop it out, but still much sticks to the sides, the water nearby freezes, and the boat sinks lower an lower in the water. We are practically in winter clothes and even then it is hard to keep warm facing a wind in the cold. We get fifteen or twenty miles in a day. Nervousness is disappearing. We no longer mind the crunching and punching of the floes. There is nearly always a boat in sight now.

When about twenty miles, we judge, above White River, which we look for on the left, and which we expect will put a lot more ice into the Yukon, we see a boat on the right-hand shore—a large boat with a stove cooking. As we draw near, it proves to be a party known as the "Christi" party, from the Skaguay trail. They have a Japanese cook and two ladies aboard. The Indians on Lake Labarge would not believe the Jap was not an Indian. "You Injun?" "No!" "You mamma Injun?" "No!" "You papa Injun?" "No! no!" protested the Jap; "me odder country."

With the Christi party is the New York Times correspondent, Pelletier. They are eating lunch, and at the same time trying to fend off the floes. They have been having trouble all the way down. They have only just come off an island where they have been three days. After this we keep them company, with this difference, that they hug the shore, while we keep out. It was easy for them to step out, but the boat is in imminent risk of being crushed by the heavy ice.

We pass White River without knowing it, and ten miles on we come to a

straight reach where on the right are thirty or forty boats drawn out on the ice, and tents set up, and cabins.

This is Stewart River. It seems as if every one is stopping here, except some who cannot get through the ice in time. They have stopped either to remain and prospect, or from fear of ice, and also to hear whether it is safe to take their outfits to Dawson. Wild stories are coming up river, and we know not what to expect.

We go on at noon the next day. One thing the ice does. It piles up on the heads of the bars, and now it is easy to avoid them, and to see the set of the water. We keep to the right hand channel, among the many islands. Several miles below Stewart a bar with ice as usual piled up on the head of it, looms up. For our lives we cannot see, even by standing up, which way the water runs. While hesitating, we are borne directly on the island, and when we try to avoid that, we are carried directly towards the great mass of ice. Only one thing saves us: a Hoe happens to be between us when we strike. It crushes, and we slip along the side and slide out into deep water. Nothing else under heaven could have kept us from going under the ice.

Five-finger Rapids

We make shore quickly after this by a big pile of driftwood, and have hardly got our tent up and a place chopped for the boat when another boat heaves in sight, and calls to us to take a line. It is the Christi party, and they have met with an accident.

Hugging the shore, as usual, they had run upon some sweepers hanging over the water. All hands jumped for the bottom. The boat was stern down stream when it struck. The sweeper caught the steering-sweep and swept the boat clear, stove-pipe and all. Christi had failed to find a point of safety, and had been doubled up and nearly killed.

We take their line, and they camp with us. After that, at last, that boat keeps clear of the shore.

Navigation is getting more difficult; the channels are growing so narrow that a boat can hardly go through. We can only drift and keep the sides of the boat clear. We have been told to keep to the right from Sixty Mile Creek down. On that side we can see scores of parties going out with sleds. By this time we have discovered one thing—that we are better off taking nobody's advice about camping-places, so we have taken the other side, and do not know how near Dawson we are.

On the 29th of October, judging ourselves to be about ten miles away, we make camp and set about fixing up a sled, stay there two days; then

start once more. When we have the covers nicely tucked around us for a big trip we turn suddenly to the left, and see on the right bank ahead a large number of tents, houses, and boats, some of them in the water, others drawn out.

"How far to Dawson?" we ask.

"This is Dawson," is the reply; "you'd better hurry, or you'll be carried past."

We make a landing in good order, and tie fast to the shore. We are not yet in Dawson proper. This is but a suburb, on the site of the old Indian village, and known as Klondike City, or Lousetown.

Four days later the river jammed, then it moved on again, and closed for good on the 7th of November. It had closed in front of Dawson on about the 15th of the month of October, but had broken again—a most fortunate circumstance for us. Little did we realize the danger we had been in, for we knew not then how the Yukon closed. Burnham's party , with the four canoes, got no farther than Selkirk. Major Walsh's party lost three boats, one after another, under the ice. The last parties to reach Dawson had miraculous escapes, which have been detailed before. Yet there was only one death in the ice, so far as is known. When it is remembered how through the length of the upper river there were hundreds taking the greatest chances, first with water, then with ice, it would almost seem true, as has been said, that a guarding Providence watched over the newcomers on the Yukon this year.

HOW ADNEY GOT THROUGH.

The "man leading the horses," mentioned by Tappan Adney in one of his letters (June 4, 1898), from Dawson, has a vivid recollection of the chance meeting referred to, at the foot of Lake Lindeman, where the Skaguay trail of agony and mud joins the original thoroughfare to the gold-fields, via Chilkoot Pass.

As I came down the sandy hill-side to the lake, I saw at the landing two men unloading a trim-looking double-ender boat of distinct individuality that it needed only a glance to show was vastly superior to the ordinary Yukon type. One of the men was a slender six footer, with a face wind-tanned the colour of sole-leather.

He wore weather-stained clothes, that, judging from the general suggestion, no doubt still carried a little of the smoky smell and balsam aroma from camps in the green woods of New Brunswick. His feet were moccasined, and his black hair straggled from under a red toboggan cap. Not only was his rig suggestive of the aborigine, but his every action proved him to be so thoroughly at home in his untamed environment that it is little wonder at first glance I took him to be an Indian, and that it required several minutes after his jolly smile and voluble greeting to dispel the illusion.

Adney was a hustler of the most advanced type. Though just recovering from an attack of the prevailing malady of the trail, he carried across the portage packs weighing as much as 125 pounds that evening and the following days, and in an extremely short time had his boat emptied of her

cargo and ready for the trip from Lindeman to Bennett. These lakes are connected by a rapid stream, with a rocky, obstructed channel. White men let their boats down by ropes—a process known as "lining." The Indians, who are familiar with the stream, shoot a portion of the rapids, but near the lower end they land, and make a short portage past a particularly dangerous place, where the current dashes tumultuously over and around a number of large boulders Lying in the bed of the stream. Above on the bank is the grave of a man who lost his outfit and in his despair committed suicide.

Adney was an expert at river navigation and his companion, though inexperienced in this kind of work was a champion oarsman, cool-headed, and gritty. On a later occasion I happened to be on the trail near the point referred to when I heard some men calling out from the top of the canyon like bank that the HARPER'S WEEKLY man was shooting the rapids. I ran across just in time to see the boat swept by with the speed of a bolt from a crossbow, leaping from wave-crest to wavecreat, and drenching its occupants with sheets of spray. Adney and Brown were standing erect in bow and stern, each wielding a single oar used as a paddle, and from their masterly course it was evident that they had their boat well under control. It was all over in a very small fraction of time. They had avoided by the narrowest margin jagged boulders that it seemed impossible to pass, and in a slather of foam shot out into the smooth water below.

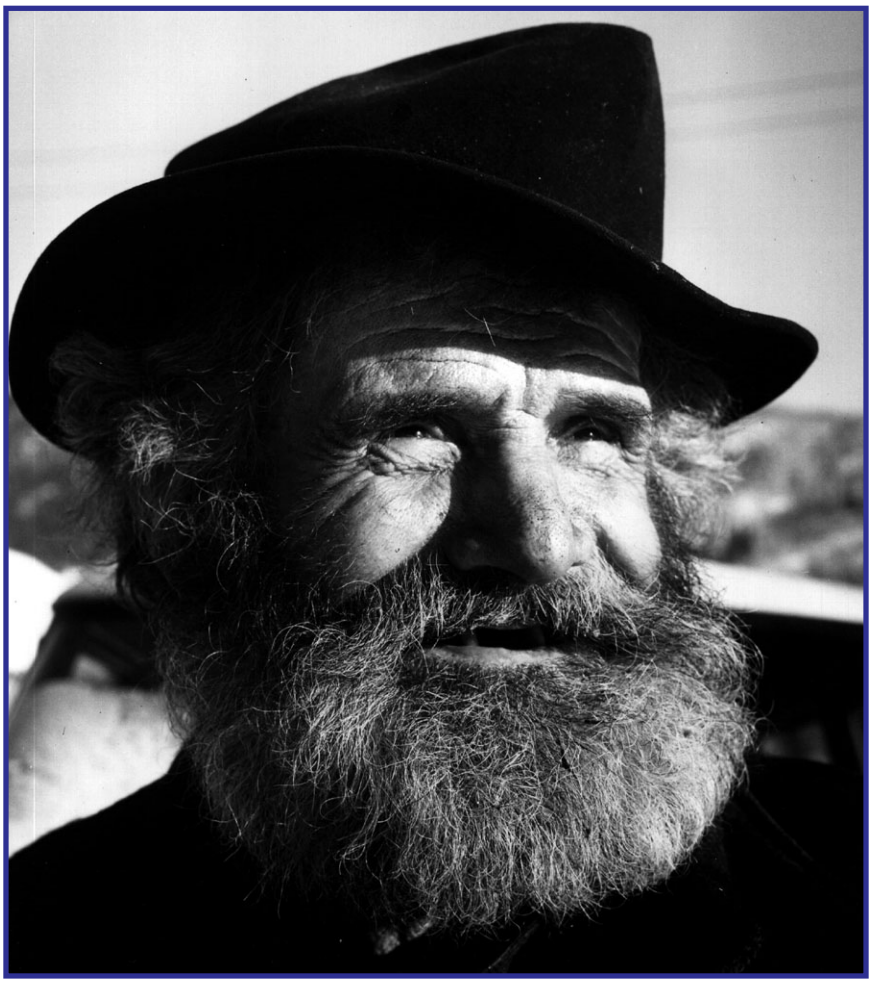
I overheard one man remark on the daredevil skill of the newspaper man, to which his companion replied: "Oh, that's the kind of a fellow Adney is. I knew him at Sheep Camp."

Dog team leaving Dawson for Dyea.

Black Mike as I Knew Him

By W.J. Swanson

In Dawson City, that late fall of 1937 with dredging operations closed down for the winter season, I began looking around for winter work. Early that spring I had landed in Dawson owing money to the WP&YR (White Pass & Yukon Route) for air passage from Whitehorse to Dawson and, by the time I found a job with YCGC (Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation), I also owed a considerable sum to the Regina Hotel and the Arcade Cafe for lodging and meals. I had worked most of the summer at



Black Mike, photographed by Richard Harrington in 1968. [Yukon Archives photo, Harrington Collection]

Arlington Camp, situated near the junction of Hunker Creek and the Klondike River, on ground preparation work ahead of Dredge No. 4 (later moved to Bonanza Creek). When work at Arlington began tapering off I was transferred to Granville Camp' situated near the junction of Dominion and Sulphur Creeks, where I again worked on ground preparation for Dredge No. 6 which was digging upstream along Sulphur Creek. Later still, when water flow ceased because of low temperatures, I was transferred to Middle Sulphur to work on construction of a new dredge (I believe it was No. 8) which was scheduled to start digging the following year.

When the construction project closed down for the winter, sometime around the end of October, having paid off all my debts but without enough money to spend the winter "outside", I began looking for winter work—rather scarce around Dawson City.

Following a day or so of inquiring around town, I was told by one of the oldtimers that Mike Winach was looking for someone to cut wood. We were standing in the lobby of the Occidental Hotel and the old fellow pointed out through the window saying, "There goes Mike now. Go and have a talk with him.

Mike was quite a tall man, lean and muscular with a mat of graying black hair which appeared to have been self maintained by the occasional use of scissors. His short, irregular beard, the same color as his hair, also appeared to have been clipped with scissors rather than cut with a razor. I decided he must be 55 or 60 years old, probably a bit over six feet in height, very wiry, probably not more than 185 pounds—a tough old man who showed no signs of even middle-aged spread.

Approaching him, I said, "I hear you're looking for someone to cut wood."

He looked at me and I could almost feel his eyes as, over a period of about 30 seconds, they took in my entire stature from head to toe, "Can you handle horses?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied and I noticed his eyes begin to soften while small smile-wrinkles began forming at their sides.

"You can use an axe, eh?"

"Yes."

"Okay," he said, "I'll give you a job. I'll be going out to camp tomorrow morning. I'll pick you up.

That was how I met Mike Wenovich, whose last name had been shortened to Winach but who was commonly known throughout the Klondike as Black Mike.

I will digress here briefly because I feel that, especially in his later years, Black Mike was treated quite unfairly by some members of the press as well as by others. He was one of those naturally taciturn northerners who didn't speak unless he had something to say. I recall a couple of lines from an old poem that I feel typifies such a man:

While others shout and cry, Old Black Mike is still, and thinks Of northern lights gone by.

He was often misunderstood by people who didn't know him—especially

more vocal people—and many such people interpreted his reticence as being boorish or ill-humored. I could easily imagine Mike, if being interviewed by routine questions from a reporter, saying something like, "I've got no time for this nonsense." And, if he got the idea that someone didn't believe something he said, such as his age, I believe Mike would have just walked away.

But, underneath that gruff exterior, Mike was a pleasant, generous and good-hearted fellow who would do whatever he could for a person in need. The following information was told to me by several old timers, including Martin Larsen Hale, commonly called Martin-Larsen or occasionally just Martin, a Norwegian ex-sailor who had jumped ship to join the gold rush and who had known Black Mike and his wife long before they were married. Details were also learned from Mike and Mrs. Winach or, as she was then known, Mrs. Mike.

Mike married the ex-Mrs. Gordon in 1937, shortly before I met him. Mrs. Gordon, Helen to those who knew her well, had been a dance hall girl in Dawson during the gold rush days and, sometime during her dance hall career, she'd met and married Mr.. Gordon, a brother of General Gordon of Khartoum. Following some years of married life Mr. Gordon had his wife declared insane and committed to the mental hospital at Essondale, near New Westminster, B.C. How long she was in that hospital, I don't know, but she was getting old and she made a request to hospital management that she be allowed to return to the Yukon to live out her last days there. The hospital authorities considered her harmless, but unable to look after herself so they let it be known that, if someone would marry her and be responsible for her, she could be discharged and allowed to return to the Yukon. Black Mike heard about the situation and agreed to marry her. She returned to the Yukon, they were married and henceforth she was known as Mrs. Mike.

That was Mike's first marriage, and it necessitated some changes in his lifestyle. For many years Mike's livelihood had been trapping. He had organized, and was operating, an extensive trapline along the Hart River, but because he was being married to a woman needing constant care, he deactivated his trapline and started a woodcutting business to supply firewood to residents of Dawson City.

I got to know both Mike and his wife well and, at different times, I heard them discuss their ages—he was 68 and she was 71. Although Mike was generally considered to be a very obstinate man, after I got to know him I found him to be pleasant company and a good conversationalist. I would also have to agree that Mrs. Mike was not entirely lucid at times, but she was quite harmless. She died in, I believe, 1940, and after her death, Mike went back to his trapline which he operated until the mid 1940s.

On a couple of occasions, in later years, I saw Mike's picture in the National Geographic Magazine with a caption under it saying something to the effect that "Mike Winage (Winach) or Black Mike claims to be — years old". Each time I saw it, I added the years since I'd worked for him and

found his claimed age to be correct, but it seemed nobody believed him—small wonder he was ornery with so many people insinuating he was a liar.

I returned to the Yukon in the summer of 1976 and asked at the tourist office where Black Mike lived. The middle-aged woman I spoke to said, "Mike lives at the old folks home now. But, there's no use going there, he won't talk to anybody."

"I think he'll talk to me." I replied. "I've known him for a long time."

"Well, you can try. If he's known you for a long time he might talk to you." she replied.

I drove to the old folks home, saw Mike sitting out on the porch, walked up to him and said, "You're Mike Winach aren't you?"

"Yes," he replied rather hesitantly.

"Do you remember a fellow by the name of Bill Swanson?"

"Yes."

"Well I'm Bill Swanson."

"Ah, but you were just a young fellow." Mike replied.

As we sat there and talked for some time, Mike told me about many of the old timers we had known, when they had died, how old they were and what they had died from. His mind was perfectly clear as we talked of events that had happened almost 40 years before. While we were talking the nurse came out, joined in the conversation and the question of Mike's age came up.

"Do you know how old Mike is?" the nurse asked.

"Yes." I replied doing some quick calculations.

"How old is he?"

"I don't know when his birthday is, but, within a year, he is 107," I replied.

Mike grinned under his beard showing smile wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and said, "That's right!"

The nurse, with a rather odd look on her face, left without further comment.

The following year I sent Mike a Christmas card; it was returned marked "deceased", so I assume that Mike died in 1977 at age 108.

Over the months I worked for him, Mike told me much about his earlier life: He had been born and had grown up in a rural part of Yugoslavia and, while still in his teens, he and a friend had been poaching game from an aristocrat's estate when they were seen and identified. Poaching being a serious offense in Yugoslavia, especially on grounds owned by an aristocrat, the two friends split-up, each making his own way out of the country before the police were able to arrest them. From Yugoslavia Mike went first to Turkey, then travelled the world working on boats and stopping wherever he could find work. Although he'd never seen his partner again, he thought he had gone to South Africa.

While sitting in the cookhouse one night, just talking, Mike made the statement that he had been 'to every country in the world, except China'. No doubt he was a well travelled man, however, on the basis that most of his

travels had been by ship, I would suspect there would be a few countries he had missed. He also mentioned that, while on his way to the Klondike, he had worked for some time with the drover who had planned to make his fortune by driving a herd of cattle from central British Columbia to the Klondike—Although I don't know many details of that ill-fated venture, I gather that some of the cattle actually made it to their destination.

On arriving in the Klondike a few years after the big stampede, he worked for a time on construction of the ditch that was built to carry water from a river far to the north, along the sides of the rounded mountains to a point on the north side of the Klondike Valley. From there it was carried by pipeline down the slope of the mountain and across the Klondike River to the Bear Creek area. According to Mike, the ditch was 73 miles long. I believe that was the source of water used to wash (by hydraulic means) the paydirt from Guggyville Gulch.

Mike later joined Frank Rae as a partner on his trapline along the Blackstone River. The two of them once took a year off from trapping and spent the winter travelling, by dog team, from Dawson to Nome. Mike told me that, since he first arrived in the Klondike, he had taken only one trip outside and that was in 1924. He also told me that Frank Rae took a trip outside, went to Mexico where he met a girl, married her and brought her back to his trapline on the Blackstone River—she loved it. About that time, Mike organized his own trapline, more than 200 miles long, on the Hart River which he operated until starting his woodcutting business in 1937.

Having spent a good part of one winter trapping along the Athabasca River in Northern Alberta, I had some idea of the problems involved in the operation of a trapline but, after listening to Mike tell of some of his problems along the Hart River, I realized I still had a lot to learn: He told of one occasion when his lead dog was leaping in front of the team, to break a trail through a patch of fresh snow, when he landed on the sharp stump of a sapling that had been cut, or broken, and the spear-shaped stump penetrated the dog's stomach muscles so badly that his innards were beginning to show. He loaded the dog into the toboggan and got to his next line cabin. Getting the dog inside, he went to work with chloroform, needle and special thread—items he always carried when travelling his trapline. He put the dog to sleep, washed, shaved and cleaned the wound area, sewed up the wound and the dog was back in harness within about three weeks. And he told of always carrying moccasins, that he'd made himself, to fit his dog's feet. When travelling through open areas, the snow freezes then, from the action of the wind, the surface becomes eroded in sharp, irregular shapes which will cut a dog's feet—that's when the dog moccasins came into use. There were tricks in every trade. I don't think there were many tricks, about trapping in that part of the country, with which Mike was not familiar.

Mike picked me up as agreed. He'd hired a halftrack to take Mrs. Mike, him and me out to his wood camp. We were dropped off a few miles past the airport, along the south bank of the Klondike River, from there we carried our gear across the river ice and walked the three miles or so to his camp

on Rock Creek. The main camp building consisted of the cookhouse, with living quarters for Mike and his wife at the back and a storage shed at the side, all built of logs. There were also two log bunkhouses for the wood cutters and a log barn for Rosie, Mike's horse. There was a meat cache—a small enclosure built on top of a 20-foot-high tree stump. The trunk had several sections of tin wrapped around it, well nailed, to prevent it from being climbed by mice, squirrels or wolverine. And, tied up around the yard, were Mike's six sled dogs.

Our water supply was from a pool in Rock Creek, about 100 yards down the hill from the cookhouse. When needing water, someone would go down to the creek with two four-gallon tins carried by a yoke across his shoulders. During the earlier part of the winter, water could dipped out of a hole cut through the surface of the ice, but later in the winter the creek froze solid, so it was necessary to take an axe and chip enough ice to fill the tins. Those tins were then placed in the cookhouse and bunkhouses where, in time, the ice melted.

A week or so after my arrival I was joined in the bunkhouse by Martin-Larsen and a couple of weeks later by a German fellow, Henry Schmidt, with whom I had worked at Arlington.

Although it was cold, having no thermometer we never knew just how cold, but we did have a bottle of mercury which we set outside the bunkhouse—if in the morning the mercury was frozen (at about -40 degrees), we didn't go to work, otherwise we cut wood every day. The wood cutting area was about one mile northwest of the camp in a wide expanse of dead timber. A fire had gone through the area some years before and the fire-killed trees were still standing, tinder dry and very hard. Each tree was felled and the top cut off leaving a 16 foot long pole. With Mike's horse, Rosie, those poles were yarded into piles along a cat road and, when we had enough wood cut for four sleigh loads, Henry Lepine (another oldtimer) would come out with his "Cletrac" crawler tractor and haul some 24 cords of wood to Dawson City.

Mrs. Mike never really trusted her husband: She seemed to be of the opinion that every time he left the cabin he was going out to have an affair with some woman hiding out in the woods. Consequently, it was not many days before she insisted on coming out to the woodcutting operations with us so she could keep an eye on Mike. Being still in my teens and very limited in experience with the opposite sex, I was very embarrassed one day when she came over to me and, very confidentially, said, "Bill, don't mind me, you know I'm old enough to be your mother but, you know Mike hasn't touched me for a whole week. He has another woman around here." What should a 19 year old reply to such a statement from a 71-year old woman complaining about the virility of her 68-year old husband?

Martin-Larsen, being an old acquaintance, was frequently asked by Mrs. Mike if she could walk with him to the working area, or home from the working area, and of course he couldn't really refuse. She would unburden herself to him in much the same way.

Martin was a constant smoker of a ripe old pipe and, as they walked along the trail, I could always tell how the conversation was going. If the talk was about normal things, Martin would let off a puff of smoke about every three or four steps but, if the conversation switched to Mike and his other woman, there would be one or more puffs of smoke for every step. On one occasion when Martin had escorted her back to camp, he came into the bunkhouse and started sounding off: "That goddam woman—she keeps telling me that Mike has another woman hiding out in the bush. I got so goddam mad I told her—Fer godsake woman, it's 30 below zero, do you think Mike would go up there and play around with another woman in this weather? If you think that's what's going on, you go up there and lay down in the snow. I'll come and fix you up'." She didn't walk with Martin for several days after that.

About every week or two, there would be an argument between Mike and his wife. She would walk out of the cabin and hike down the trail to Archie Fournier's place, near the airport, from where she would catch a ride to town. Later that day or the next morning, after his temper had cooled, Mike would go into town and bring her back—he really did look after her.

One day while we were out in the wood camp, Mike told me to take his rifle and see if I could get a moose or a caribou because he was running short of meat—he had brought the dogs and toboggan along to cart it home in case I got one. I left the wood cutting area about 11.00 o'clock and took about an hour's walk through the woods. About 15 minutes after I left, Martin went to where the dogs were tied, built up the fire and began making tea for lunch. I had been away about 30 minutes when a small herd of six caribou walked through the area right past the fire. Martin said that two of them walked right between the fire and where the dogs were tied. He had to shoo another away because it was walking right towards the fire and he was afraid the tea would be spilled. I had the only rifle and didn't see a thing.

On Christmas morning of 1937, I left Mike's camp and walked the 20 miles) or so to Dawson City. The temperature was very low and the air was dead calm. Part way along I met a fellow walking the other way and we stopped, briefly, to talk. After talking a while, he lit up a cigarette and, a few moments later we each went on our way. After walking for 50 yards or so I stopped and looked back. He was still walking but every puff of smoke that he had exhaled was almost exactly as he had left it. The ones farther back had expanded slightly more than the ones in front. There had been almost no movement of the smoke! I was wishing I'd had my camera along to get a picture.

On arrival in Dawson City later I was told that it had been minus 72 degrees F (-58 C) that morning.

Martin quit the woodcamp sometime in early January and that resulted in me hearing more than my share of Mrs. Mike's troubles. Also, two other men had arrived at the camp to select and cut timbers for props in a mine shaft. The first afternoon they were there, Mike wanted to show them where

to cut their timbers and he asked me to go back to camp and start cooking the evening meal. Somehow that became routine so, in addition to cutting wood and listening to Mrs. Mike, I became the cook for six people. The cooking of those meals, compounded by Mrs. Mike's complaining, got to me and I just packed up one day, about the early part of February, quit the job and went to town. I regretted the action later and wished I had talked to Mike before I left, but the move had been made and I suppose I was too proud to go and ask for my job back.

On my arrival in Dawson I booked a room at the Occidental Hotel, as I recall the rate was $12.00 per month, and I remained there until work started at Lower Sulphur in the latter part of April. That couple of months was an unusual existence for me. Aside from the occasional walk, all I did was eat, play cards and sleep. I played a lot of cribbage, learned to play bridge and pinochle and occasionally played penny ante poker.

There was usually one high stakes poker game under way at the Occidental Hotel during afternoons and evenings. On one occasion, when I had been playing penny ante poker and had an unusual run of luck—I think I was up about five dollars after winning about ten hands in a row—someone suggested that, with my luck, I should get into the big game downstairs. I listened and I did. I bought in for a $50 stack of chips (a lot of money in 1938) and within about ten minutes my stack was gone. That was the best gambling lesson I've ever had. I still play the occasional game of poker, but I'm not an avid player and when my contributed funds are gone, I quit.

Some nights I would go to Apple Jimmy's place and roll dice for a good part of the night. Apple Jimmy was a Greek who'd arrived, in the early gold rush days, with a good supply of apples which he sold to the miners for a good price. With that beginning, he opened a small general store on Front Street with a games room in the back. I believe he retired from business after his premises were badly damaged by fire when the adjoining Yukonia Hotel was destroyed by fire early in 1939.

A boring existence it was—Dawson City in winter time. Each night I would stay up a bit later and get up later in the morning. That trend would continue until I was going to bed about 7:00 AM and getting up about 3:00 PM; then, one night I would not go to bed at all and things would get back to normal for a short while, until the cycle started again. And, not a day went by that I didn't regret having left my wood cutting job without talking it over with Mike. Although I finally did apologize to Mike for walking out so abruptly, I didn't get around to it until that later visit in 1976.

In 1989 I was on a trip through Dawson City and stopped to talk with some of the local people. I spoke to one fellow, who claimed to have known Black Mike and made the comment, "Yeah, he was a stubborn old bastard all right. He didn't change even when he died. When they were taking his corpse up to the graveyard, the coffin slid off the hearse—it was as though he was being stubborn to the very last."

Black Mike in his Later Years

By Ron Wendt

In his last years roaming the streets of Dawson City, Mike Wineage, known to locals as Black Mike, collected sticks for his fireplace and bones for his dog.

Mike was 107 years old when he died in a Dawson nursing home in 1977. He was picking up driftwood along the frozen Yukon River and froze his feet severely.

A big man at six feet two inches, and a full black beard, Mike was an immigrant from Yugoslavia where he was born in 1870. He came to the United States in the late 1890s and settled around Butte, Montana. It was here where Mike became involved in the labor movement. A large group of Slavs were working the local mines when the sheriff shot and killed their local leader of their labor group. The sheriff had to leave town for awhile. When he came back, some Slavs were waiting for him and Mike was in a group that killed the sheriff.

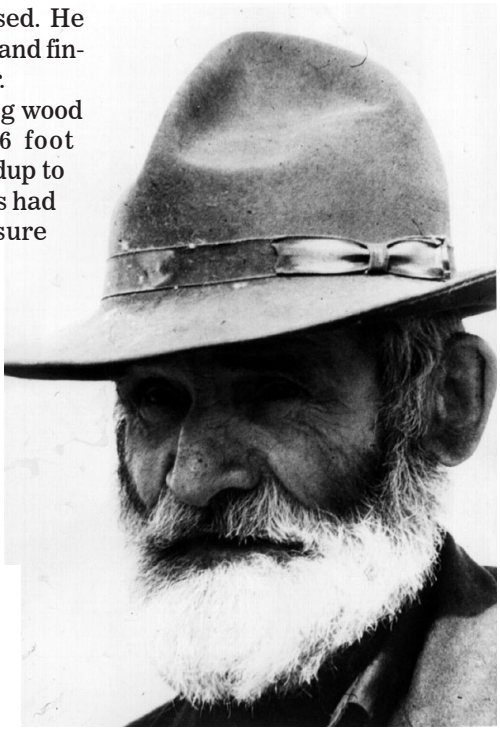
It was 1906 when Mike fled the states and hit the streets of Dawson, searching for a better life and running from his past. One old timer who came into the Klondike in '98 said he didn't remember seeing Mike until 1906.

He was not one to be missed. He was a big man with large hands and fingers and a black beard and hair.

Mike made his living cutting wood for people in Dawson—in 16 foot lengths. Occasionally he headedup to the creeks and mined. His hands had large callouses on them, the sure sign of a hard worker.

Mike was at the fire hall one day playing cards. A man from National Geographic asked him how old he was. Mike replied, "I was born on March 15, 1870." That was when Mike was ninety-six. Some townfolks say Mike could barely see his cards because his hands were so big. He was a powerful man in his day.

He became ill at 97 and went to the doctor up in Mayo.



The doctor asked how old Mike was. "You want to make it to 100..cut out the booze!" said the doctor. Mike quit just like that. He used to spend a lot of time in the bars. He was still doing some foundation work at the time and would take friends into the bars and buy them drinks and smoke cigars. Then he'd look in his pockets and say, "Before when I was drinking I never had any money. Now I've got all kinds!"

Mike was married once to a woman of the line. She had to quit the business because the younger girls took away her customers. The townspeople called her "Rain in the Face" because her face was so wrinkled. There was a wood camp on the Klondike River where they lived.

When Mike died, there was a big turnout for his funeral. Mike's casket was carried to the grave site where a pall bearer walked out over the grave hole on a board to let the casket down. The board broke sending the poor man into the hole with the casket tipped sideways. Dawson old timer Windy Farr described the event.

"The lid had popped open and it looked like Mike was trying to get up the side. That's the way it looked to me! Mike had his feet up on the side. The minister and the crowd were horrified and didn't know what to do so a few of us put Mike back."

Black Mike's beard was all trimmed up and he looked grand according to most of his friends. In fact they say he looked better in death than life He was all dressed up in a fine suit. When it was all over the people didn't know whether to laugh or cry!

One of his close friends stood up and said, "Mike would have wanted it this way."

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Along Bonanza Creek near Dawson City (SH photo, 1976)

Gold-hunting in the Stikine

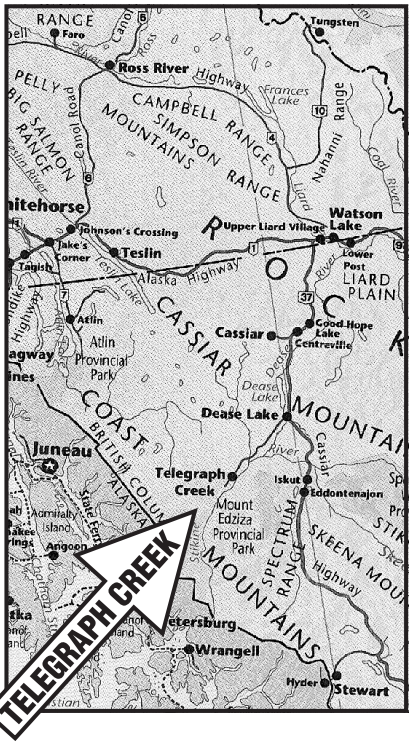
By Lena Mann

Growing up in the bush, we were the happiest with a fishing rod in one hand and a gold pan in the other. Some people may think that we were poor, but truthfully, we always thought poor people were the sad ones, and we were a rather happy lot. We ate mom's homemade breads and thought we were in heaven when she went all out on a Christmas dinner.

There were times when we'd look through old magazines of *Good HouseKeeping* and drool over the advertisements of rich chocolate cakes that looked as if you could nearly eat the page itself. When our parents would go out on a trip to Smithers for hay and cases of food we'd make these cakes and eat them for breakfast and supper with nothing else.

When I think back, food was a pretty important part of our lives. But this is a story about gold, not food. Although when we saw those first gold flakes, there was a different kind of a hunger and I understood what had drawn many a man to his death for the hunt of a rock that was useless except for the price it would bring.

While fishing on the Stikine River one early spring day, one of the kids were panning just below us, irritating because we were sure it was due to their noise that was scaring any fish away. When they had found a few tiny specks, the rest of us lost interest in the fish that weren't biting anyway. The fight was on with seven kids and one gold pan. Dad solved it by taking it himself.



It was pretty exciting to find the gold specks in nearly every pan load of dirt. Over the next few days, we spent it hiking up over cliffs, canyons, creeks and brush as we scouted the shores of the Stikine for the motherlode. We never found it, but we found a very likely place just a mile from our driveway. The only problem was the fact it was three hundred yards down over a steep slope to the fifty-foot bank of river.

Over the next week while dad built a sluice box, we cut a trail with pick and shovel over the slope to the river. Dad had built several long boxes with carpet in the bottom,

large screen was placed in the upper part of the box, and finer screen in the lower end. Packing the boxes down with one on either end they were set up with a slight slope tipping toward the river. The hose that mom had planned to use for running water into the house was dragged to the river and set up to have pretty good pressure. All was ready except for the real work.

The fun quickly ran out and the real work became a reality. We used shovels, picks and bars to dig out and move tons of earth. By hand we dumped the dirt into the upper end of the sluice box while someone stayed at the boxes to work the dirt down under the pressure of water. We traded off regularly on this job, as the freezing water would numb our hands in no time. The rocks were thrown into the river, and then carefully with a garden fork the gravel was washed over the screens to let the heavy sand and "all the gold" drift into the carpet.

At noon every day we took a break to wash the carpets into five-gallon plastic buckets, and then everything was replaced for the afternoon. We would set up our fishing poles so we could leave them along the river, tied to a bush and continue with moving the earth. By evening, the plastic pails were half filled with dark soil and felt as if they weighed a ton each. Taking turns packing them up the steep slope we'd haul them home in the old Ford.

Mom did a lot of the work in the evening. The dirt was dried over the cook stove on cookie sheets and then with first a magnet the lead was taking out, and then carefully the gold separated into vials. The flecks that could be picked up with tweezers were put into one vial, another for finer stuff, and the dust put into a can with the sand that couldn't be separated.

By the end of the summer, we had several vials of gold, which was pretty sad for all the work we'd put into it. Even though we hadn't become "rich" with the gold, it taught us how gold fever could work... always the

The Stikine River, B.C. [L. Mann photo]

Where the Tahltan River joins the Stikine River. The road is the main highway to Telegraph Creek. [L. Mann photo]

next scoop shovel was going to be the payoff.

For some reason, my dad thought we could make some money on staking placer claims. I never really thought much about it, since it was fun and exciting to do. As kids, the end results were the least important. We staked miles and miles of these claims, hiking many more miles, and seeing a whole lot of rough, wild country that we wouldn't have seen if there hadn't been a reason.

The claims stretched over into ten-mile, where a creek ran down a draw for a natural boundary. We spent quite a bit of time in the bush there and it was prime bear country. Wild meadows, swamps, and thick brush with down logs everywhere. We packed shovels, picks and axes along with gold-pans and bags for collecting samples, so we never carried a rifle. We tried to make enough noise to scare off any bears, but after a few miles, we were too tired to do much except breathe heavy.

We came upon one bear, a little brown one in a meadow that wasn't more than two hundred feet from us. Banging the shovels together only made him jump onto a log and peer at us. One of us hollered, and he came quickly toward us to stop and rise to his hind legs. That was enough for me and my brother Clint. We both went up the nearest trees. He picked a thick willow and was quickly at the top, sadly, mine was so thin and willowy that by the time I was at the top it had bent over and I wasn't more than two feet off the ground. The bear left quickly after that, and I think it was due to all the laughter.

Dad and Rod ran into a griz later on in the same part of the land. The sow had two cubs and was on a slope directly below them and in the way of

their line. They tried to scare the bear off by yelling, rolling rocks down at her, but she and the cubs would calmly watch the rocks roll past them, and go back to grazing. The bears won out and the guys made a half mile detour around her

A few years later, Rod bought himself a wet-suit and a dredge. Determined there was gold in the Stikine, he went into the river with the audience of the younger brother and sisters.

For awhile he dredged the edge of the river where he could reach bottom fairly easily. But when the kids started losing interest, he made a spectacle of himself by floating out into the river, pretending he was drowning, and making the kids scream with either fear or excitement. He continued to move across the river, not thinking about the facts that there had been a few people over the years, green to what the Stikine could do, died in the river. He continued to bounce across the river, sometimes going under to be banged up against a boulder. He later said that it was surprising how strong the river really was. Rod fought the current as it swept him down stream about a quarter of a mile, before being able to climb up the bank on the other side. He was a strong a swimmer, and yet even here, where the river was most gentle, he was nervous about coming back across. He hiked up river in his wet suit for a half a mile and then slowly he started across. This caused just as much excitement with the kids on the bank. He landed just below the kids, and climbing out, he said there was nothing to it.

He never found much gold, but he continued through the years to hike the river with a gold pan. He walked through country that people only dared in a helicopter. Over the years, he has done a lot of thinking, studying, and has come to the conclusion about where the gold really is. But he's not telling.. not even his sister.

In most rivers and creeks there's a little bit of gold to be found in the North. At the Tanzella River, just below where I now live, I took a gold-pan last summer and scooped some surface sand. I panned the sand down to the fine black sand and found several very tiny flecks. My husband took my pan away, dug a two foot hole, and panned for an hour without finding a single fleck.

People have lost big with the gold fever. The country is filled with empty mines. Claims where it looks as if they might return any day. One thing to remember is that a mine is never considered abandoned and to take anything from these camps is considered theft.

There's plenty of stories where men have became bushed living alone in the wilderness as they sought out the rich rock. One waited for a family of U.F.O.'s to join him for dinner. Miners have cut their house down the centre because of arguments. But I know of others who live with their families in an envious lifestyle, with the freedom to come and go as they please.

It's strange when you hear of people with the gold fever. But if you're ever out panning a creek and come across a few flecks, the excitement, the pounding of the heart, tells you what the fever must feel like. As for me, I'll continue to pan the odd creeks,and maybe one day I'll luck out and find the golden egg.

The Log Sky-Scrapers

By Darrell Hookey

They are the most photographed buildings in Whitehorse. Even a person half way around the world with a passing interest in the Yukon has seen a picture of the two and three-storey log skyscrapers on Lambert Street.

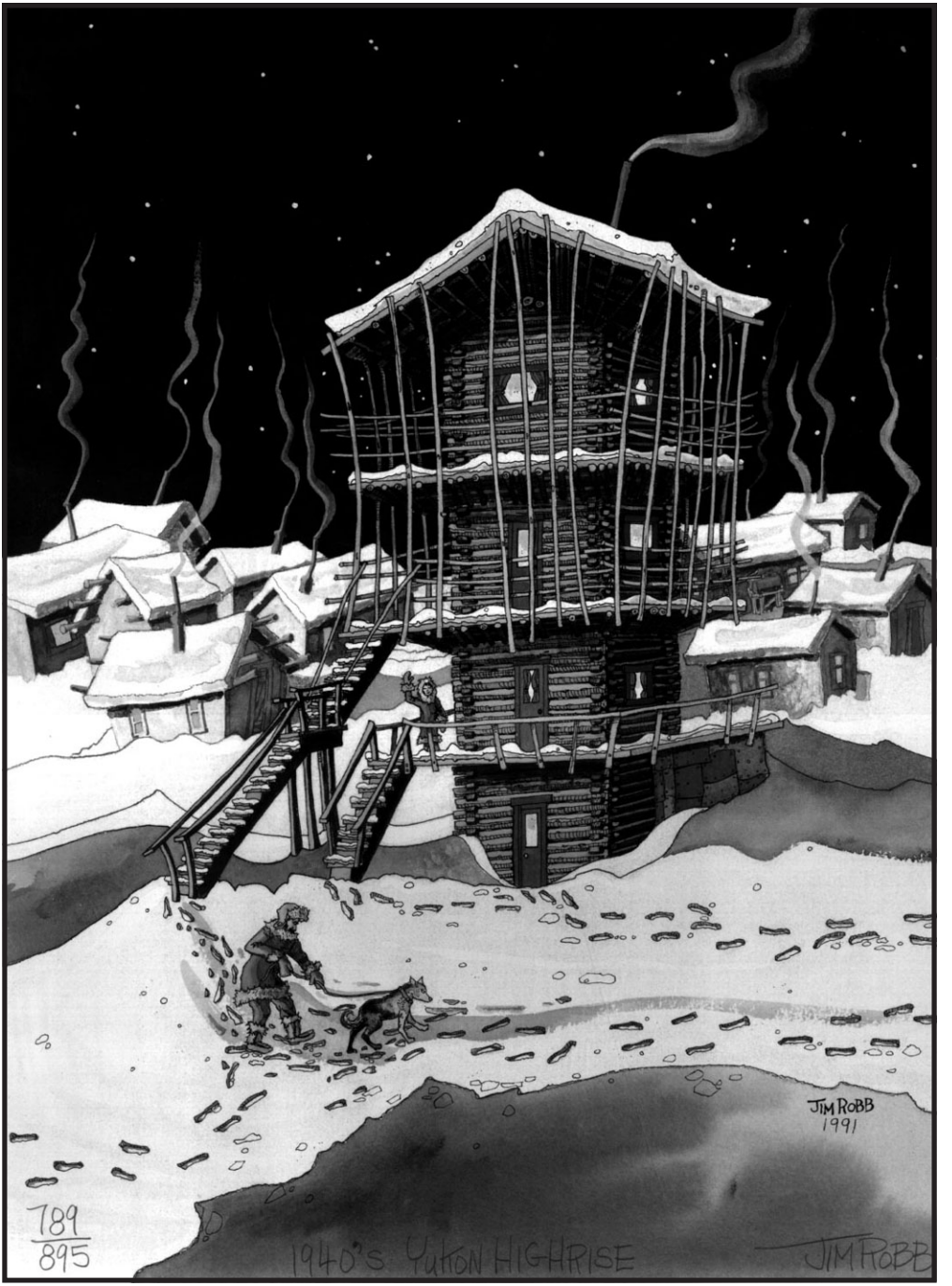
But as remarkable as the buildings are, their builder was not considered remarkable in the late 1940s as construction was under way.

Townfolk would watch him each day expertly cut the ends of 300-pound logs and swing them high on the end of a rope and pulley rig into a nearly perfect fit, until, three years later in 1949, the three-storey structure was 58 logs high.

Even the fact Martin Patrick Berrigan was 78 years old when the job was finished only made him a little more remarkable in the eyes of his neighbours. Although thousands of tourists who visit the buildings today consider him remarkable, back then he was just one of many typical Yukoners .. a character in a town full of characters.

Photo courtesy of YHMA, Whitehorse.

Fifty years after the gold rush, Yukoners were a hardy lot with enough natural ability and toughness to fix a cabin ... or move it ... or build a new one. Martin blended in with his fellow Yukoners nicely in the uniform of the day—coveralls, plaid shirt, an old cap, good boots and a pair of work gloves. He wasn't a tall man, but he had a husky build.



The log sky-scraper in the 1940s. ©1991 by Jim Robb. Published by the Colourful Five Percent Company, Whitehorse. Print loaned to us by Yukon Gallery.

Instead of being robust, however, he was mild mannered, clean shaven and a devout Catholic. He didn't drink, didn't smoke and didn't have many friends as he kept to himself. He never married.

Martin built the skyscrapers mostly by himself. He cut the trees 10 miles from town on the other side of the Yukon River. He peeled the bark from the logs and hired Tony Cyr to haul them to Lambert Street by horse team and sleigh.

"Poor guy," people would comment in the stores and offices of Whitehorse. "He needs something to do."

One admirer, though, was John Olof Erickson. He would say to his teenaged daughter, Gudren (Sparling), "Let's go see how far Martin got today."

He loved to walk around town at night seeing what was new. And it was with some amusement that the owner of the two-storey Regina Hotel would watch Martin build what would become the tallest building in Whitehorse at the time.

But why three storeys? The most popular explanation is he was challenged by Clem Emminger, an electrician who lived in a cabin next door to the two skyscrapers. After watching the first skyscraper built to two storeys, he asked Martin why he couldn't go three storeys on the next one being built behind it.

Another suggestion is Martin wanted more rent from the same piece of land. Martin, however, told Laurent Cyr it cost less to heat a three-storey cabin than three single cabins.

From what is known of Martin, all three factors probably played a part in his decision.

Martin was born in Ontario (likely close to the Quebec border owing to his French accent and bilingualism) on November 11, 1871. He came to the Klondike on the Trail of '98 and staked a total of 11 claims between 1899 and 1935.

Mostly he worked on the dredges during the summer and in the '30s began to winter in Whitehorse.

By 1939 he had started to feel run down and suffered from headaches. "Life is too short to allow for getting sick," he said, and he moved to Whitehorse permanently.

Wartime construction caused a shortage of accommodation, so Martin started building single cabins to rent out. He built the Berrigan's Cabins (mistakenly called "Branigan's Cabins" today by many) on Lambert Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues and moved into one of them. He then built his first two-storey cabin which is called "Mah Bing's Residence".

From there he moved up Lambert Street, between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, and bought the land formerly used for Roland Ryder's house, stables and vegetable garden. He built the two-storey log cabin closest to the street and then started on the three-storey structure.

The foundation was 12-inch diameter logs lying on the ground with walls of 9-inch logs on top. The end of each log had a 12-inch spike hammered into it for added stability. The cracks between the logs were chinked with moss and oakum.

The cabins were sparse of conveniences or decoration, but five of Martin's cabins are still standing today.

Not long after the three-storey skyscraper was completed, Martin said to Clem Emminger, "I think I'm done for." He entered the hospital with a heart attack on a Friday and died on Sunday, February 26, 1950, at the age of 79.

The world had just begun to realize that, amazingly enough, there was a "three-storey log cabin up there in the Yukon". Magazine and newspaper articles had already featured Whitehorse's unlikliest addition to its skyline, but Martin never shared in the skyscrapers' celebrity.

Two years later, Martin's estate sold the skyscrapers to Robert Rowan, an insurance salesman. The cabins rented out for $25 each month and were always full.

Usually the tenants were a single person or a couple since the one-room cabins were only 16 feet by 16 feet. There was no running water or electricity and heat was provided by a Yukon Stove with a common chimney running up the centre.

Laurent Cyr operated Cyr's Services in those days delivering water and wood and taking away waste and garbage. He cursed Martin and his three-storey log skyscraper as he carried two four-gallon pails of water up to the top floor at just five cents a pail. The stairs were tacked to the outside and the water slopping from the pails would freeze on the steps making his trip down again even more dangerous.

It was the third storey that convinced him to buy a pump.

One of the tenants was Lt. Colonel Bernard Zohn, an engineer in the American Army. When his wife, Frances, moved to Whitehorse to join him he left the Regina Hotel and moved into the log skyscraper. They were delighted with the idea of living in such a unique and interesting building.

Genera Graber saw a picture of the buildings in a Toronto newspaper and decided she must live there. She made the move west and bought the property in the summer of 1953.

She lived in the bottom of the three-storey building and rented out the other four units.

One time a tenant from the top floor complained there was no electricity from the extension cord that ran up into his room. She said when the rent is paid he will have electricity again. The tenant argued he did pay the rent, but was told that the tenant on the second floor hadn't paid and they will both get electricity again when the account is paid.

By 1964, Mrs. Graber was ready to sell the log skyscrapers to a developer who wanted to tear them down and build an apartment building.

Earl Bennett came to their rescue. He made a living buying homes, fixing them up and re-selling them. He was among a core of Whitehorse residents who kept an eye open for historic buildings that were in danger of being torn down.

He heard that $3,000 had been offered by the developer, so he offered $3,500.

Right away he installed electricity and plumbing and increased the rent to $100 per month from $75.

As well, he and three partners opened a souvenir shop, Skyscraper Treasures, on the bottom floor of the two-storey building closest to the street. The manager, Marion Copp, lived on the second floor.

In 1971, the log skyscraper was taking a bad dip to one side reminding people of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Earl Bennett sold the buildings to Waldemar and Gisela Bellon with the understanding they would fix them up.

Each side was lifted up and concrete fittings were placed under. Standing straight once again, they added drywall inside.

As the buildings got older, they increasingly became in danger of being torn down. The speculative and property values were too high for any historical society to pay and then preserve them. Besides, as famous as the log skyscrapers were, they weren't really old enough to warrant legislated protection.

But they continue to survive through the interest of private individuals who keep them full and standing from owner to owner.

Few people today believe they will ever be torn down. They are certainly strong enough to be moved to another location ... but Yukoners will never allow them to be torn down.

The log skyscrapers served as a beacon to the rest of the world as the Yukon entered the second half of the twentieth century. They signalled the message that the Yukon was much more than beautiful scenery with a Gold Rush history ... there are Yukoners here who are tough, self reliant and indefinably clever.

Just like Martin Berrigan.

The cabins in 2004 (SH photo).

The Goldseeker

Part Three

 Sam Holloway

Editor's Note:
This is a work of fiction.

If not for the endless supply of rum, I might have fallen into a great despair. Who wouldn't? I had been abandoned on a tiny island in the Pacific with hardly any food, with no shelter from wind and rain and sun... all because I couldn't bear to watch a man being punished unjustly.

It was my first taste of liquor and I almost gagged with every swallow. It tasted like a mad bull's urine, smelled like a black bear's breath at the end of hibernation, and it hit my stomach like tar and soapy water—but the effect was almost instant.

I looked into the empty tin cup and filled it again. I felt relaxed for the first time in eternity. I felt a oneness with the universe. I lost my despair at being left alone. I looked at all the kegs of rum surrounding me and thought to myself, I could stay here forever. And I filled the tin cup again, spilling rum onto the dry sand but I had plenty more.

I woke up later and swallowed a drink of water, gnawed on a potato, then started on the rum again. I learned to control my intake until I achieved that oneness with the gods again. Now I knew why they called it "spirits." I took the writing paper and pen and ink from my pack and began a letter to Beth. I started that letter dozens of times but the rum always took over my mind before I finished. I could never make sense of what I had written and I buried all the letters deep in the sand.

At times, when I poured more rum into my cup, I would stagger or fall and the keg would tip over onto the sand, with the brown liquid gurgling out, and I would have to open another keg. I didn't worry. In the days since the ship had abandoned me here, more kegs had rolled up with the surf and I stood them upright. Under the Pacific sun, the kegs swelled slightly and shrank at night with a faint, squealing sound. I imagined the kegs to be friends surrounding me in my isolation.

I slipped the iron hoops from an empty keg and stood the curved staves in the sand. When they had dried in the sun for a few days, I started a fire with them and the grey, acrid smoke rose up to be carried away on the wind.

How the days went by, I didn't know. Sometimes I drank too much rum and passed out on the sand, to be baked like a lobster in the sun. I woke up in agony and swilled enough rum to take it away the pain.

Through spilling and drinking, I had emptied four kegs of rum. One day I heard music. Bagpipes. The wonderful sounds came right out the sand and from the small hill behind me and from the ocean itself. I heard someone laughing and realized it was me, laughing and hearing myself laugh and then laughing again.

I began to wake up filled with dread. It took more and more rum to ease the awful fear that started in my stomach and spread itself to the rest of my body and mind. It didn't matter any more that I was alone. My universe had shrunken, tiny as it was, to a terror-filled mind and a cup of rum. Instinctively, I always went to sleep with a jacket over my face and chest to keep out the sun. One morning I awoke to find my jacket gone.

Where was it? Oh, over there, lying in the sand. I stared at it. I started to move. It hunched itself into a wrinkly, creeping mass coming toward me. Then it jumped at my face. I tore it away and threw it out onto the sand. If I watched it from the corner of my eye, it would lie dormant. But if I turned to look at it directly, the jacket would turn itself into a writhing, hideous mass that always jumped straight at my face. I ripped it away and finally buried it deep in the sand, along with the letters to Beth.

I must have been eating without knowing. I reached into the sack of potatoes to grab one. I felt around in the bottom until my fingers closed over the very last potato, tiny and wrinkled. I realized, somehow, that many days had passed, perhaps thirty, perhaps ninety.

The only thing to do now was to drink enough poison rum to kill myself. But it wouldn't stay down in my stomach long enough to do that. I had to sip at it, swirling it in my mouth and letting it trickle down. I had come to love the taste of it, the smell of it, the colour of it. I could lie on the sand and watch the clouds turn into white horses. But then something odd would happen. The horses would turn into pigs and come hurtling down from the sky. I tried to remember who I was. Nothing seemed clear any more.

But one vision kept repeating itself and I remember it yet. so vividly did the nightmare burn into my mind.

A huge golden bear, of a type I had never heard of, was chasing Beth along a path in the woods. She was as naked as the last time I saw her, and she screamed my name. She ran into a small log cabin and slammed the door. The huge bear pushed down the door as though it were made of paper. Its head and shoulders went into the cabin and I could hear Beth screaming, 'Hank! Hank! Help me, Hank!'

In my fear, induced by all the days of drinking rum, I stood and watched until the bear's yellow back disappeared into the cabin and all went silent. The dream played over and over and it left me writhing in the sickness of guilt and remorse over my cowardice. At least a dozen times, I left my true love to die in the jaws of a beast. The certainty of what happened was too real, as though I had stared for a moment into a Gypsy crystal ball. I prayed to the gods for that vision to cease and it never returned... until...

One day I saw people wading through the surf. They came toward me, waving and yelling. I knew they were a mirage, even when they carried me out to their boat and hoisted me onto a ship.

Then I had another dream. I had been strapped to a bed and left there for days. I heard people moaning and laughing and surely it wasn't true, but the whole place seemed to be full of... crazy people. In fact, I dreamed I was locked up in a lunatic asylum. One day they unbuckled the straps and let me walk around. I staggered and fell and got up again. Someone dressed in a grey uniform handed me a bowl of greasy stew and I slurped it down.

Daylight—striped daylight—shone in dusty rays through the high windows. The stripes were caused by thick iron bars in front of the glass. I wanted to talk to somebody but all the people paced around in circles and wouldn't listen. Then the man in the grey cotton uniform took my arm and led me down a hall. He opened a door and said, "This is your room."

I looked and saw four small beds covered with grey blankets. Wooden boxes the size of steamer trunks were positioned between each bed. The man pulled up the lid of a box and there lay my pack in the bottom. I noticed a chain attached to the foot of each bed with an iron ring on the end of the chain.

"And long will I be here?" I asked.

"Forever."

He closed the door behind me. I set my pack on the nearest bed and turned it upside down. My little bible fell out and some dry, yellow sand. It was everything I owned.

'I sure could use a shot of rum,' I thought. 'I wish I could come to and pry open another keg.'

The door opened and a man in a black suitcoat stood there, filling the door to the sides and top. He wore a white shirt under the coat and he had greasy black hair combed straight back over his ears. The ears. I couldn't help staring at them, shelving out from his head at right angles, pointed at the tops as though held up with clothespins.

"Good day, sir," he said. "So you are my new cellmate."

"Cellmate? Is this a jail, sir?"

"Indeed it is. A jail where no one ever finishes his time."

"What are those chains on the beds for," I asked him. He walked over, all 250 pounds of him, and sat on the bed beside mine. It creaked and bowed under his weight. He crossed his legs and I noticed he wore very shiny, expensive shoes.

"They shackle us every night. Just on one leg, though, so a person can turn over if one lies just so."

He shoved a big hand toward me. Black tufts of hair poked down from his shirt sleeves. My trembling, sweating palm took hold of his and we shook hands.

"I wish this dream would end," I said. "I need a shot of rum."

He laughed and I saw that his teeth, as white as fresh snow, had two incisors inherited from his ancestor, Count Dracula.

"My name is Frederick. Would you like to know how you came to be incarcerated here?"

"Tell me."

"They brought you in from a ship. Picked you up on an island, surrounded by kegs of rum and completely out of your mind. That's all I know. So what is your name and how did you come to be left on the island?"

So I told him the story. As I spoke his face inched closer to mine. I thought he was about to kiss me. When I got to the part about the sailors whipping Ben, I could see Frederick's eyes get bigger and bigger, and then...

His eyes turned completely backward in his head. All I could see were two white globes and he started to fall backward.

He tumbled off the bed onto the floor and lay there, with his egg-yolk eyes. Red froth bubbled from his lips which were pulled up into a grimace and he convulsed there on the floor.

I ran out into the hall. "Help! Help!" But no one came nor ever turned to look my way. In the main hall where we ate, a guard or worker sat in a small booth. Through the iron-barred window, I could see him reading a book. I yelled at him, "Fredrerick is dying!"

The guard kept reading, flipping to the next page, and I walked back to the room. Frederick lay on the floor. He had stopped flailing about and his chest heaved up and down as he gasped for air, although he was unconscious.

A loud bell, ding, ding, ding, ding, rang out and I heard a clattering of feet rushing to the main hall. Dinner. Another pint of stew served in a wooden bowl, a tin cup of water. Some ate with spoons, some drank from the bowl, and some stuck their faces into the food and sucked it in with the most hideous sounds you can imagine.

I couldn't bear to look closely at my brother prisoners. It seemed they had all been put here for a very good reason. To get them away from society, from their families, to be locked up and forgotten. Because now I knew I had descended into Bedlam, most likely in Seattle or San Francisco. I ate my stew and wished for more. I had been greatly weakened by my stay on the island and my body clamoured for nourishment, for recovery.

I shuffled back to my room. Frederick was lying on his bed and I tried to wake him but he began to snore. I flopped onto my back and listened to the snoring; it reminded me of the wind-driven surf rolling onto my island of rum. I wished I were back there, but with more food this time. At last I fell asleep. I awakened as the room darkened as day ended. Without my knowing it, someone had shackled my leg to the bed.

A year went by. No one came to see me. No one but Frederick had asked my name. I yelled at the guard in the cage one day and they cut back on my food, to a quarter or less of the little they had been feeding me. After two weeks I could barely walk. I leaned against his window and apologized. Gradually, they returned my food to the full allotment. I was lucky. Other inmates had been strapped into a metal chair and had terrific electric shocks applied to every part of them.

Frederick took a spell several times a week. When I told him the story of Elizabeth and her father, he went into convulsions twice in one day. He had been an epileptic since the age of three. His parents and his brother had brought him here when he was eight. Frederick had been in the asylum for twenty-one years. He told me his complete name: Frederick Thornton Fauntleroy.

He had the manners of a lord and talked like a philosopher. Nobody had taught him anything. He had been born with the bearing of an aristocrat. He could go on and on about Plato and Socrates and Spinoza and Descartes and all those other brainy fellows that I cared nothing about. I named him Lord Fauntleroy, and shortened that later to "Faunt."

One day I said to him, "Well, Faunt, what would happen if you stopped taking those spells. Would they let you out of here?"

"Yes. I could get out. But my family wouldn't like it. They have my inheritance in their bank accounts. If I did get out, as soon as I had one of my 'sicknesses,' someone would carry me back here again."

"Ever been with a woman, Faunt?"

"I've hardly ever seen one, except in these books."

His box had several changes of clothes, all black and white, and under the bed he had piles of books, sent by his brother.

"Out of guilt, he sends me a package once a year."

"What if I could cure you, Faunt? So you never got sick again."

"Nobody can do that. Only God can do that. And He doesn't care."

So I told Faunt about my time in the deep well. How some sort of power got me out of there. Maybe it would work again. On Faunt. On us. But how would I create that feeling I had at the bottom of the well? So it would work again?

We looked at the problem from every angle. We talked into the night, two voices murmuring in the dark. If one our roommates complained, Faunt would hold him up against the wall by the throat.

"We're talking, see? Now don't interrupt."

We agreed that only a desperate situation could trigger this power to come down from the universe. Well, who could be more desperate than we two? Who, on all of Darwin's green planet, could be living in such wretchedness?

But nothing happened. We gave up for a week, not mentioning the subject. One night I lay on my bed, unable to sleep because of the moonlight shining off the walls. I wanted to go for a walk, to breath some fresh air, to talk to a normal human being. I moved my leg and heard the chain rattle against the steel bedpost. I could feel myself falling, into a deep despair. I imagined myself to be the tiniest speck of sand on an endless beach. I knew I was nothing at all. My ego had been beaten down by hopelessness. I thought about nothing, I felt about nothing, I was just another grain of sand amongst all the sand in the universe.

Suddenly, I angled myself sideways on the bed. I shook Frederick awake.

"What? What?"

"Shut up. Don't say a word. Put your hands down by your sides," I said.

With my right hand I could reach his forehead. I pushed back some of the greasy black hair and left my hand there.

"Do you believe something is out there, Faunt? That something in the universe cares about us, just a little bit? Do you believe there's some kind of power out there than can be tapped into?"

He snapped his head back and forth, trying to wake himself. "Maybe."

"No maybe's. Do you believe or not?"

"Yes."

"Then lie still. Just let go."

I kept my hand on his forehead. Then I went back to being a grain of sand. I left my body and mind somewhere else and became just a... what? A channel, a conduit, something like that.

I could feel Faunt twitching under my hand.

"My God! Something is moving around in my head, Hank!"

I kept my hand on his forehead. I swear I could see, in the semi-darkness, little crackles of light between my fingers. "Lie still, Faunt. Go back to sleep now."

Which he did. I too felt exhausted and fell into a dreamless sleep.

Lord Fauntleroy took no spells the next day. Nor the next. I told him again about the sailor being stretched on the deck and beaten, just for standing up to a bully. I told him about Beth's father. And still, no fits, no frothing of the mouth.

"Oh, Plato would have loved this. Oh, if only I could discuss this with Locke and Pascal and Spencer and Spinoza. Oh, I must go and see William James."

"Yes," I said. "But first we have to get out of here. That's our next job, Faunt."

"Well, Hank," he said. "If we do it right, they can't bring us back. They let me out once before. I took a spell in front of my brother and woke up here again. If we don't wreck the place and make it to the outside, we're free. We haven't broken any laws. It's only while we're in here that they can do what they wish with us. Do you think this 'cure' will last, Hank?"

"It should. If it doesn't, we'll do it all over again."

"All right. We leave tomorrow."

In the morning we dressed. Faunt had a huge leather case for his clothes and some of his books. I still didn't know how we would get past the guard and the steel doors and the big iron fence outside.

We stepped up to the cage, and Faunt rapped on the bars. The guard looked up from his book. He saw what Faunt had in his hand and reached through the window to take it.

"You'll have to wait till they're all eating," he said. Otherwise some of them will try to run out."

"Feed them now, then."

The guard pulled on a cord and then talked into a funnel that led into a copper tubing. It was the same system the captain used on our ship for

talking to the engineer. The cook worked in a room that adjoined the main building. He slide the narrow, long door open and began setting bowls of stew on the ledge between the rooms.

The inmates crowded over to the food. Our guard took us to the main door and out we went, into the dazzling sunlight.

"How much did you give him, Faunt?"

"Forty dollars. He'll write in the book that we were taken away by our families. That's the only time anybody gets out."

"What if they have no family around, like me?"

"They keep you. Forever."

He knew just where to go from the lunatic asylum. To a bank. His brother's bank. We sat in big wooden chairs outside the boss's door and finally the man came out. He had pointy ears like Faunt, but had greying hair and little square glasses. Faunt stood up, towering over his brother.

"Come into my office, Frederick. I've got bad news for you."

They went in and closed the door. Faunt had a foghorn voice and I could hear the bass vibrations through the thick wooden door. Whenever I could hear nothing, I knew the brother was talking. Probably waiting for his big brother to keel over backward into an epileptic fit. Then, it would be another trip to the asylum.

I waited almost an hour. Occasionally I could hear Faunt talking but mostly, I think, he listened.

They came out and walked into another office. In a few minutes, Faunt came over to my chair."

"Come with me, Hank."

We lined up at a teller's wicket. Faunt's turn came and he handed the teller a cheque. The teller turned to look for help and saw his boss standing behind him.

"Cash the cheque," said the boss.

We left the bank and walked down the busy street.

"Don't you think you ought to put that money in your pocket, Faunt?"

We had a fine meal in a classy restaurant. My partner had never been in an eating establishment in his life. But the waiter bowed to him and when the food was served, it was Faunt who told me how to hold a knife and fork in the proper manner. He had learned it all from his books on etiquette. "We wouldn't want people staring at us, Hank."

To me, the city of San Francisco looked awful busy compared to Saint John. Was I hearing things? It seemed everyone, on the street, in the cafes and hotel lobbies were talking about one thing: GOLD.

Faunt and I had landed in the middle of the Klondike Gold Rush. The year was 1898. We overheard that the jumping off place and the best source of outfits was Seattle. We bought every newspaper we could find and they all had the same story: everyone in the world was heading north.

We went back to the bank and cashed another cheque. It seemed that

Faunt's brother was very relieved to hear of our impending voyage to the far northwest.

I began to worry. What if we were steering a boat down some raging river in the Yukon—and Lord Fauntleroy took a spell? He would probably drown us both. And how about if we met a grizzly bear? The country was supposed to be swarming with them. I needed to test his cure—and my faith.

"Faunt," I said. "For both our sakes, we have to do something tonight."

"Like what?"

"We're going to go a whorehouse."

In those days, in the United States, about ten robber barons had ninety percent of the money. The rest of the population lived on the crumbs left over. On the West Coast, particularly San Francisco, unfortunate women turned to prostitution. The city had dozens of bordellos. We could go first class or we could go to a place where the ladies worked out of cribs not much bigger than a coffin. Faunt decided we should go for the best. We had the money.

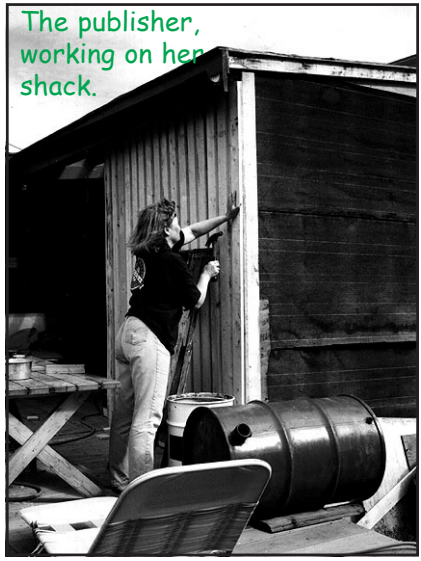
We hired a cab that evening and instructed the driver. We clip-clopped along the back streets and came to a big house with a veranda and walked up to the door. Someone looked through a slot and asked us what we wanted.

Faunt boomed out, "We want defloration."

To Be Continued

Woodcutters getting ready to load firewood onto a paddlewheeler. Photo taken near Mayo, Yukon, in 1932, by Gordon McIntyre.

From the Publisher


The publisher, working on her shack.

On a windy spring day recently my artist-friend Ellen came bouncing into the Eat More Cafe in Whitehorse. I hadn't seen her since the previous summer when she was feeling pretty down in the dumps over marital problems. I'd heard that she and her spouse had split the sheets and were living in separate cabins on the same property at No Gold Creek.

For someone who had spent the winter alone in a country inhabited mainly by grizzly bears and hippie artisans, Ellen looked awfully cheerful. She rattled on about her plans for building a kitchenette in her 12-by-12 foot studio (read "shack"). The previous winter she and her estranged hubby had shared the kitchen in the former marital domicile, a one-room log cabin affair with loft. The new kitchenette would let Ellen spend more time in her own space.

After living with a significant other in crowded quarters all winter, space is what a body needs. Living and working together in tight quarters all winter long will blow the best relationship apart.

In Whitehorse, people who live in small houses can go to Tim Horton's or the library when they want a break from their partner. If they live in a big house they can go down the basement. Or, more likely, they will go to their job at the office or store. People can't really afford to live in Whitehorse unless they have a job.

Out of town it's a different story. There are no jobs so people who are not unemployed tend to be self-employed. Usually this means working at home in some sort of family business. There's seldom enough money to build a decent-sized office or shop so home and work areas get all tangled together. By February, couples are snapping at each other like crocodiles.

But Yukoners are as clever about keeping their relationships together as they are about keeping their shacks warm and their vehicles going. The cure for too much togetherness is simple: build another shack.

Sam and I took up living separately (but together) a long time ago. After one winter spent in my little cabin, Sam built his own cabin on the property. It is where this magazine is produced.

As for Ellen and her man, the other day they were spotted in Whitehorse walking hand in hand. I'm sure they will have a long and happy life together. In separate cabins.