

THE **YUKONER** MAGAZINE

**NO.
9**

- Buzz-Saw Jimmy
- To Be a Queen
- John Scott
- Keno City Hotel

**Price
\$3.95**





A gold placer mining camp on Last Chance Creek, which runs into Hunker Creek, near Dawson City. (SH photo, 2002)

THE YUKONER MAGAZINE

Issue No.9
September, 1998

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Cover photo: M. Schultz, setting out on a prospecting trip in 1921. Photo by Claude Tidd, a member of the RCMP, who took hundreds of wonderful photos during his time in the Yukon. The photo on page 42 is another example of his work. Courtesy Yukon Archives, Tidd Collection.



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From the Editor

The yellow spots on the inside front cover are from a screw-up in the last issue. I printed the yellow ink on the covers upside down. However, that shiny paper is really expensive so here it is again. Also, the *Goldseeker* story has been left out so we could finish the *Campbell* story by Bill Betts.

Since the last issue, a lot has happened here. My old partner and friend, Moe Parent, died after a short illness. He was co-founder of the *Yukon Reader* magazine. Although that publication went down under a cloud of debts, Moe never lost interest in publishing.

I went to see him in the hospital. He had known for some time that this might be it. But he took it all in stride, never once whimpered, and was a hombre right to the end. We shook hands that day, gave each other a hug, and made our farewells. Every time I go to town, I look in the window at Norcan where Moe always sat at his desk—but he's gone.

He came into the Yukon some 25 years ago as a salesman for Whitehorse Motors. He soon had his own lot and then went to work for Bob Stack at Norcan. Moe loved gold, tried his hand at various mining ventures, and always wore about half a pound of nuggets—around his neck, on his watch and on his fingers. He loved collecting stamps, he loved good food and rum, and fancy cars. If you lined up all the vehicles he sold in the Yukon, they would probably stretch from here to Teslin. So, we'll miss you, Moe, and everybody knows we'll never see anyone like you again.

Also, Mattie Chapman died. She was in the first issue of *The Yukoner*, profiled by Darrell Hookey.

What else is new? Well, old Dodge got a paint job, compliments of my son, Sid. Nobody knows me any more because he painted the truck a beet red. It's been grey for twenty years; you couldn't tell if it needed washing or not, and nobody wanted it on a trade. Now all the young fellows in town are admiring old Dodge and one told me I could get a "considerable" amount of money for it. But as you all know, I'll be driving it for at least twenty more years.

I heard a story at the Carcross Corner Cafe about two fellows who got treed by a grizzly bear. They had left their hunting equipment in their truck and went for a walk, when that old bear came along. They each scrambled up a spruce tree, as quick as you can imagine.

Old griz' stood at the bottom of each tree, pushing and snarling, and trying to shake the fellows down. Then it would walk away, down the trail. As soon as the boys tried to come down from their trees, old griz' would come back and start his tree-pushing routine again. Then, gone again.

During one of these waits an argument started—over who would climb down and get the gun out of the truck.

"You go down; you're quicker than me."

"Screw you, buddy. You go down. I mean, what kind of friend are you?"

And so they argued for eight hours. The sun went down and they sat on their tree limbs with hindquarters painin'. Finally, in good old Canadian style, they compromised.

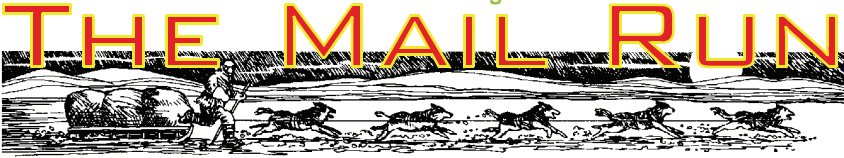
They both came down at the same time and ran for the truck. But the bear never came back.

Number one rule for travelling in grizzly bear country: take someone with you who can run slower than you.

So long for now,
Sam



Don Martin, the editor, and son Sid, looking over the innards of Sid's old Dodge.



Sam:

Could you possibly find me a copy of Pat Callison's book on flying in the Yukon? Its title included the words, "dog team" and "helicopters."

Thanks,

Bill Burdell (Dawson, 1946-50)

Hello

Just a note. I worked for HBC in the 1930s. I was an engineer on the Canadian tug and another, bigger tug, and on the Radium King on Great Bear Lake. One time we were frozen in, south of Victoria Island in 1938. A plane found us on the 11th of December but didn't fly us out until May, 1939. They stopped all mining because of the war and I was laid off. It was a wonderful time of my life. I am 82 now, still busy and go like hell.

A. Jost,

Windsor, Ontario

Dear Sam,

I don't want to miss a single issue of The Yukoner. GREAT little magazine. Especially the (to be continued) stories. I've always loved the North and would love to take a trip to the Yukon. Meanwhile, I'll travel that fascinating country through your magazine.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Thor,

Black Diamond, Alberta

Hello!

I really look forward to reading your magazine. I lived in Dawson for several summers, commercial fishing with the scurviest, most lovable crew of river rats. I did some "time" on BIO-island with DFO as well, but it was my commercial fishing experiences with on Ronnie McPhee that changed my life forever. If you knew him or would be interested in publishing some stories of his river days, let me know.

PS.: I was informed that he was buried with a large chinook salmon, a bottle of Captain Morgan, and an I.O.U. from everyone in town who would never see their \$!!.

Sincerely,

Laurie Calder

Sulnderland, Ontario

Editor's Note to Laurie: Please send in any stories about the famous McPhee that you might have.

To Be A Queen

By Delores Smith

Imagine it is 1935 and you are a young, attractive woman with a yen to compete in the Miss Alaska Contest coming up in the March 1936 Winter Ice Carnival in Fairbanks. Now, put yourself in Juneau, Alaska, 1000 miles south, with no roads, an indirect marine route via Valdez, and minimal air travel connecting the two cities. Formidable odds, even for seasoned travelers.

Not, apparently, if you were one Mary Joyce, who at the age of 27 decided nothing would stand in the way of her entering that contest. Described by contemporaries as small, (5' 4", 115 lbs), dark-haired, pretty, intelligent and a good shot, she was named Miss Juneau in 1935. Alone, with only sled dogs for companions, she mushed the whole way, through the almost untracked wilderness of northern Canada and Alaska, during the darkest and coldest months of the winter. The trip took 96 days, from December 22, 1935 to March 28, 1936.

When asked why she did her famous dog sled trip, she answered, "I wanted to see the country, and experience some of the things the old-timers did when they climbed over the Chilkoot Pass or walked from Valdez to Fairbanks" and "I just wanted to see if I could do it."

Like many Alaska and Yukon women, Mary Joyce thought of life as an adventure. She had come north



in 1929 as a nurse-companion for Hackley Smith, an injured World War I veteran with an addiction to his medication. Hackley's mother, Erie Smith, owned the remote Taku Glacier Lodge on the Taku River, 30 miles south-east of Juneau. It was there that the trio settled for three years. They hoped that Hackley could overcome his addictions through an interest in outdoor activities but he succumbed to his illness in 1932.

Erie Smith gave the lodge to Mary who continued to run it as a wilderness retreat and a homestead with the assistance of a caretaker.

The route Mary took for her Juneau to Fairbanks trip had been a major trading route linking the Coastal and Inland Tlingit Indians. In the early 1800s it had also attracted the attention of Russian fur traders who set up a post at the mouth of the Inklin River 80 miles from present day Juneau. Schwatka surveyed this route as a possible pack train trail without success in 1891, with funding from the town of Juneau. They had hoped to link up with a native trade trail that reached Teslin in the Yukon.

For part of her journey Mary followed the route of the Overland Telegraph. A joint American, British and Russian venture, the Overland Telegraph was intended to link Europe, Asia and North America by way of the Bering Strait. All work on the line ceased in 1866, when a competitor succeeded in laying an underwater trans-Atlantic cable. The information gathered on the surveys for the Overland Telegraph informed the US government's decision to purchase Alaska from Russia in 1867. Parts of the trail were incorporated into the Yukon Telegraph line which the Dominion of Canada completed immediately after the Klondike gold rush.

Mary's trip began at her lodge, six miles below the Mouth of the Taku River. She packed enough food for 30 days and planned to replenish her supplies as she went. There was dried fish for the dogs and bacon, beans, and rice for her along with canned sterno to melt snow for tea water. Walt Simpson traveled the first part of the journey with her on a good trail past Canyon Isle, where there was a wireless station, to the Pan-Alaska Lodge. Here, they were joined by a Justice of the Peace traveling to Tulsequah Village across the Canadian border to investigate the death of a man by suicide. Tulsequah was a center for mining exploration and fell into disuse after a 1936 spring flood washed away the docks and part of Front Street.

From Tulsequah, Mary traveled alone to Inklin, the site of the ruins of a Russian Fort. She could not find companions willing to travel with her because the river was too dangerous. Successfully negotiating thin ice and open water, she arrived at Inklin in time for Christmas celebrations and a good rest, carrying three months of mail for the residents.

At Inklin, she joined up with Billy Williams and his sons Frank and Steve, all Taku River Tlingit Indians. The Inklin River was open, so they boated Mary and her dogs across to Nakinaw, a native village on the Telegraph Trail. From there, the trail runs over high passes on its way to Atlin B.C., a small gold mining town on the shores of Atlin Lake. Half way along the toughest stretch of the trail, while traveling alone and having difficulty breaking trail through deep snow, she came across one of the line cabins. The

lone male occupant would not let her in. After camping on the high plateau, she made it to a friendly cabin 20 miles further on.

Once in Atlin, she rested up for six days amid the unaccustomed hustle and bustle of a busy town. Solo now, she followed the trail over a small portage to Tagish Lake, then along to Carcross on the White Pass and Yukon Railroad Route, which runs from Skagway to Whitehorse. She followed the railroad tracks into Whitehorse where she bedded down at the Whitehorse Inn on Main Street.

Here, she met up with Clyde Wann a well-known pilot and Mrs. "Pete" Jacquot who was born in Tagish in 1901, and was an expert dog musher. They guided Mary through to the Jacquot home at Burwash on Kluane lake, where she rested up for another four days.

Jonny Allen, and Eugene Jacquot showed her the way over to Snag on the Alaska/Yukon border. This stretch proved to be the roughest and coldest part of the whole trip and it was along here that Mary developed full-blown pneumonia. She stopped at Nebesna and Tetlin Junction for treatment and rest which caused her to become overdue for her projected arrival.

Joe Crosson, was sent out in his plane to look for her. He searched for two days until he found her. She and Jonny raced on into Tanacross where they were welcomed with relief. By this time (March 5th), it would have been too late for her to make it to Fairbanks in time for the carnival, so she left her dogs in the care of some new friends in Tanacross and Crosson flew her the rest of the way. She didn't win the Queen Contest but was named "Honorary Pioneer," only the second person in Alaska history to be given



Miss Joyce, standing on the runners of her sleigh, along with other contestants in the beauty contest and two stewardesses for Canada North Airlines, the company that flew Mary and her team back to Juneau. Photo courtesy of Alaska Aviation Museum, Anchorage, Alaska.

this award. (The other was Mrs. Florence Kling Harding, the wife of the President of the U.S.A. during their visit in 1923).

After the Carnival, where she entered the dog races with a borrowed team, placing near last, she was flown back to Tanacross and her dogs to continue her journey, which took another two weeks, with people at each roadhouse relaying messages of her whereabouts as she mushed along. The Alaska Highway now follows the route she took from Whitehorse to Fairbanks. She was flown back to Juneau on March 31st, 1936, by F.L. Barr and Canada North Airlines.

Mary became a stewardess, flying between Seattle and Alaska at a time when only nurses were allowed to be flight attendants. During the Second World War, she sold the lodge and moved into Juneau, working as a nurse in Saint Anne's Hospital. She bought the Top Hat Cafe and the Lucky Lady Bar on Franklin Street where she regaled patrons with stories of her adventures.

In 1965, still strikingly youthful and good looking, Mary visited Fairbanks following most of the same route she had travelled 19 years earlier, only this time by car. In June of 1976, in her home above the Lucky Lady, Mary passed on into legend..



Ned Cathers, a modern-day Yukon Quest musher, drives his team over the same trail that Joyce travelled, 60 years earlier. [John Hatch photo]

The Last Rescuer

By Sam Holloway

Atlin, B.C., October 11, 1930.

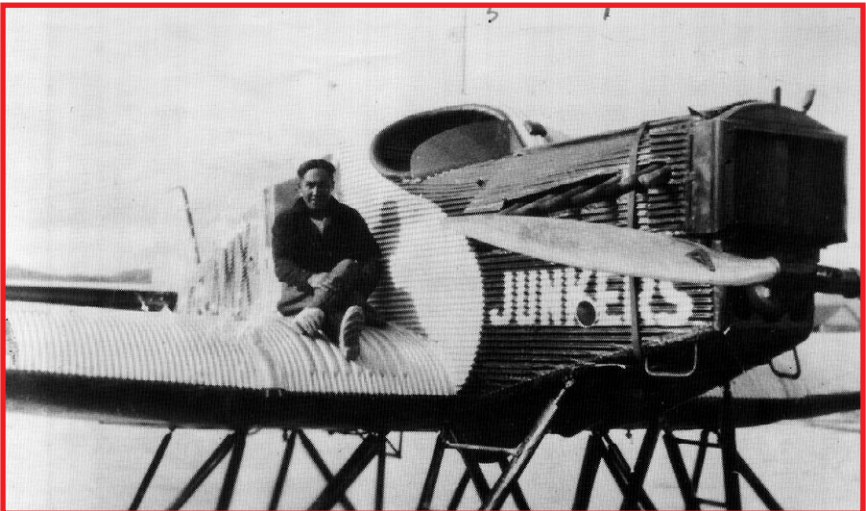
On that day, a prospector by the name of “Three Finger Bob” Martin chartered a single-engine Junkers aircraft at Atlin, B.C., just south of the Yukon border. It was to be a business trip to the trading post at Liard Post and then a return to Atlin.

The pilot, FJA “Paddy” Burke, had started flying at the age of 16 during World War I. At war’s end he quit the RCAF and by the late 1920’s was one of the better-known bush flyers of western Canada. With him on this trip was Emil Kading, the aircraft’s mechanic (or engineer, as they prefer to be called).

They would fly over some of the roughest country in the world: mostly unmapped, full of unknown sawtooth mountains and countless lakes and rivers. During winter, storms and blizzards sweep the area in constant succession, depositing the dry, powdery snow peculiar to northern climates.

Although the plane was equipped with floats, this was the “in-between” time of year. The rivers could freeze any day but the ice wouldn’t be thick enough to land on with wheels or skis yet would rip the bottom out of a pair of floats.

The trip to the Hudson Bay Post on the Liard River went without a hitch. On the way back, they ran head-on into a blinding snowstorm. With the main pass through the Pelly Mountains blocked, and with not enough power to climb over the 8000-foot range, Paddy Burke knew they should



Paddy Burke's plane; Taku Jack sitting on the wing. [Yukon Archives photo]

land somewhere and wait out the storm.

He brought the plane down on the Liard River. They huddled together on the riverbank overnight but by morning the weather hadn't changed. They ate from their meager supply of beans, bread and coffee and looked at the river. The water of the Liard was already turning into slush. Paddy Burke decided they had better fly on out of there or be stuck for the winter.

They flew up, up, up into the snow-filled air, with a course set for Teslin Lake, Yukon. The earth disappeared into a blinding whiteness that completely surrounded the aircraft and no one knew

where they were as they drifted blindly, surrounded by unseen mountains. Paddy dropped the elevation of the Junkers till the plane skimmed the tree-tops; even then they had a hard time seeing the ground. Using all the skill of a lifetime in the air, Burke landed the plane again on the river.

As he taxied the aircraft toward shore, they felt the plane tremble and heard a sickening, crunching sound as the floats struck something just beneath the water's surface. Ten feet from the riverbank, in only two feet of water, the plane sank till the floats rested on the bottom. They might have pulled it onto the shore except, in this location, the riverbank dropped off like a small cliff.

Because they hadn't seen much from the air, the three men had no clear idea of where they were. One thing they knew for sure: the northern winter, merciless, long, was almost upon them. They tallied up their food and equipment:

Five pounds of dried beans

Five pounds of rice



Paddy Burke sitting by the Yukon River at Whitehorse. [S.H. Collection]

Three cans of bully beef
One pound of tea
Three pounds of sugar and raisins
Three cans of dried vegetables
Two pounds of butter
Six chocolate bars
Three sleeping bags, only one of them suitable for winter
One axe
One rifle with twelve rounds of am- munition
A coil of rope
A few cooking utensils and some matches

They looked for signs of game in the area but found nothing, not so much as the track of a skinny rabbit. They sat by a campfire for six days and nights, waiting, watching the sky for signs of a rescue operation. They looked at the food, how fast it was being consumed, and decided to move.

A raft might be the answer; float down the river to the Hudson's Bay Post. They had no nails or saw; rope wouldn't hold it together; Burke and Martin couldn't swim...

They would walk, they decided, to a food cache that Burke and engineer Kading had established on a lake they had named after their aircraft, Junkers Lake. They figured it to be about 20 miles from where they camped.

It was now seven days since they had left Atlin. They left a note in the plane:

"Oct. 17th, left for Wolf Lake, badly in need of grub, Paddy, Bob, Emil."

If it had been later in the winter, they could have walked over the river ice. With the camp equipment shared among them, they floundered along the riverbank while the snow on the ground kept piling up. They fought their way through dense willow thickets. If they stayed close to shore where the going was easier, they were sometimes forced to climb the riverbank, hundreds of feet high, to avoid being swept away by the current.

Making three or four miles a day, they threw their sleeping bags onto some willows at night and slept in the snow. Thirty miles from the plane Paddy Burke's legs gave out.

The other men were exhausted also, and made no attempt to carry Paddy. They decided to give up their trek and again wait for a rescue. They made camp and ate the last of their food.

Emil Kading, the best shot with a rifle, hunted the area for game but saw nothing. They had been abandoned by nature and by man.

For 23 days they lay in their sleeping bags, 18 hours out of every 24. During that time Emil managed to shoot four little squirrels and a small duck that had gotten lost from its flock. On November 8, Paddy wrote a farewell letter to his wife and children.

Then one day a caribou walked past the camp.

From two hundred yards Emil lined up the rifle and said a silent prayer as he squeezed the trigger. The caribou dropped in the snow and they

watched for it to move but it had died instantly.

Paddy Burke said a prayer of thanksgiving and thanked Emil for saving their lives. Emil and Bob cooked the liver and made some soup for Paddy but they could see he was going downhill fast. Five days after the caribou had been shot, Paddy died in his sleep while lying between his friends.

On that cloudy day, with heads bowed low so as not to look at each other, Emil and Bob built a small crib out of logs and placed Paddy's body in it. They slashed the bark from a tree by Paddy's grave and wrote a note there:

"Paddy Burke died November 20th, cause sickness from lack of food, having been 23 days without same. Expect to leave here tomorrow for Wolf Lake. Hope we can make same. Snow very deep and no snowshoes. Bob Martin, Emil Kading."



**Joe Walsh and Everett Wasson
[Yukon Archives photo]**

They loaded up as much caribou meat as they could carry and struck out in the morning. It took them three days to go five miles. They made their last camp, with less food than they had before.

On November 24th, they saw a plane pass over. They were on trail and had no chance to signal it. On December 4th they saw another plane. Desperately they threw green spruce boughs on the fire to make some smoke. By the time the smoke drifted upward past the tree tops, the aircraft had winged away over some mountains.

They had two bullets left in the rifle. The caribou meat was almost gone. While Bob Martin tended the fire, Emil looked for more game but saw nothing at all.

Paddy Burke's wife had long ago notified the Vancouver office of his failure to return to Atlin.

The company sent their other Junkers aircraft north from Vancouver, piloted by R.J. Van der Byl, with engineer Ted Cressy and a grounded pilot (license rescinded by the Air Safety Board). They left Prince George and ran into a continuous snowstorm. The weather turned so cold they had to land at Takla Lake to warm their bodies at the trading post there. At Thutade Lake they camped for the night while the temperature continued dropping.

In the morning the plane would not start and they fought with it all day, heating the oil over a campfire and pouring it through the engine. They spent another cold night by the lake and in the morning succeeded in starting the engine. They chopped a channel through the ice for the plane's floats and tried to take off. The spray from the water so quickly turned into ice on the plane's fuselage and wings it could not take off. They made four attempts, each time faced with the job of chipping ice off the plane.

They made a decision. Bill Joerss, although refused official permission to fly, had the most experience. He would leave the other two men on the ground and with 20 gallons of fuel would try to get the aircraft off the water. It worked.

After sending a rescue party to find his friends, Joerss reached Vancouver where he was greeted by officials of the Air Board. The rescinded his license indefinitely for flying without permission and was much criticized for leaving his friends behind. Only after an outcry from the public that took his case as far as Ottawa, was his license re-instated.

In the meantime, after many delays, the rescue party going in to find Van der Byl and Cressy set out for the bush. Their quarry, the men waiting almost 16 days by Thutade Lake, had assumed that Joerss had crashed. They decided to walk out. The rescuers and the rescuees, on different trails in the same area, never saw each other. Twenty-five days later Van der Byl and Cressy walked into Fort St. James, having covered 350 miles of wilderness on foot. They had brought down two skinny moose during their journey—or they too might have been starved into staying in one place with no energy to keep moving.

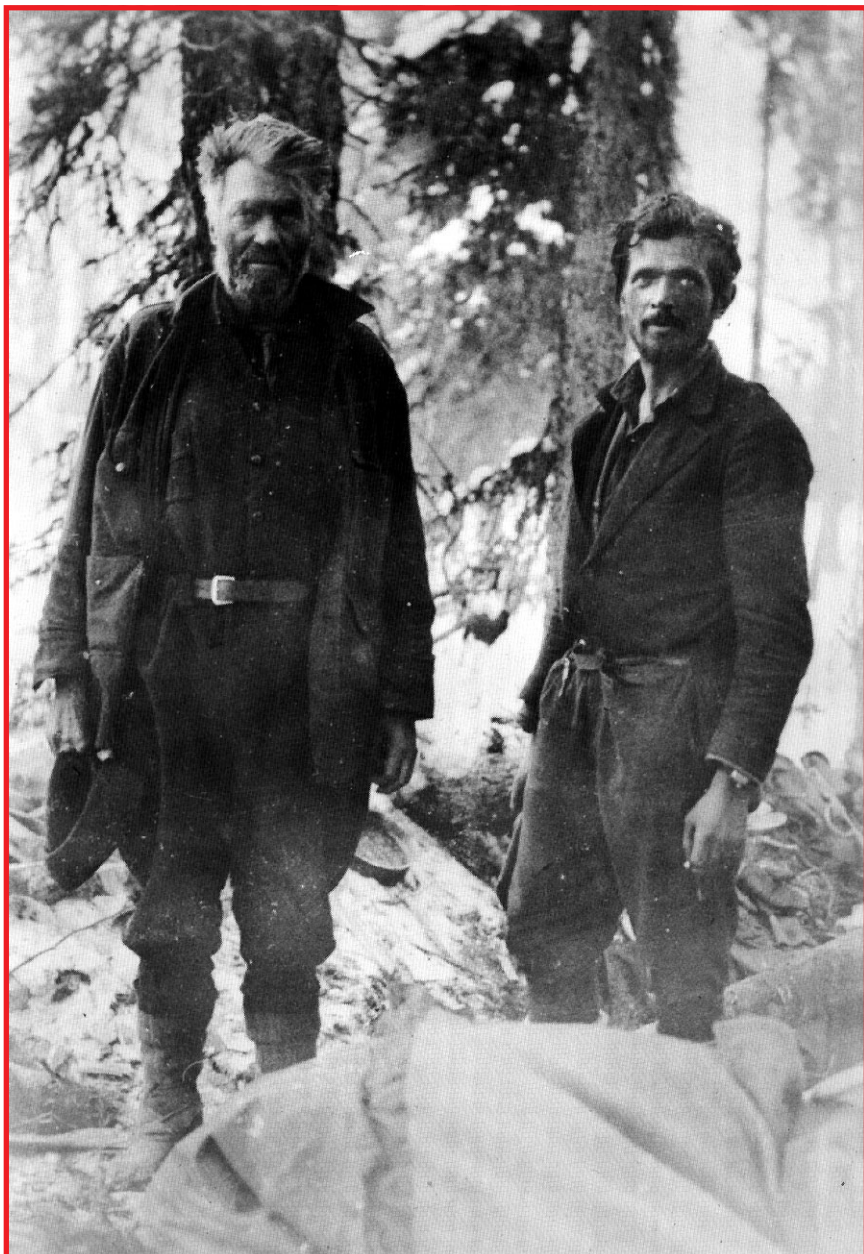
More planes joined the search. The RCAF sent out two planes. Pacific International Airways diverted two Alaska-bound aircraft to the search area. The latter two planes flew together and had skis fitted at Smithers, B.C. On landing at Telegraph Creek, one of the planes hit a tree and was totally wrecked, the pilot unhurt. The other aircraft hit a soft spot on the lake and went through the ice, almost drowning the pilot. (This last plane, a Fairchild, was later re-floated and flew in the Telegraph Creek area for many years.)

Further south, in Vancouver, a prospector-mining promoter from the Yukon, one Sam Clerf, was on his way to San Francisco to see his wife and new-born son. He heard about his good friend Paddy Burke's plight and immediately chartered a plane from Alaska Airways at Seattle.

They headed up the coast toward Prince Rupert. Of all the rescuers thus far, the men in this plane—Clerf, pilot Pat Renehan, and mechanic Frank Hatcher—were most familiar with the area Burke was thought to be down in.

They disappeared into oblivion. Another rescue operation that included flying boats, ships and fishing vessels, turned up no trace of them. Four months later a wheel from the airplane—a Lockheed Vega—was found washed up on the beach of the Piercy Islands off the B.C. coast.

Paddy Burke's company hired a pilot named Derbrandt of International Airways to continue the search. He flew hundreds of miles with no results.



Bob Martin and Emile Kading at their last camp. [Yukon Archives photo]

Eventually he had to leave to pick up the trappers he had contracted with in different parts of the country.

That left one plane with any chance of finding the missing men.

Just before Derbrandt left, Burke's company contacted the Treadwell Yukon Company based in Whitehorse. The pilot they sent out, in a Fairchild FC-2, was a young American named Everett Wasson.

The two planes flew over Liard Post and dropped a note asking the trader there whether Burke and his companions had been there. The trader tramped a message in the snow:

"Burke left here for Teslin. Teslin."

The name in the snow should have read, "Atlin."

After Derbrandt left, Wasson searched for hundreds of miles, led into the wrong area by the trader's message. He flew to Mayo, Yukon, to have skis fitted on his plane. While there he met Joe Walsh, said to be the best woodsman and guide in the Yukon. Wasson was convinced the missing men were still alive and told Walsh his story. Walsh agreed to help with the search and came back to Whitehorse with him.

All the other rescue operations had been cancelled.

On November 12, 1930, they left Whitehorse and began a systematic search. Not a clue turned up until they landed at an Indian camp on the Lower Liard River near the mouth of the Francis River. The Indians told them they had seen a "big white swan" or "tin boat" flying up the Liard River.

Walsh and Wasson now had just one river area to search, long as that river was. They ran into snowstorms constantly and were forced down on small lakes. The lakes had not frozen hard and they had to place spruce bows under the skis to keep them from freezing into the lake. Every time they took off they had to snowshoe a runway in the waist-deep snow. Even so, Walsh had to sometimes run beside the aircraft and swing himself up into it after it was airborne.

It was their plane that Kading and Martin saw on November 24th and December 4th.

On that same day, on their last flight of the day, Wasson and Walsh spotted a peculiar shape on the surface of the snow-covered river. They flew down for a closer look. It was Paddy Burke's plane.

The river ice being too rough to land on, they flew back to Whitehorse for more food and equipment and returned right away. They landed on a small lake 16 miles from the downed aircraft and hiked in to it. All they found was the message stating their quarry had left for upriver.

Again they returned to Whitehorse. They thought perhaps the lost men might be with Indians at Pelly Banks near Wolf Lake. They set out to try this theory on December 6th, 1930. While searching for a pass through the Pelly Mountains, they spotted a thin trail of smoke curling above the treetops. They circled and went down for a better look.

In a small clearing they saw two tattered figures waving feebly.

While Wasson flew as low as he could, Joe Walsh threw a box of food out of the airplane. Believing the starving men might not find it, Wasson circled



Everett Wasson standing on a float of his Ballanca, at Mayo, Yukon, 1932. [Yukon Archives photo, Tidd Collection]

In this photo and on the page opposite, Everett Wasson stands proudly by his plane. He delivered mail to telegraph stations and RCMP outposts and hauled food and freight all over the Yukon. He carried many passengers safely to their destinations in the days of mud airstrips—or no airstrip at all.

As yet, we don't even know how many years he flew in the Yukon (at least 15) but apparently he never had a major accident. He died of old age in California in about 1978.

Since this rescue story was published in the Yukon Reader, various people have written to say they knew Everett. One lady said when she lived with her Mountie husband at Lake Laberge, Everett would swoop over in his plane and toss their mail so it landed right by the cabin. But even so, details on his life are scarce.

So, if any reader knows of a relative of Wasson or have seen a newspaper account of his life, please let us know. I would like to compile a full-length story on this great flyer.

Thanks,
Editor.

again and Walsh threw out another box—this time the last bit of food in the plane. They stuck a note to the box advising that they would land as near by as they could.

The nearest lake was ten miles away. Wasson and Walsh immediately started out on snowshoes, keeping a furious pace. Suddenly they realized they had bypassed the camp. They backtracked and shouted as they went. Two rifle shots rang out over the frozen forest. They reached the camp a few minutes later.

Around a roaring fire and swallowing good food, Wasson asked Kading why he had only fired two shots; the standard SOS called for three.

“Those were our last two bullets.”

They camped for two days to allow the rescued to build up some strength for the hike back to the plane. When they finally reached the aircraft it would not start; the engine had frozen solid and tight. Using hot oil and a blow torch, Wasson finally got it started. They landed at Whitehorse late that afternoon, December 10th, 1930, 61 days after they had set out with Paddy Burke.

It was estimated that Everett Wasson and Walsh snowshoed 200 miles besides the flying they had done. The Government of Canada and the Provincial government of B.C. awarded Everett Wasson \$1500 and Walsh \$500 (worth about \$15,000 and \$5000 in today's inflated dollars).

—Joe Walsh went back to his home in Mayo.

—Martin and Kading went to Atlin to live.

—Everett Wasson married Florence G. Jones of the Whitehorse Hospital Staff.

—A creek was named after Paddy Burke; Burke Creek runs into the Liard River south of...

—Wasson Lake, located on the southeast side of the Simpson Range near the headwaters of the Liard River.

Since the time of this rescue, Yukon aviation law requires adequate survival gear to be carried on all aircraft carrying passengers.



John Scott: Hydro Pioneer

By Dianne Green

John Scott, mining engineer and co-founder of the Yukon's first hydro electrical plant, is one of only a few Yukoners who remember the way Whitehorse looked in the early 1920s. That's when Scott's father, John Henderson Scott, brought his family here from Alaska.

Scott senior was the station agent at Nenana for the Alaska Railway at the time the railway was being built. His employer, the White Pass and Yukon Route Railway, needed a fuel agent for its shipyard and railway operations in Whitehorse and transferred Scott here in 1922.

The Scotts were no strangers to the Yukon. Scott's parents had married in Dawson City in 1901. Scott's older brother and sister were born while the family lived there, although Mrs. Scott travelled south to her parents' home in Tacoma, Washington for the birth of her children. After the fervour of the Klondike Gold Rush had cooled, the family moved to Alaska where Scott Sr. worked at prospecting and railroading.

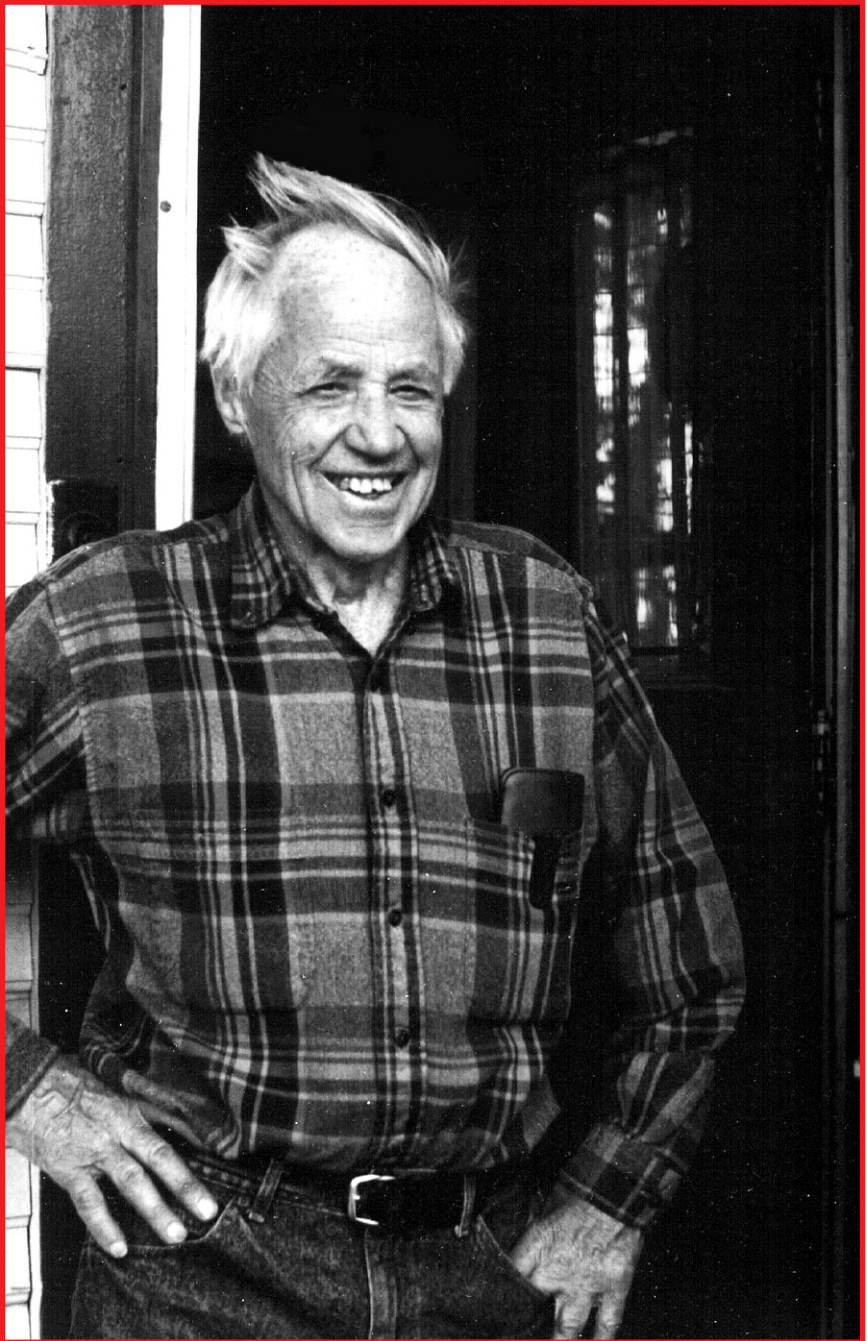
John Scott was 11 years old when his family returned to the Yukon. He remembers the trip from Nenana to Whitehorse up the Tenana and Yukon rivers aboard the *Seattle III*. Whitehorse was a small, company town with fewer than 400 permanent residents. The town's chief employer, the British Yukon Navigation Company (BYNCo.), was a subsidiary of the White Pass Railway which brought goods and passengers from Skagway to Whitehorse. The BYNCo. owned the big river boats that took people and supplies from Whitehorse down the Yukon River to the mining centres at Mayo and Dawson City.

The Scott family moved into a sunny, Victorian-style home located at the south end of town. Scott's older brother and sister were living in Washington where they attended high school and college.

Scott didn't have far to walk to school. The three-room schoolhouse was just a few blocks away, on Lambert Street. Thirty-five students attended classes there under the supervision of two teachers, who followed the Ontario school curriculum. Scott recalls. "Mostly we did homework. There was always homework."

At first Scott and his schoolmates had their doubts about the "little old school marm from Winnipeg" who replaced their male school teacher. The new teacher was a stern task master with "a will of iron" but gradually she won them over. "It was the luckiest thing that ever happened to us. We learned to study. We all passed with good grades," Scott remembers.

Scott's high-school classmates included Fraser Watson and Mabel Sampson, whose fathers were employed by the White Pass, and Dorothy Phelps, Scott's future wife. Dorothy's father, Willard Phelps, was known to



John Scott on the porch of his home in Whitehorse. Photo taken by an unknown tourist who had been given a tour of the house.

all as Deacon Phelps. He was a member of the Territorial Legislature, an owner of the Yukon Electrical Company and an attorney.

From high school, Scott went to the University of Washington where he worked on his degree in mining engineering. Each summer he returned to Whitehorse to work as a longshoreman for the BYNCo.

Scott's years at the university were not a happy time. In 1928, when he was in his second year, his father died. There were increased financial pressures and Scott spent one winter working at the Silver King mine in Mayo. When he returned to university the following year, his classmates had moved ahead to the next level. Not one to make friends easily, Scott found it difficult to fit in with the new group.

As the Great Depression ground on, Scott's financial woes increased. A friend in the Yukon lent him \$1,000 to finish his final year. When Scott graduated in 1933, there were no jobs for mining engineers, or anyone else.

"I had \$14 in my pocket and I was taking care of my mother, who was getting old. There were no social programs. You worked or you didn't eat," Scott recalls.

Scott talked to White Pass Chief Executive Clifford Rogers at the company's Seattle office. Rogers gave him a ticket for his passage aboard a CPR ship to Skagway and a pass for the train ride to Whitehorse. There the newly graduated mining engineer went back to his old job as a longshoreman.

In 1935, Scott returned to the silver-rich Mayo region to work at Treadwell-Yukon's Elsa Mine. In December, Scott married Dorothy Phelps. Her parents had wanted the couple to postpone their nuptials until the spring when they planned to give their daughter a big wedding, but Dorothy knew that John needed her in Mayo and away she went. Scott recalls the couple's introduction to married life:

"On December 12th she shows up in George Simmon's bush plane. She was the only passenger surrounded by freight. It was 54 degrees below zero.



John as a longshoreman in the White Pass shipyards at Whitehorse, ca. 1933



John and Dorothy in the 1940s

We walked up to the church at Mayo and were married.”

The next day the couple headed out to the Treadwell-Yukon Company mining camp at Elsa. A bad storm drifted in and the two-ton truck was bucking snowdrifts. At Five-Mile Lake the clutch started to slip. Dorothy walked up and down trying to keep warm while her husband and the driver took the clutch apart. They could not fix it, so the newly weds hiked five miles back to Mayo where they spent the night. The next day they got a ride to camp on another company truck.

Not long after his marriage to Dorothy, Scott got his first job as a mining engineer at Elsa, where he helped start the Calumet and No Cash mines. In 1941, the silver mines shut down as the crews enlisted for World War II or got better jobs elsewhere. With his wife and one-year-old son, Scott transferred to the Alaska Juneau gold mine. At the time, the mine was the world's largest underground mine and Scott had a rare opportunity to observe the mining and milling of huge tonnages of ore.

Scott and his family had lived in Juneau for five years when a new opportunity arose. The Phelps family had been involved with the Yukon Electrical Company since its beginning, in 1901. By 1948, the diesel-powered electrical generation system that supplied power to Whitehorse was badly overloaded and it became apparent that an alternative system was needed.

John Scott and his brother-in-law, John Phelps, started looking at the possibility of hydro production. They proposed diverting water from a chain of small lakes and creeks about eight miles from Whitehorse to a powerhouse on Porter Creek, where electrical power could be generated. A major concern was making sure that the stream of water in a 3800- foot ditch connecting Fish Lake and Louise Lake did not freeze. They solved the problem by raising the water level in the ditch. In winter, when the surface of

the water froze, they lowered the water level and the stream rushed along under the protective layer of ice.

Deacon Phelps backed the project with his life's savings. The hydro plant began operation in May of 1950 and, with short shutdowns for inspection and maintenance, has operated since then.

In 1958, an Alberta company, Canadian Utilities Ltd., bought the Yukon Electrical Company. For Scott and his wife the sale brought new opportunities for adventure and travel. In the early 1960s Scott had the *MV Schwatka* tour boat built in Vancouver and brought to Whitehorse. A few years later, Scott designed and supervised construction of the MacBride Museum in Whitehorse.

Although Scott will celebrate his 88th birthday in November, he appears to be always on the move—walking briskly around town, ice skating at the Takhini arena, attending historical society functions, browsing through the aisles at Canadian Tire or driving out to his cabin at Windy Arm.

Alone since his wife died in 1978, Scott lives in the same house his father purchased so many years ago. The house, which he and Dorothy bought in 1954, appears on a map he has drafted of Whitehorse streets as they were in the 1920s. Scott is carefully plotting where the houses stood and noting who lived in them.

Scott believes it is important to recall the past and pass those memories on to the next generation. He has written his memoirs and given copies to his sons. Mike is a Whitehorse retail jeweller and Bill is a research scientist with the Chevron Oil Company in California. An Alaska publisher has expressed interest in the memoirs which Scott has aptly titled, "My Life in the Yukon."



The No.1 Hydro station on McIntyre Creek. Photo taken in the early 1950s.

"I Fooled You That Time"

By Darrell Hookey

The Story of Buzz-saw Jimmy

"Ha! I fooled you that time you Son of a Bitch!"

Colourful words that made a colourful Yukon character famous.

Buzzsaw Jimmy had just fallen from his perch atop his mobile, engine-driven, wood-cutting machine and cut his right leg off.

Being able to pick up his leg and shake it mockingly at the contraption that had just caused the tragedy would be difficult for anyone ... even to a man as perceptive to the humorous side of life as Buzzsaw Jimmy. But, you see, this leg was a wooden peg replacing the same good leg that was cut off by the same machine some time before.

He was an accident waiting to happen ... and as a woodcutter Buzzsaw Jimmy never had to wait long. In 50 years of cutting wood in the Yukon he collected more than a metre of stitches over his body, lost a finger and, of course, lost his leg ... twice.

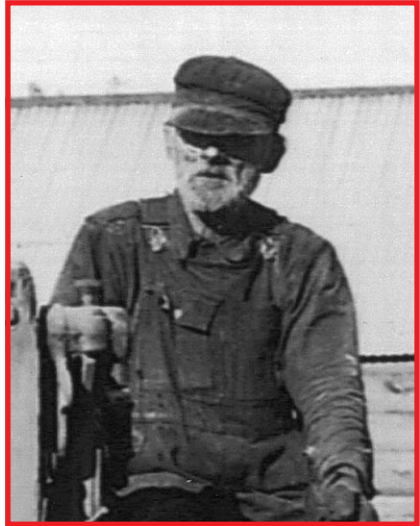
You would think the mishap-filled journey from his home in Saint John, N.B., would convince him to find a safer career. In the Gold Rush year of 1898, at the age of 25, James Domville Richards boarded a Colonist Sleeper to Vancouver. It derailed near Rat Portage killing two of his fellow passengers.

The replacement train almost derailed past Canmore when the car he was riding in left the rails and bounced along the ties until a quick-thinking passenger pulled the bell cord alerting the engineer.

A derailment in the prairies is one thing, but in the middle of the Rockies "I would have been just a little grease spot".

Safely arriving in Vancouver, J.D. Richards, as he called himself at the time, took a job finishing the construction of the Steamer The Honest Citizen.

After the shake down cruise, he took a job on another steamer headed for the coast of Alaska. She was a small ship, so she was pulled by a larger steamer. The Pacific Ocean became too choppy for the speed they were travelling and J.D.'s ship began to fall apart from under them. The first



mate had to threaten the steamer ahead with a rifle before she would slow down.

Repairs were made and the trip to St. Michaels, near the mouth of the Yukon River, was completed.

J.D. Richards then boarded the Steamer James Domville, named for his Godfather Lt.-Col. James Domville, Member of Parliament for King's County, N.B., and a manager with the Yukon Steamboat and Mining Company.

The ship's job was to push a barge laden with whisky up the Yukon River to the thirsty new city of Dawson. She barely had enough coal to reach the arranged woodpile of, what turned out to be, green cottonwood. Captain Ferris ordered barrels of fat pork to be pulled from the hold and used for fuel.

Seeing the white tent city of Dawson prompted the crew to spruce themselves up for a night out. Although it was the heady year of 1898, J.D. saw that the good claims were already taken and the food was scarce, so he gladly returned to the winter quarters of the Steamer James Domville via the Yukon River.

Arriving in Whitehorse Oct. 5, Captain Ferris offered him five dollars a cord, on top of his usual wages, to chop wood for the boilers. But gold fever got the best of him. So he and Chris, a deck hand, built a sleigh and headed for Atlin after a Christmas dinner aboard the ship.

It took them five weeks to get there and they managed to file some claims. But they decided to return to the ship anyways. They left the stove, tent and sleigh behind and "siwashed it on way back", meaning they slept wrapped in canvas on ground exposed by large fires.

In her first run of the season, The Steamer James Domville was headed back to Dawson City. But she was wrecked in the Thirty Mile River just 24 hours into the trip. The crew was paid off and J.D. began his career along the length of the Yukon River doing odd jobs. He cut wood, prospected, worked on boilers and machinery, ran messages, and anything else to make a dollar.

After a few years J.D. adopted Whitehorse as his home and became a town fixture. Although he blended right in wearing his bib overalls, denim shirt and black cap with chin and cheeks covered in an ever-present blanket of stubble, there was still something different about him. A lot of the Stampeders worked hard at odd jobs ... but he worked at a feverish pitch. A lot of men were good with their hands ... but J.D. displayed a genius as he coaxed more power from a boiler or modified a less than perfect tool.

And then there was, "The Machine".

He took an old tractor and an engine from a Model T Ford and fused them together with bits of iron, pulleys and circular blades to create an unequalled wood-cutting machine.

When one of his two or three helpers placed a log in the clamps, the blade would rip into it with an unforgiving whine that could be heard all over town. Eight to 10 cords an hour would be dispatched when the next best machine could manage only three.

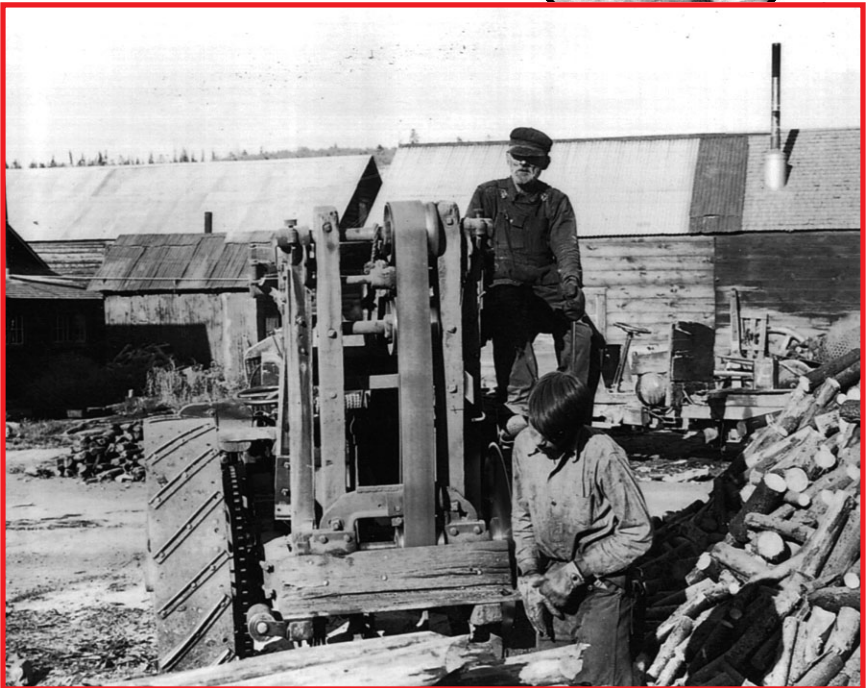
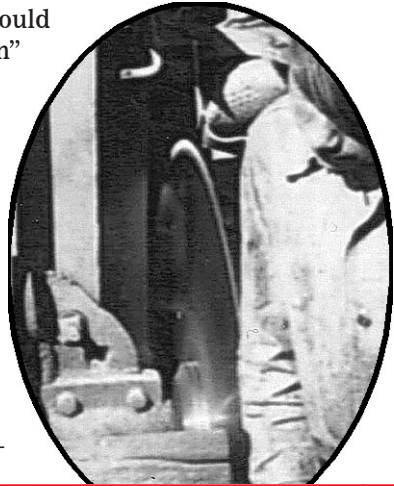
People would hire him just to see The Machine at work. He charged \$1.50 for each cord if the logs were already there. The going rate at the time was seven to eight dollars supplied, cut and delivered.

The Whitehorse Inn hired him regularly to cut its wood because he was so fast ... and to make sure he stayed ahead of his tab at its City Cafe where he ate daily.

Lloyd Ryder's father, George, was in the wood-cutting business as well. He would sometimes hire his "friendly competition" to chop his wood when he got behind.

Lloyd remembers J.D. (or "Buzzsaw Jimmy" or "Jimmy Buzz Saw" as he was now called) as a quiet man, a loner, but always good to the kids in town. He would talk to the Ryder, Drury and Cyr kids and give them candy.

Buzzsaw's home was a garage on Second Avenue between Elliott and Main Streets (where the Tim Horton's now stands). He would park The Machine in there and park his truck beneath his hammock strung up in the ceil-



Buzz-saw Jimmy and his famous contraption. [Rolf Hougen collection]

ing rafters since it was the only way he could climb up to it. A string was attached to the damper of his Yukon Stove to control the heat while he was up in the hammock.

People wondered how he would get into his bed at night if his truck met with misfortune. At least once a year he tested his brittle and meagre luck by being the last person to drive across the river in the spring. Sometimes he would be over (in what is now Riverdale) in the morning collecting wood and the river would be flowing by evening ... but he would always be back in time.

Despite all of the money he must have been earning he didn't have much to show for it. He was impractical with money but was a content sort and "a gentleman in many ways", according to Bill Drury.

He would make little inventions that had no real purpose and would write poems for his advertisements in the Whitehorse Star. A short little poem reflecting his philosophy on life or just for fun would be followed simply by "SEE Jimmy Buzz SAW".

For all of his rough edges and whimsical sense of humour, friends who knew Buzzsaw well loved to shock people by informing them he had a diploma in business administration.

Buzzsaw, himself, started an autobiographical booklet with the words, "Graduate St. John, N.B., Business College ...".

He was an interesting man. Tourists to Whitehorse would see Buzzsaw driving The Machine from one woodpile to another and cameras would be quickly brought to the ready. People from all over the world would agree on one thing: They had never seen anything like it.

Talking to Buzzsaw was a treat as he would brag about all of the injuries he's collected. Like back in September of 1911 when he almost lost his right arm. He only allowed the hospital to keep him one day.

A few years later he was getting ready to go home for the night when he fell from his seat and caught his right leg in the gears. George Ryder lived a block away and was able to get him to the hospital by sleigh, but the leg was amputated above the knee.

With a wooden peg in place he was back at work ready for his next accident. This time, on Dec. 12, 1919, he crawled under The Machine to locate a problem without bothering to turn the power off. Shifting positions beneath the spinning blade, he cut his upper right leg through the muscle and to the bone. Once again, he hobbled back to the hospital.

Four months later he lost his balance stepping on a log and fell back onto the blade cutting 45 centimetres diagonally across his back.

Two years later he crushed his left leg just above the ankle. And then there was the time he swung an axe at a tree and cut his left leg instead ...

Yukon News columnist, the late Don Sawatsky, wrote once: "Jimmy seemed to live under an evil star but it wasn't anything fatal—just bothersome enough to interrupt his daily schedule at the woodpile."

But at least it made him famous. He especially loved to tell people how he fooled the fates by cutting off his peg leg.

If he weren't so accident prone, Buzzsaw Jimmy would have been fa-

mous for other reasons. He could have been remembered as the man who (please pause here for effect) **SAVED WHITEHORSE FROM BURNING DOWN.**

It was May 30, 1921. He was taking part in the winter gab session at the Yukon Electric Power House when the Whitehorse Hotel (now called the Edgewater) caught fire. Townsfolk remembered the last fire in 1905 that destroyed the downtown core and they could see this fire was big enough and hot enough to repeat the performance.

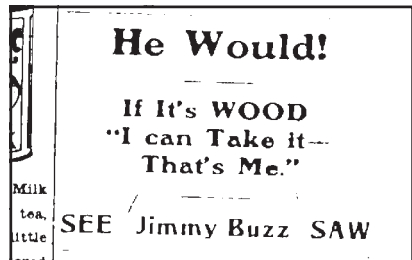
The only chance to save the town was to put a maximum amount of water on the fire immediately.

Despite the fact he was in the company of engineers who made a living working with the boilers every day, it was Buzzsaw Jimmy who took over. He found an old wash tub and began throwing straight coal oil to the boiler every five minutes. The pumps “just sizzled” allowing the fire fighters to keep four hoses trained on the fire from all four sides of the burning structure.

By 1950 Buzzsaw was well into his seventies and The Machine, too, was getting old. They both moved onto some property owned by George Ryder. One day The Machine was towed away to the dump (like the proverbial glass milk bottle, its future value wasn’t appreciated).

One day Buzzsaw left as well. He died at Grandview Nursing Home in Vancouver Aug. 21, 1967.

He fooled The Machine one last time.



One of Jimmy’s advertisements in the *Whitehorse Star*. Sometimes he published poetry as part of his ad.



A cabin in the Sixtymile area (SH photo)

Silver and Sausages

By W.D. Alford

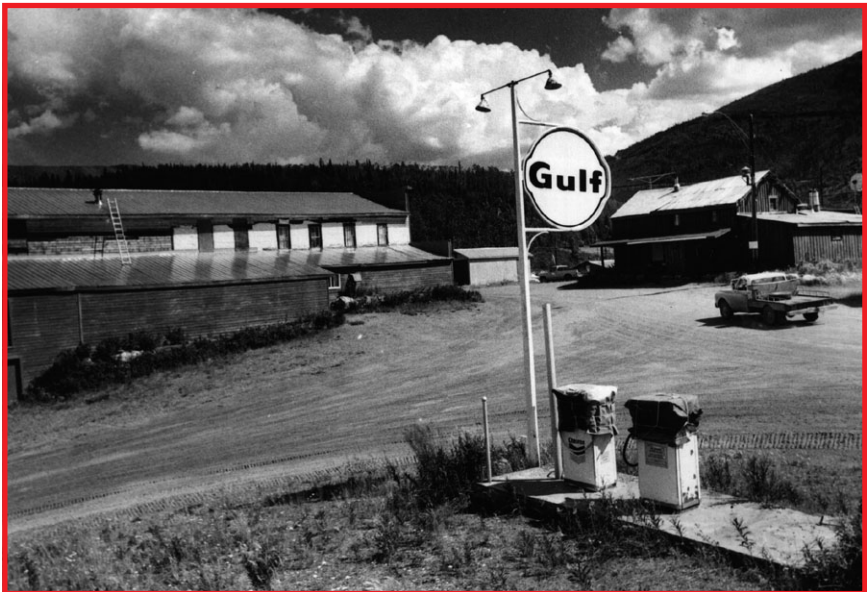
Geordie Dobson can't remember exactly why he started hanging sausages from the ceiling of the bar in the Keno City Hotel.

But those sausages, some of them 35 years old now, still hang there along with bottles and beer cans, and dozens of other items which have struck Geordie's fancy over the many years he has owned and run the Hotel. Those sausages *are* the Keno City Hotel. And, in many respects, the hotel is Keno City itself.

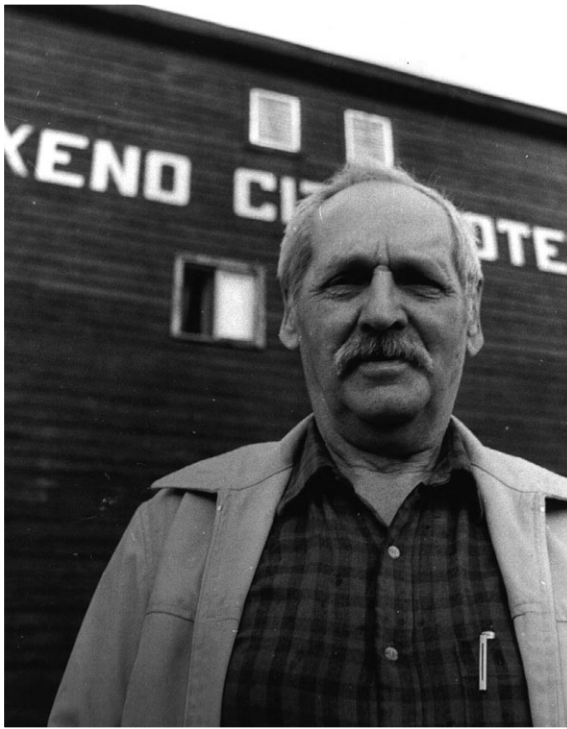
Geordie says the original building where the Keno City Hotel now stands was erected in 1890. During the 1920's, R. H. Palmer of Mayo ran the structure as a saloon and general store, known simply as Palmer House.

The size of Keno City during this time has been often incorrectly put at 20, 000 (the population of the whole Yukon Territory in 1922 was only 4,157). However, liquor sales for the Keno area accounted for one-quarter of total alcohol revenues for the entire territory in 1921.

Palmer sold the Hotel in 1941. When Geordie arrived in Keno City in 1952, the building was operated by United Keno Hill Mines as a mine dry,

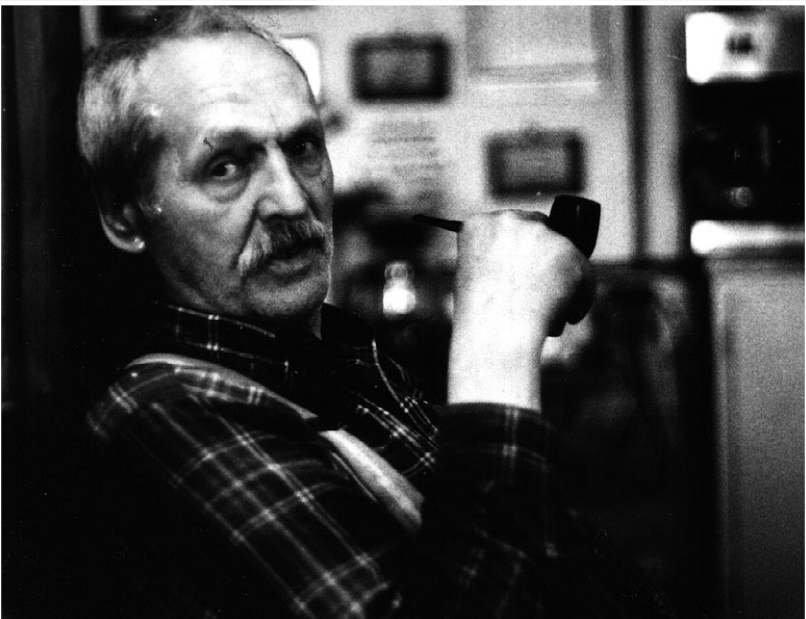


The main street of Keno City, Yukon, population 27. Geordie's coffee shop is on the right, the hotel is on the left. Not visible in this photo, beyond the hotel, is the Keno City Museum. To get here, you must drive to Mayo, turn north and go uphill for 30 miles to Elsa then it's about another nine miles to Keno City.



Geordie Dobson.
in front of his
hotel at Keno
City and in his
favourite chair at
the coffee shop.

**Photos by
W.D. Alford**



cookhouse, bunkhouse, and covert gambling hall, and featured a nine-seat outhouse.

Geordie bought the building in 1959—an unlikely event, perhaps, given that Geordie was fresh to the Yukon following several years roaming the South Seas on a sailing vessel, trading cookware and tobacco for mangane and copper.

In Newcastle-on-Tyne, Northumberland, he had lied at age 15 in 1940 to enlist in the British Merchant Navy, and in 1943 was aboard a ship sunk off West Africa by a German submarine. Of the 64 men aboard, only five survived. Geordie's brother, Alexander, was killed in action in the war.

Geordie then found himself on his way to the invasion of Japan. His ship was just off the coast of Hiroshima when the Bomb went off. Later, in a bar in Vancouver, he had overheard two men talk of free airfare aboard a DC-3 to work in a mine at a place called Keno.

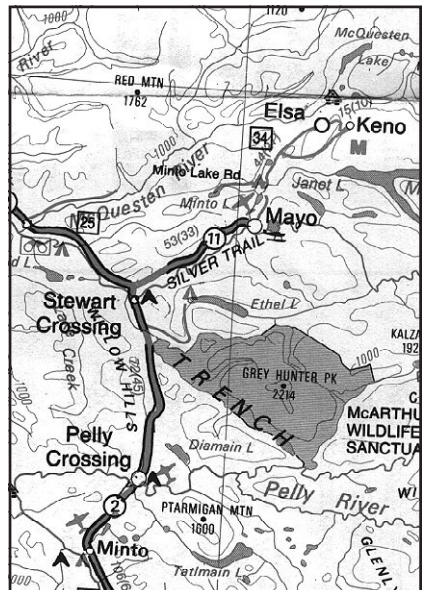
His steamfitting experience in the Navy gave Geordie the skills to work as a plumber at the MacKeno mine north of town during the early 50's. From 1959 until 1962, he worked as a miner at Calumet, Comstock, and BelleKeno. Geordie would regularly spend eight hours working underground and another 10 hours a day refurbishing his hotel. He later built his house in Keno, of 32,000 beer bottles.

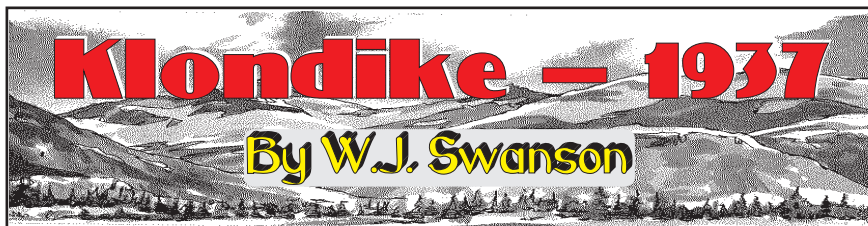
By one spring, the heap of empty beer bottles outside the Hotel's back door had made it almost impassable. Long before recycling became fashionable, Geordie decided to put the empties to use, as he had been thinking of building himself a house anyway. He still says the bottles are about the best insulation around.

The Hotel had stiff competition in those days, not only from the Silver Queen Saloon just down the street, but also from the stills and bootleggers which abounded in the area. "Alteration Annie", "Madame Zoom," and "Bombay Peggy" plied their trade in Keno City as well, but Geordie says there were also several amateurs. Throughout everything, Geordie never forgot his Golden Rule: "He Who Has The Gold Makes The Rules."

Since the Keno City Hotel opened in 1963, the town itself has not changed very much. The Silver Queen burned to the ground in 1964. The miners and conmen, losers and visionaries have since come and gone, in a rhythm enduring to this day.

All have paused to gaze up at those sausages hanging from the ceiling.





"Yep, m'boy," the old man said, "It's a mighty fine country up there - yes, sir. I've been going back every year, for more'n 20 years now, and I can you, it's a mighty fine country."

"How much money could you make in a season?" I asked.

"Well now, b'golly, I tell you." He replied, "If you go to the Yukon in the spring with a hunnert dollars, you c'n come out in the fall with two hunnert. I tell you though, it's a mighty bad country to land in broke. Yes, sir, mighty bad."

I began to think, Good Gosh! This guy's been going to the Yukon for more than 20 years so he should know what he's talking about. What the hell am I doing here?

The youngest of a farm-raised family of eight children, I had dropped out of school after completing Grade IX, in 1934; my father had died the previous year. For the next year I worked for different farmers around the Fraser Valley and in August of 1935, then aged 16, I joined three other young fellows and travelled to Alberta to take part in the prairie harvest. With the harvest completed, instead of returning home, another fellow and I decided to go trapping for the winter: We drove to Athabasca Landing (now Athabasca), built a raft, loaded all our gear aboard, drifted down the river for five days, built a cabin and settled in for the winter: But, having underestimated our food requirements for the winter, we had to abandon our cabin just a few days before Christmas and we walked to Athabasca Landing, a distance of about 75 miles, in two days.

Obtaining work on a dairy farm near Calgary, I remained there for the rest of the winter and, in April, 1936, I returned to the Chilliwack area where I spent the summer working with my brother. With the harvest completed that fall I found work as second-faller on a snag-falling crew in a logging camp at Horn Lake on Vancouver Island; however, because of heavy snow-fall during the Christmas shut down, that camp remained closed for an indefinite period.

Shortly after the New Year I obtained work at the Port Mellon Pulp Mill; beginning in the hog-fuel bin - shovelling hog-fuel for the boilers - I was transferred to the power plant and later to the sawmill, where I ended up working as a boom-man feeding logs onto the jackladder.

In early May, 1937, I decided to leave Port Mellon; I had made up my mind to go to the Yukon: The spell of that country had been on me since I'd first began reading about the gold rush and poems by Robert Service. It had been augmented by listening to Oscar Swanson (no relation) talking

about the summer he'd worked on the river boats running between Whitehorse and Dawson City; and that spell had become more intense after hearing Mickey Munson talk of his days in the Yukon. Mickey had served with the RNWMP in the Yukon during the early 1900s: I'd met him while I was trapping in northern Alberta, at which time he was stationed at the confluence of Calling River and the Athabasca River and was doing maintenance work on the telegraph line that ran between Athabasca Landing and Waterways, then the head of navigation for the Mackenzie River system.

I had left Port Mellon with about \$70 in my pocket. After purchasing my ticket - steerage class to Skagway, train to Whitehorse and river boat to Dawson City - at a cost of about \$50 I bought a blanket and a few other items, which left me with about ten dollars in my pocket. I then went home and announced to my family that I was going to the Yukon. From their rather quiet response, I got the impression they were not overly excited about my decision - after all I was still a minor. In 1937 one had to be 21 years old to be considered an adult - I still had two and a half years to go.

In Vancouver on the afternoon of my departure I called at my brother Lawrence's, place and his friend, Clarence Sharp, was there; I got the impression that Clarence had been primed to try to dissuade me from leaving; he first told me how much better things were in Vancouver than in the Yukon and, when I didn't respond he added, "My god, here you are going off to the Yukon, a thousand miles, all by yourself, no job, no hat, one blanket, ten dollars in your pocket - are you feeling alright?"

I had expected my brother to drive me to the dock that night but, with no such offer forthcoming, I took a streetcar to the CPR docks and boarded the SS Princess Louise sailing for Skagway. Our ports of call on the way included Prince Rupert, Ketchikan and Juneau.

That night - the first on my long trip - just a couple of hours out of Vancouver, alone, sitting on my bunk in the steerage section, I'd struck up a conversation with the old man lying in the next bunk. After having listened to Clarence Sharp's comments, having had to ride the street car to the dock, having listened to that depressing talk from the old man and his comment about landing in the Yukon broke; I thought seriously about getting off the ship in Prince Rupert and riding the freights back home. If we'd stopped in Prince Rupert that night I believe I would have done so. But by the following morning, after sleeping on the problem and stewing over it much of the night, I'd decided that, having come this far I might as well continue on my way.

On going through US Customs and Immigration in Ketchikan, each passenger was required to fill out a questionnaire; one of the questions asked was, "Are you in possession of \$50 or more? If not, how much?" I noted "no" for the first question and "\$10" for the second - rather expecting to be refused entry into Alaska. But, when my turn came to be interviewed, the immigration officer asked, "Where are you going?" I told him. He looked down at the paper, then glanced at me with a rather odd look and said, "Okay."

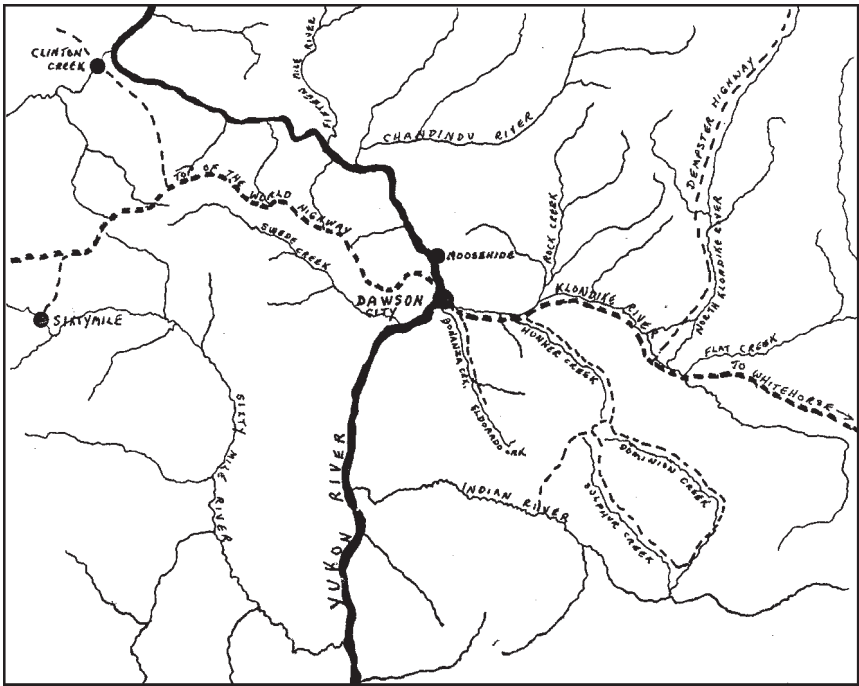
We docked in Skagway during the early morning hours and, coming out

on deck a couple of hours later, I was quite impressed with the rock paintings all along the shore side of the dock; the only one I now recall was a painting of Soapy Smith's skull. I'm sure many of those paintings had been there since the gold rush days almost 90 years before.

In Skagway we were to transfer to the White Pass and Yukon Railway (WP&YR) for passage to Whitehorse in the Yukon. I'd been told it was the only narrow-gauge railway operating in North America and that it traversed the White Pass rather than the Chilkoot Pass through which most of the gold seekers trudged in 1898.

The train, with its rotary snow-blower in front followed by four engines and six cars, backed down and stopped on the town's main street. When all were on board the train began to move up the valley towards the forbidding mountains and, as we began climbing to the summit of the White Pass, it became quite obvious why there were four engines. I don't know what the grade was but I had the feeling that if someone had put a smear or two of grease on the track we'd have slid all the way back to Skagway - it was steep.

On traversing one section, where the railway bench had been blasted out of a near-vertical rock face, I looked out my left side window and could not see the edge of the roadbed but looked directly down to the base of the cliff a few hundred feet below. Seemingly hanging out in space half way up a



The Klondike today, with the names unchanged since 1898. [map by S.H.]

cliff was rather unnerving and the lateral swaying of the coach didn't help. In order to share the beautiful view, I suggested those from the other side of the car should come over and have a look, and quite a number did. Their reaction was aptly expressed by one fellow who put his head close to the window, looked down and came out with the word, "shi-l-it," before making a hasty retreat to the mountain side of the coach.

As we increased elevation, the rotary snow plow demonstrated its purpose. Being early May, at higher elevations the snowbanks on each side of the train were still well above the top of the coach - like going through a tunnel without a roof.

On crossing into British Columbia, at the summit of the pass, members of the RCMP came aboard to see that all was in order. I was not able to see any police building, but I saw a police constable walk down a ramp into the snow, then I saw smoke coming out of a chimney pipe just above the surface. The building was entirely covered with snow.

Stopping at Bennett for lunch we viewed the shores of Lake Bennett, where the Klondike gold trekkers had camped after carrying their "one ton of supplies per person" over the Chilkoot Pass. Along those shores they had cut trees, whipsawed lumber and built boats, while waiting for the ice to disappear from the lakes and rivers. I felt, as I looked out over the snow-covered landscape, that if I'd been born about 40 years sooner I just might have been there as a member of that great stampede.

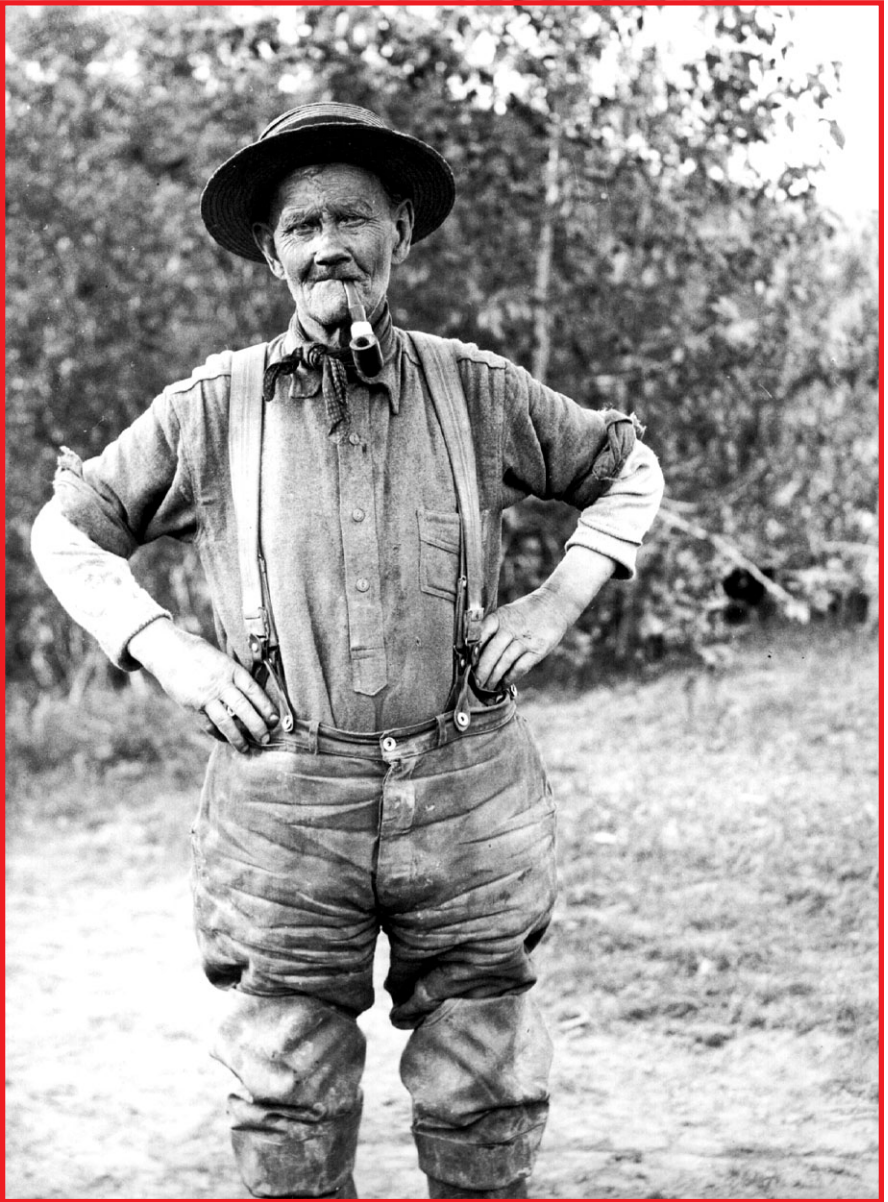
The remainder of the trip via Carcross to Whitehorse, following the ride through the White Pass, seemed rather routine. On purchasing my ticket in Vancouver, I had been assured that there would be immediate passage on one of the river boats from Whitehorse to Dawson City. On arrival in Whitehorse, however, I learned that Lake Laberge was still blocked with ice and that the first river boat was not expected to sail for at least two weeks. The few dollars I had left wasn't going to last long in Whitehorse. I'd booked a room for one night so my funds had already begun to shrink and I didn't have enough money to return to Vancouver or even to Prince Rupert.

For dinner that evening I went to a small cafe, situated in a log building just north of the railway station. As I was finishing my main course the waitress, an attractive blonde who would have stood over six feet with her feet flat on the floor, came to where I was sitting, leaned over with her doubled-up fists on the counter and, in her gruffest voice, said, "What kind'a pie'll ya have? We got lemon!"

Looking up at her I replied, "I think I'd like lemon."

I've no idea what the girl's name was, but the little comic skit she put on helped me get through an otherwise very depressing time.

Later that night I was approached by a couple of fellow travellers who had decided to buy a small boat in which they would sail down to Dawson. They would also have to purchase skids on which to drag their boat across the ice on Lake Laberge and they asked if I would like to go along for a one-third share of expenses. I wanted to go with them but I just didn't have enough money for that one-third share. Yet, thinking I may be able to get



This photo was taken in about 1920 by RCMP photographer Claude Tidd. The miner, Dave Swanson, (no relation to the author of the preceding story) was an oldtimer in the Yukon since 1887. Never been “outside.” [Yukon Archives photo, Tidd collection]

cash for the unused portion of my ticket, I said I'd let them know in the morning. Early next day I went to the WP&YR ticket office and told them my situation. The agent's reply was, "Well, it will take a few days to get a cash refund; but we can credit your boat fare against an airplane ticket, fly you to Dawson today and you can pay us after you begin working." No doubt they were playing a bit of a con game on their passengers in order to increase their air traffic to Dawson; however, I reasoned that if they were prepared to let me pay the fare later, there must be work to be had around Dawson City, so I informed my two fellow travellers I would not be joining them.

Later that morning, I climbed into an old tri-motored Ford airplane for the flight to Dawson. About two and a half hours later we landed at the Dawson City Airport about 16 miles east of town along the south bank of the Klondike River. In Dawson I booked a room at the Regina Hotel with the understanding that I could pay my bill after I had obtained employment. I also arranged with the owner of the Arcade Cafe, Harry Gleaves, to have meals there with the same understanding.

For the next week or so I did a lot of walking around Dawson and one of the areas I visited was Klondike City: For a few years, following the gold rush, a railway had operated between Dawson City and the settlement of Grand Forks, near the junction of Bonanza and Eldorado Creeks "where the first big find was made", a distance of about 18 miles to the southeast. The storage and maintenance yards for that railway were situated southeast of the river junction, just across the Klondike River from Dawson, in a settlement known as Klondike City or, more commonly, Louse town. (I was told by some of the old timers, that in the early days the red light district was also to be found there.) Just a couple of days after my arrival I walked across the Klondike River ice and had a look at the old railway facilities; quite a number of the old locomotives were still housed there as were other items of both fixed and rolling stock, but I saw no red light district nor even another person.

There had been another active area, across the Yukon River from Dawson which, at the time of my arrival, was still referred to as West Dawson. At one time there had been a shipyard there

to provide repairs and other services to the river boats, but on wandering around the area in '37 the place looked more like a sternwheeler's graveyard.

About two miles downstream from Dawson stood the Indian village of Moosehide which could be reached by walking over the river ice during the winter and, in summer, by boat or by walking the Moosehide Trail - and it was quite a trail: From the north end of 7th Avenue it wound along the hillside north of the town and crossed the big scar, or rock slide, about a third of the way up its face. I always felt rather nervous crossing that slide in case it began moving again. I walked that trail several times to arrange to have some Indian-tanned, Moosehide mitts and moccasins made by one of the Indian women in the village. I also walked over the ice a couple of times in

the winter to look in on an Indian potlatch. (I would walk that trail again in 1976, along with my wife and my two youngest children, but for some reason it seemed narrower and the slide seemed steeper then.)

At the time of my arrival in Dawson, one of the current items of interest was the flag mounted in the ice of the still-frozen Yukon River. The pole was firmly frozen into the ice and a wire ran from the flag to a clock situated inside the Canadian Bank of Commerce. Tickets were sold each spring on which each purchaser would record his estimate of the date, hour and minute the ice would go out. When the flag had moved a set distance (I believe it was five feet) the clock would be stopped and the person that had recorded the closest time to that of the actual movement won the Dawson Ice Sweepstakes. I was told the sweepstakes that year were expected to be near \$10,000 - a lot of money in 1937. A much larger prize, the Tanana Ice Sweepstakes, was won in Alaska each year but I won neither.

Most of the mining operations in the Klondike were being carried out by the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation, usually abbreviated to YCGC and referred to as "The Company." Its main field-administration office was in Dawson City, while its operating headquarters was at Bear Creek, about eight miles east of Dawson along the south side of the Klondike River Valley. The Arlington Camp, where Dredge No. 4 was working, was about 12 miles east of Dawson near the mouth of Hunker Creek. At that time, two other dredges were operating along the Klondike River Valley, No. 2 near the mouth of Bear Creek and No. 3 near the mouth of Bonanza. Those three dredges, all of a similar size, were the largest in the Klondike.

If one continued east along the Klondike River for 12 miles or so beyond Arlington he would come to the hydro-electric power plant, on the North Fork of the Klondike River, where electrical power was generated for all dredges and other facilities operated by The Company.

Within a couple of weeks of my arrival I obtained work with The Company. The Assistant Employment Manager, Sid Church, met me at the hotel, signed me on and informed me that I would be leaving next morning to work on the thawing crew at Arlington camp. There, the following morning, I settled into camp life not far from where Hunker Creek joined the Klondike River.

[Editor's Note: Bill Swanson has written two more segments of this story which we will continue in the next issue.]

The Yukon's Greatest Explorer: **Robert Campbell**

Part Four of Four *By William J. Betts*

It was the 10th of June, 1843. How many years had it been? How many years had he fought the wilderness, the hordes of mosquitoes, the sub-zero temperatures in the long winter nights, the starvation, the marauding Indians? All these thoughts must have gone through Robert Campbell's mind as he prepared to explore the Pelly River on this June morning.

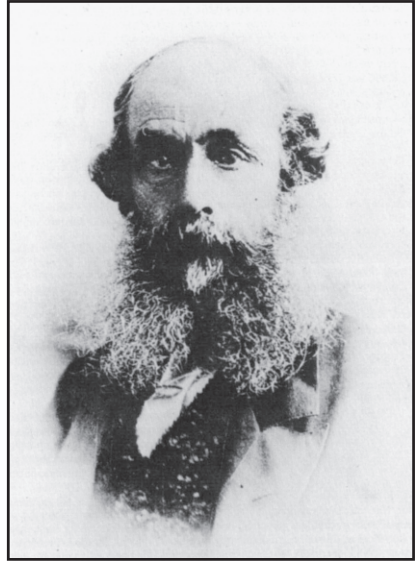
We can only speculate what his thoughts were when this hardy Scot set out to explore this river unknown to the European. It had been 10 years now, since he arrived at the Red River settlement. Yet for all his privation, Campbell was eager to leave on this exploration trek. This was what he had waited for ever since he left his lovely Scotland.

Now with his two Indian companions, Lapie and Kitza, Hoole and two French Canadians, he would begin his journey down the Pelly. They would take a minimum supply of food, three bags of pemmican and some tea, and trade goods such as beads, knives, awls, tobacco and flints. They would depend on their guns for most of their food.

Campbell and his five companions made good time down the Pelly but some 25 miles down river from Pelly Banks they came to rapids around which they had to portage. Campbell named these after his canoe builder Hoole. They didn't encounter rapids again for some 90 miles. Campbell named this second set of rapids, Desrivieres, after one of his French Canadian employees.

They saw lots of game, caribou, moose, bear and big horn sheep. They once killed a bighorn, the first of this species that Campbell had killed. He found the meat much to his liking.

Now and then they would encounter Indians who were surprised and awed by their first sight of white men. Although they had difficulty communicating with the native people, they managed to convey to them that they were friends and intended to establishing a trading post. They invited the



Indians to bring in their furs for trading and to pass the word about the new trading post.

There were many small streams flowing into the Pelly and now and then a larger river. One large tributary entering from the northeast Campbell named for Chief Factor McMillan. On the 6th day another large tributary was reached which Campbell named the Lewes after J. Lee Lewes. Unknown to Campbell, he had reached the Yukon River.

Early the next day they came upon a large encampment of Indians a few miles from the forks. In a later report to Lewes, Campbell wrote that there were some 55 Indians in the encampment, 24 were men, a formidable number had they proved hostile. But their two leading chiefs, a father and son, were friendly and smoked the peace pipe with the Campbell party. Gifts of tobacco, beads and knives were given the leaders who seemed to be friendly and wished to help these strange men who travelled the river in a beautiful bark canoe.

When Campbell made them understand with great difficulty that he planned to go on down the river "to the big waters" they immediately became alarmed. And they in turn with great difficulty conveyed to Campbell that many bad Indians lived down river. They would surely be killed and even eaten if they continued down the river. This threw Campbell's men into a fit of fear. They wouldn't go another foot down river. They must return to Pelly Banks right away. No matter how much Campbell scolded them they would not change their minds. Even Lapie and Kitza, his companions for six years, would not budge. Campbell was both frustrated and furious at his men. So very close to the success of his dreams, he could do nothing return to Pelly Banks and hope to continue his explorations another time.

Campbell felt so dejected that he paid little attention to the surrounding country as they made their way back up river. On the third day of their return journey Campbell noticed smoke arising from both sides of the river. He knew that Indians could be sending signals about their travel up river. He forgot his disappointment and hurried to get the canoe up river. The next day they encountered Indians who signalled the Campbell party to come to the opposite bank to meet them.

This they did and found the Indians with arrows fixed to their bows. It took some doing but Campbell managed to get them to allow his party to leave. They wasted little time tracking up the river. Campbell wanted to get past Desrivieres Rapids before nightfall but had to stop short of his goal. The men were so tired out from getting the canoe up river that Campbell allowed them to sleep in his tent while he stood watch. He climbed a tree that had a large fork where he sat reading Hervey's Meditations, while keeping a lookout for Indians.

Unknown to Campbell the Indians had followed them with intention of attacking them, killing them all in their sleep. Two years later, when friendly relations had been established with these Indians the leader of the band told how they watched him in the tree allowing his men to sleep. They were

puzzled by such odd behaviour in this strange white man and decided not to attack.

Had Campbell known how very close they were to attack by the hostile Indians he would never have stopped no matter how tired were his men. Campbell thought he had left the war party well behind. He awoke the men early and they started once more up the Pelly, taking their time, hunting as they went.

They encountered no more Indians on the river. At Pelly Banks they left their canoe well hidden in brush and started across the high hills to Frances Lake. Even in the winter, when dog teams were used, the going was rough. In the summer there were bogs to cross and the mosquitoes were wild. After years in the bush, Campbell still could not get used to them.

They arrived at the fort late in July. All was well, however; the fisheries had been very poor. On top of that, the barter for furs had not been as brisk as anticipated. Campbell was disappointed. It seemed that his hopes were thwarted no matter how much he tried.

On October 3rd, the boats with the fall outfit arrived. There was also a new arrival, a new clerk by the name of William Hardisty. He would winter with the garrison at Fort Frances. There was also a letter for Campbell from Sir George. In the letter he suggested that the Lake Frances Post be kept open as long as possible; that it was imperative the Company establish a trade with the local Indians. He assured Campbell that there would be no problems with the Russians. He also wanted Campbell to report on everything he observed, no matter how trivial it seemed. He commended Campbell for the work he'd accomplished and was sure that the hardy Scott would continue to explore the possibilities for trade on the Pelly.

Campbell wrote a dispatch to Sir George to be returned with the boats to Fort Simpson. He described the country along the Pelly River, noting the animals encountered such as bear, moose, and caribou, and noting that the signs of beaver were plentiful. He described the Indians, what they wore, what sort of equipment they carried (much of it from white traders) and how friendly they were toward the white man. He wrote that he thought the Pelly River would be profitable to the Company.

There was another note in the dispatch that wasn't at all favourable. He wrote of the starvation and hardship of the past winters at Fort Frances. He hinted that if he was compelled to go through such deprivation again that he might have to leave the employ of the Company. This was the first of such warnings from Campbell.

In the spring of 1844, Campbell left with the winter's fur returns for Fort Simpson. Once more it was a hazardous trip and one of hunger. Campbell and his party had to subsist on what little game they could procure. At both Fort Halkett and Fort Liard the rations had been consumed and the men at these two posts were all but starving as well.

It was early June when Campbell and his party arrived at Fort Simpson. Campbell was made most welcome by Lewes who would soon retire.. Lewes

had had an accident the previous September. He shot off his lower right arm with his fowling piece when it was fired by accident. One can only imagine what suffering the poor Lewes must have gone through in that era, when medical skills were very primitive.

Chief John McLean assumed temporary charge of the Mackenzie district. Campbell was well aware that he had lost a friend with the departure of Lewes. He felt that there would be a setback in his further exploration of the Pelly. The hardy Scot certainly must have wondered why he kept trying when everything seemed to be against him. Perhaps it would be better if he resigned and went back to Scotland.

But Campbell should not have been so worried, although he had good cause for such. He learned that Gov. Simpson had plans for the Pelly and wanted further exploration of the river. Simpson felt that a new trading area could be opened for the Company and knew that Robert Campbell was the man for the job. He felt, also, that some new route must be opened to supply such an area. The Liard River route was far too dangerous. So when Campbell learned about the plans of Gov. Simpson his enthusiasm was once again fired up and he was ready to try again.

Campbell returned to Frances Lake in early October of 1844 but the bad luck that dogged his footsteps did not go away. Campbell had been given crews that were mostly Indian to man the boats negotiating the dangerous Liard River. One by one the Indians deserted him, 10 in all. With the men he had left, he could not negotiate the long portage at Portage Le Diable. The boats were just too heavy.

Campbell was forced to leave half his outfit at Fort Halkett—not a secure place even though Chief Factor John McLean had sent specific instructions that the supplies not be touched or used under any circumstances. Campbell didn't think that it would deter the Fort Halkett personnel and once more faced the prospects of going hungry at Fort Frances during the coming winter. Again he considered leaving the service of the Company.

When Campbell finally arrived at Fort Frances, he was delighted to find that Hardisty was well and thriving. He had kept the garrison in tip-top shape and even had taken in fur. Hardisty had done so well that Campbell decided to send him over the hills to Pelly Banks to trade with Gens Des Corteaux Indians, as they were called. Campbell knew that these Indians would not cross the difficult terrain to trade at Frances Lake. Hardisty did very well but was forced to return on January 21st, 1845, due to the lack of provisions.

In 1845-46, trade with the Indians had fallen off at both Fort Frances and Pelly Banks. In his report on that season, Campbell again pointing out the difficulty of procuring enough food to prevent death by starvation. He sent in his resignation for the close of the 1846 outfit, which would be May 31, 1847.

The long years of privation and hardship had taken their toll. Campbell had had enough of starving in the winter and fighting swarms of flies and mosquitoes in the summer. Then there was McPherson. Campbell disliked

the man and it would seem that the Chief Factor heading the Mackenzie District went out of his way to make difficulty for him. He would nearly always turn down his requests for more trade goods and provisions. Campbell had fought the wilderness for years. Now he would like to return to civilisation, marry a Scottish lass and have children.

McPherson, as soon as he had received Campbell's request for resignation, forwarded it to Gov. Simpson. He also wrote that he would have to appoint another officer to take the place of Campbell with the 1847 outfit. This meant that Campbell would stay with the Company another year.



Lapie River Canyon near Ross River on the Canol Road.

Campbell didn't dwell on his request to quit the Company but busily started the construction of a fort at Pelly Banks. He wrote in his dispatches "as good a fort as any in the district." Campbell remained at Pelly Banks during the winter of 1846-47. Hardisty was left in charge of Fort Frances.

In July of 1847, Campbell, accompanied by Lapie, again made the long and hazardous trek to Fort Simpson. He requested more supplies from McPherson but that individual granted him just what he thought was needed at Frances Lake and Pelly Banks. Campbell was sure that if Gov. Simpson was there that his requests would have been granted. McPherson was a tight-fisted Scot and this character trait, coupled with his dislike for his countryman, kept him from granting Campbell's wish for more supplies.

Campbell returned to Frances Lake a very disappointed man. With him was James Green Stewart. Stewart would replace Hardisty who was leaving because of ill health. Campbell would miss Hardisty.

Almost immediately, Campbell sat down to pen a dispatch to McPherson. He would send it to Fort Simpson with the returning Hardisty. Campbell requested permission to quit his post at Pelly Banks for the purpose of further exploration of the Pelly and the river into which it flowed. Campbell was not yet aware that this was the Yukon River. He again requested retirement from the Company should his request to further explore this unknown territory not be granted. This was the second time in 16 months that Campbell had threatened to resign from the Company.

The winter was spent at Pelly Banks. For a change, the men lived rather well. Fish and game were plentiful. Also the trading had been very good, as more Indians found their way to Pelly Banks.

In the closing months of the 1847-48 winter, Campbell received a welcome letter from McPherson. He was instructed to take Stewart and establish a new post at the juncture of the Pelly with the Lewes (Yukon). He was to leave Pambrun in charge of both Frances Lake and Pelly Banks, a very poor selection for that post as it turned out.

In May of 1848, Campbell, with Stewart and eight men, left Pelly Banks for the junction of the Pelly with the Yukon. With him he took some of his Fort Liard Indians to hunt game as they travelled down river. They met very few Indians until some 50 miles from the forks of the two rivers. It was very near the very place that Campbell had met the hostile Indians in 1843.

The Campbell party caused a lot of interest. The Indians talked and gestured a good deal, yet they were very friendly. An Indian approached Campbell and handed him a large bundle of furs. At first Campbell thought of protesting as he thought the Indian wished to trade and he wasn't ready to barter as yet. The Indian indicated with signs and gestures that this was a gift.

As it turned out this was one of the Indians who had accosted him five years before. The Indian indicated the gift was for causing Campbell alarm with their threats. It seemed that the Indian had become lame and he was sure that Campbell had placed "bad medicine" on him. He indicated that he

was sorry and would Campbell take away the curse he had placed on him. Campbell thought that this wasn't the time and place for attempting to cure the Indian. He told the Indian to come back later, "At the forks of the rivers," he told the Indian. This was accepted by the native.

Sometime later, after the junction of the Pelly with the Yukon was reached and the new trading post started, Campbell did use what little medical knowledge he had to try to cure the lame Indian. He was successful. The word spread far and wide about how the big white leader had cured the Indian. Later, Campbell's "miracle cure" would promote trade at the new post.

The construction of the new trading post was started on June 1st, 1848. It would be called Fort Selkirk. It was built on a level rise near the juncture of the Pelly with the Yukon. There was plenty of timber from which to saw lumber for the buildings. By this time Campbell was adept at building and the fort went up fast.

The Indians, or Gens de bois as Campbell called them in his memoirs, were very friendly. Also they were very honest. They took nothing from the building site and often returned items they had found. It would be good to barter with these Indians. The natives even thanked Campbell for founding the trading post. Trading was brisk.

Early in August Campbell and his men were amazed to hear singing and shouting. The men of the post couldn't understand what this meant. But the local Indians knew what it meant. They told Campbell that they should hide everything that those they heard were the Chilkats and they

A presence in Old Crow

The highlight of 1964 for Yukon Electrical was the building of its new plant in Old Crow. The Northern Canada Power Commission had built a diesel unit in the village three years earlier which was being operated by YTG, but the cost of power for the scattering of customers was astronomical. In an attempt to lower costs, YTG invited Yukon Electrical to supply power.

All the equipment was barged in from Dawson City. Yukon Electrical crews flew in for the installation. They had brought tents as there was no accommodation. Within days, they had the plant running and had strung the community's entire outdoor lighting system which consisted of 2 street lights. Donald and Stephen Frost were trained as standby operators.



THE YUKON ELECTRICAL COMPANY LIMITED

An **ATCO** Company

would steal anything in sight. The local Indians even helped Campbell and his men secure the supplies and trade goods.

They had just barely put everything out of sight when 20 Indians put ashore from rafts made from logs lashed together with spruce root rope. Campbell soon found out how right his local Indians were. He and his men were kept busy watching these Chilkats to keep them from stealing..

Campbell learned that these Chilkats from the Lynn Canal were familiar with the Hudson's Bay Company. They had traded with Capt. Dodd of the Company steamer, the Beaver. This gave Campbell an idea. He would send a written message to Capt. Dodd that he had established a post on the Yukon. Indians were in awe of the written word and for a small gift would act as messengers.

The Chilkats were skilled traders and had traded with the Indians of the interior long before Europeans appeared on the scene. The Chilkats possessed great strength and were able to carry heavy packs over the mountains and raft them down the rivers. Later, in 1898, the Chilkats would pack for the gold rush prospectors over the Chilkoot Pass..

Campbell was not aware, or if he was he ignored it, that the Chilkats had been trading with the Yukon Indians long before the white man made his appearance. The Chilkats would not give up their lucrative trade without a fight. Sooner or later there would be bloodshed. Campbell was certainly aware that these Indians were different than "his" people who had been so friendly and helpful.

In September, Campbell sent Stewart with several men to Pelly Banks to meet the outfit from Fort Simpson. On his arrival, Stewart found that Pambrun had allowed the Post to deteriorate badly. He had wasted supplies, including those destined for Fort Selkirk. Once more Campbell and his men would have to survive on their fishing and hunting skills.

In the summer of 1849, the situation grew worse. No supplies arrived from Fort Simpson. Again, in the winter of 1849-50, Campbell and his men had to live off the land, but the hunting was good that year and the fish were plentiful. They lived through the winter in good shape, although they were deprived of tobacco and tea. The men missed these two items and looked forward to the day another shipment would get through from Fort Simpson.

There was something else that infuriated Campbell. Yes, he could give up his pipe and his tea but he had few goods for trade so the Indians did not bring in fur. Business was poor and the Company lost money, trying to supply Fort Selkirk by way of the Liard River route. There had to be a better route of supply.

Campbell blamed much of his plight on Chief Factor MacPherson. In the spring of 1850, Campbell decided to send Stewart and John Reid, another employee, to Fort Simpson. Perhaps they could find out why there were no supplies or communications sent since October 1848. Campbell made up his mind that should Stewart and Reid not get through he and his men would drift down the Yukon until they reached a Russian trading post. It would be impossible to spend another winter at Fort Selkirk.

Campbell also sent word to Capt. Dodd at Lynn Canal, via a Chilkat "mailman," about their plight. He wrote about their plans and asked Capt. Dodd to communicate with the Russian Governor at Sitka to alert the trading posts on the Yukon that they might have to ask for their help. Campbell learned later that Dodd did receive his message and that word was sent to the Russians at Sitka. The governor did alert the Russian outposts to be on the lookout for them and render any assistance they could.

But Campbell did not have to abandon Fort Selkirk. On August 23rd, an Indian arrived from Frances Lake bearing the message that Stewart had arrived there from Fort Simpson with supplies. Most of the men were absent from the post, either hunting or tending fish nets. Campbell sent word that they were to return at once. As soon as they came in they all left for Frances Lake.

On reaching Pelly Banks Campbell couldn't believe what he saw. All but one house was destroyed by fire. What had happened? Had Indians attacked the post? Where were Pambrun and the men? Perhaps he would find out when he talked to Stewart. Campbell and his men continued on toward Lake Frances.

On reaching Finlayson Lake an old canoe was found along with several rafts. They decided to use these and cross the lake where to easy ground on the other side. Campbell and a man named Marcette would use the canoe while the rest would use the rafts. The usually cautious Campbell failed to inspect the canoe well. When they were part way across the lake, the canoe began filling with water. There was no way to bail out the water, and to make matters worse, a strong wind came up making the lake very choppy. Soon they were sinking and then they were in the water. For a time they clung to the canoe, then decided to swim for shore. When the two men seemed ready to give up, they were able to touch bottom with their feet and struggle to shore. The men on the slower rafts could only watch in horrified silence as the two struggled in the water. When they reached shore, Campbell and Marcette dried off in front of the fire while supper was cooking.

The party proceeded down the lake that evening. On the second day they reached the supply of goods that Stewart had brought up from Frances Lake. Now would come the hard work for most of the men. They would shoulder 100 pound packs to trek back to Pelly Banks. Campbell went on to Fort Frances.

Fort Frances was also in deplorable shape. Campbell was infuriated at Pambrun for allowing the fort to deteriorate so badly. From Stewart he found out what had happened. The fires at Pelly Banks were accidental. When Stewart arrived he had found both Pambrun and Lapie just skin and bones. Two of the men had died of starvation. Indians in the area had also died. Campbell was appalled.

"My God," Campbell exclaimed, "what happened to Pambrun and Lapie?"

"Well, Chief," Stewart replied. "they went on without me to Fort Simpson."

Campbell had felt all along that Pambrun was not the man to manage the two posts, Frances Lake and Pelly Banks. Although the supply boats had not arrived to re-stock the two posts, as Campbell knew only too well, he felt that Pambrun should have been able to do better. He had allowed his fish nets to rot and he had failed to ration powder and shot.

Campbell left Stewart at Frances Lake to be in charge as Pambrun had not returned from Fort Simpson. He hoped that he wouldn't. He felt that Stewart was far better qualified for the job.

Campbell returned to the cache to help his men transport the supplies to Pelly Banks. It was back-breaking work over difficult terrain. None of the packers complained, however, as they knew that their lives could depend on the supplies.

At Pelly Banks the supplies were loaded into the boats and transported down river to Fort Selkirk, which they reached the middle of October. Campbell felt that they could get through the winter if they were careful. They had ammunition for the hunters' guns and there was twine from which new fish nets could be woven. Still they would have to husband their supplies.

Early in November, Stewart arrived at the Fort with the news that the outfit for the coming year had arrived at Frances Lake. That was good news for Campbell. But there was bad news as well, Pambrun had returned to take charge of Fort Frances. Campbell had hoped Stewart would remain in charge and thus be assured that supplies would be forwarded to Pelly Banks, then on to Fort Selkirk. Pambrun had never used dog sleds to transport goods to Pelly Banks in the winter months. Instead, he packed the supplies and made caches along the route where the food often spoiled or was destroyed by animals.

Doctor Rae, in the summer of 1850, was relieved of his post at Fort Simpson to conduct a second search for the Arctic Explorer, Sir John Franklin. Rae's successor was Chief Trader John Bell. It was Bell, who in 1845, was the first to reach the Yukon River from the Mackenzie by way of the Peel.

Bell knew that the route of supply to Fort Selkirk by way of the Liard River was far too hazardous. He wrote late in 1850, to the Governor and Council, that it was illogical to supply Fort Selkirk by way of Frances Lake. He recommended that the Frances Lake post be closed. It was a drain on the District and there was very little fur.

During this time, Campbell was going through the usual winter of privation. He was beginning to believe that the Company was forcing him to quit. A less resourceful man would have given up long ago. On the 22nd of January 1851, Campbell wrote to his old friend, Chief Factor Donald Ross at Norway House, about his problems. He described in great detail the near starvation of the past. He wrote that he had not received any mail for over two years and few supplies. Campbell estimated the Company had lost as much as 10,000 pounds by not getting supplies through to him. With no trade goods he could not barter with the Indians.

Campbell inferred that there were men in the Company (McPherson) who wanted to close down the posts at Lake Frances and Pelly Banks, perhaps Fort Selkirk as well. In the letter Campbell poured out the bitterness he felt for the years of deprivation. He pointed out that it could be possible to supply Fort Selkirk by way of the Mackenzie River through the Peel River Post (Fort McPherson). This was the way that Fort Yukon was supplied..

That same year, however, John Bell had written to A. H. Murray at "Youcon House", as Fort Yukon was then called, that Gov. Simpson had commissioned Campbell to explore the Yukon River down to his post to see if it would be possible to supply Fort Selkirk from the Peel. He was to supply Campbell with whatever was needed should this route become practical. So it was evident that Gov. Simpson was aware that such a supply route was possible.

Campbell, however, didn't receive the Governor's dispatch until April. He had hoped for such orders for many years. All the suffering and deprivation of the past seemed to fade away like fog in the morning's sun. He had felt all along that the Pelly and the Yukon were one and the same rivers. Now he would have a chance to prove it.

On June 5th, 1851, Campbell began his historic journey down the Yukon. Stewart, with some of the men, was left in charge of the post. Campbell was in a hurry to reach Fort Yukon as quickly as possible. They would row night and day only going ashore to cook or to talk to Indians. He found the country through which they travelled inhabited with many species of animals. They saw bear, caribou, moose and beaver sign.

These Indians had never seen white men before. When Campbell and his boat came into view the Indians would run along the shore until the Trader came in to have a talk of sorts. Campbell didn't know their language, although he had picked up enough Indian dialect to convey who he was and what he was doing.

Campbell observed by their dress and equipment that they had evidently not traded with the white man before. They used the bow and arrow, their tools were made of stone and bone. They had no pots but used tightly woven baskets in which to cook. This they did by putting the food and water in a basket and cooking the contents by placing red hot stones into it. Campbell knew that the prospects for trading with them were good.

When Campbell and his crew reached what is now the border of Alaska the Indians they met informed them that down river were other white men like them. Campbell was so pleased he almost flew the rest of the way. This had to be Fort Yukon.

Some 40 miles farther, with the men rowing as fast as they could, a palisaded fort hove into view. Above the main gate flew the red flag of the Hudson's Bay Company. They arrived about 10 a.m. on June 8th, after three full days and 70 hours of rowing.

Murray was on his way with the winter's fur returns to Lapierre's House and, much to Campbell's surprise, his old friend Hardisty was in charge in

his absence. The two old friends had a lot to talk about. Campbell was elated. He had once and for all proved that the Pelly and the Yukon were one and the same river. Perhaps now they would be able to supply Fort Selkirk and eliminate the long wait for supplies.

The next day Campbell and his men left Fort Yukon, rowing up the Porcupine after Murray and party. They overtook them that afternoon and travelled with them the rest of the way to Lapierre's House. This was the depot for the goods brought over by dog sled from Fort McPherson the previous winter. The outfit for Fort Yukon would be loaded on the boats and the return made down the Porcupine. The season's fur would be stored here until the following winter and then transported to the Peel River Post via dog sled. It was an excellent method of supply and one often used by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Murray and his family, Campbell with some of his men, would now take the long route over the Richardson Mountains to the Peel River, thence down to the post. On their fourth day out it began raining in torrents. It was slow going, especially for the men who all had heavy packs. Since Campbell was in a hurry, he set out ahead of them.

Campbell had never, of course, travelled this route but it was well marked. He had no problems and reached the Peel River. He also met the friendly Loucheux Indians who volunteered to guide him the rest of the way to Fort McPherson. They reached an Indian encampment opposite the Fort where Campbell stayed overnight. The next day a boat came over for Campbell. A. R. Peers, a friend of Campbell's, was more than mildly surprised to see him. It was hard for him to believe that Campbell had travelled the great distance from Ft. Selkirk. The Murray party arrived three days later. Now with his men with him, again Campbell would start up the Mackenzie River to Fort Simpson. They left by boat, stopping for a few days at Fort Good Hope where Campbell visited with another old friend, Adam McBeath. There was a lot of talk about the Company and the terrible years that Campbell had experienced.

When Campbell arrived at Fort Simpson the new officer in charge, James Anderson, was still en route. Campbell wanted desperately to talk to him about supplying Fort Selkirk from the Peel River post. In the meantime he kept busy getting the various outfits together that would go out to the far flung Company posts, including Fort Selkirk. Knowing that he would have to return to his post on the Pelly, Campbell decided to write some letters to Anderson.

Campbell described how friendly the Indians along the Yukon had been and how eager they were to trade with the Company. Campbell was sure that it could become a lucrative trade. Campbell also wrote about the awful years of deprivation, and he proposed that the new route to Fort Selkirk via the Peel replace the hazardous Liard River route.

When Anderson read the letters after his arrival, he added a note before sending them on to headquarters. He mentioned that Capt. Dodd of the Beaver at Lynn Canal, had received a letter from Campbell in Fort Selkirk,

and returned an answer, all within 15 days. In other words it was possible for the Chilkat Indians (they were the “mailmen”) to traverse the mountains and reach the Yukon in a matter of days. Dodd also noted that the Chilkats had been trading with the lower Yukon Indians for many, many years. He mentioned that he had heard that the Chilkats planned to run the white traders from the Yukon. What Anderson was hinting at was that Fort Selkirk would never make a profit and the Company should consider abandoning the post. Furthermore, Anderson made no requests to send more men to the Yukon to bolster Fort Selkirk.

It might be added that Campbell had requested that two young heifers and a bull be taken by water to Fort Good Hope, then forwarded to Lapierre’s House where they could be picked up by his men. Campbell had experimented with growing vegetables with some success. There was grass from which hay could be made. Now if they had a cow or two they could have fresh milk and butter. Campbell also requested leave of absence if the Council would approve.

Campbell returned to Fort McPherson with the outfits, including the one for Fort Selkirk. He employed Indians to pack supplies over the mountains to Lapierre’s House. The rest of the outfit would be transported over in the winter and after the break-up they would pickup the supplies. He arrived “home”, as he put it, on the 17th of October, 1851. He had proved his point, supplies could be shipped to Fort Selkirk via the Peel and thus avoid the dangerous Liard River route.

Steward, as well as the men left at the Fort, had passed the summer in comfort, the hunting and fisheries were good. However there was one incident that marred the summer. Stewart had been confronted with the Chilkats who were intent on killing the white traders. If it had not been for the friendly Yukon Indians, who routed them from the Fort, they may very well have done just that. If Campbell thought that the future would bring trouble with the Chilkats, he kept those thoughts to himself. He felt confident that the Chilkats wouldn’t bother them as long as he had “his” Indians about.

In his report to Anderson, Campbell did write about the incident of the summer. He reported that there were some 31 Chilkats rafting down the Yukon for the purpose of trading with the Yukon Indians. They had depleted the fur for at least a 100 miles down the Yukon, leaving little for the Company’s trade. He reported that they had the advantage in trading with the Yukon Indians as they knew their language and their habits. Consequently there would be little fur taken in. Campbell pictured the Chilkats as “a perfect set of villains and most daring thieves.” As did so many white men, Campbell believed they had a right to encroach upon the native American. It didn’t matter that they had been there thousands of years before Europeans.

The winter of 1851-52 passed with no food shortages. The nets produced an abundance of fish and the hunting was good. This, coupled with the supplies that Campbell brought back from Fort McPherson, saw them through the long winter months in comfort, or as much as could be expected with temperatures ranging to 60 below.

In May of 1852, Campbell left with a crew to get the supplies at Lapierre's House. On the way to Fort Yukon, Campbell noted that the Indians along the river had decreased by at least a third. They had died from some sickness during the winter, probably a disease such as smallpox that the white man had brought to the area. With fewer Indians to trap and hunt fur bearing animals, the Company was sure to turn a lesser profit, which concerned Campbell.

At the site of Fort Selkirk there had been flooding during the spring break-up. Campbell decided to build a new fort a few miles up river, on the left bank. He chose a level area well above the spring floods. There was still much building to do when he left for Lapierre's House. He left Stewart, with some of the men, to work on the construction. It was still not finished when he returned. The rampart was yet to be built.

Sometime later Stewart, with eight men, left for Fort Yukon to get more supplies. On the way back he was to trade for dried salmon with the Indians. Dried salmon for the dogs was nearly as important as food for the men. While Stewart and the men were gone, the local Indians made camp near the fort to give Campbell protection should the Chilkats return. The Chilkats had threatened to kill all of the Company men but Campbell felt that there was no danger. He was sure that Stewart and his men would be returning soon.

Even though Stewart had not returned, Campbell convinced the friendly Indians that there was no danger, they could return to their summer hunting. They needed to dry meat and salmon for the coming winter. This need was probably the main reason that Campbell induced them to leave.

On August 19, 1852, Campbell, with several men, went up the Beaver River to the old fort to make hay for the cows they had acquired. They were happily singing as they worked for it was a change from the usual routine around the Fort. Suddenly they heard shouts and yelling coming from up river. They knew what the noise meant, the Chilkats were coming back! They dropped their rakes and forks and ran toward the trading post.

The Chilkats reached the fort ahead of Campbell and his men. There were 27 of them. They seemed friendly enough. One of them, a sort of "mailman" who was often hired by either Capt. Dodd or Campbell to act as a courier, had a basket of mail for Campbell. Some of it was dispatches forwarded by Capt. Dodd but there was also a letter from him. "Watch the Chilkats," it read, "I have heard that they plan on killing you all."

Campbell was now aware that they were on very shaky ground indeed. The Indians now went about with guns loaded and cocked. The leader was overheard to order the whites killed. This was the most dangerous moment of Campbell's career. There was little he could do except talk to the Indians and try to quiet them down. If they decided to attack they wouldn't have a chance. Now he wished that he had allowed his friendly Indians to remain at the post. He also wondered why he had not made a greater effort to com-

plete the rampart. As he wrote later in his memoirs, "I temporized and used every conciliatory appearance to soothe them, they were like a volcano, every moment ready to burst out."

Somehow they made it through the night, each sleeping in a different building to try and protect it as much as possible. The next day the Chilkats moved about the fort taking anything that caught their fancy. They could not be stopped.

They became more and more menacing. Finally several went to Campbell and confronted him with guns pointed at his chest. He felt that he had at last come to the end of the trail. They demanded that he and his men leave immediately or they would be killed.

Campbell saw his hunters returning and sent Lapie and another out to warn them but the Chilkats also saw them. They rushed out to the two canoes and dragged them to shore before the occupants could escape. They tore everything from the canoes and fought among themselves for the booty but they didn't harm the hunters.

Campbell ran down to the melee hoping to prevent bloodshed and to retrieve some of the guns if possible. They would need every gun they could get their hands on. He was forced away by the Chilkats so he went back toward the fort hoping that he could somehow calm the Chilkats. Three of the Chilkats jumped him with drawn guns and others grabbed him with drawn knives. Before the knives could reach him the "mailman" jumped in and thrust him aside just as his assailant thrust his knife, slashing his shirt. Another rushed at Campbell with loaded and cocked musket holding it inches from his chest. He pulled the trigger but it misfired and again Campbell's life was spared. Again his "mailman" saved him by pushing him out of the way, allowing him to escape the house.

In a frantic frenzy, yelling and howling, the Chilkats began smashing everything in the main trading house. What they couldn't use they destroyed. Campbell wondered how soon they would torch every building and send all of his work up in smoke. They wanted to destroy the white man's post and to run him out of the country.

For a time Campbell thought of fighting them until they killed him but then decided that would be of no use to anyone. He would have to reopen the trading post and if he was killed he couldn't. So he allowed the two "mailmen" to lead him down to a skiff at the water's edge. Campbell and the remaining men left in the boat.

They drifted down river with just the clothes on their backs. None of them retained any weapons. Down river a ways they caught up with some of the women and men who had run from the fort as soon as the Chilkats had come yelling down the river. Campbell knew that even with these few men he would not have a chance against the Chilkats so they kept going. They made camp at one of the fisheries. They needed rest and food before they continued. The next day Campbell continued on, hoping that he would run into Stewart and his crew. They would return to the fort and teach the marauding Indians a thing or two.

They didn't find Stewart but encountered a party of friendly Indians who were well armed. Campbell induced them to return to the fort and mount a counter attack against the Chilkats. They left their boats and canoes below the fort to approach by land above the fort and surprise the enemy.

When Campbell and his avenging force arrived close enough to the post they observed no Indians. They had left with their plunder. The fort was left in ruins, chairs broken, desks smashed, goods scattered everywhere, doors broken. There was nothing they could salvage. What the Indians couldn't take with them they rendered useless.

Campbell's Indian allies seeing the destruction and all the trade goods rendered useless, knew that the white man would not stay. They believed that they would have to trade once more with the Chilkats traders so didn't want to antagonize them by pursuit.

There was but one thing left for Campbell to do: return down river to Fort Yukon and hope that they could stay the winter without putting undue pressure on the post's resources. They went down river until they found Stewart and his men; all of them returned to Fort Yukon. Campbell's men would be put to work around the fort, setting up new fisheries and hunting for game. There would be no problem. Campbell wanted to talk face to face with Chief Trader James Anderson in command of the District.

Campbell with two men left Fort Yukon on September 6th, to return to Fort Simpson. They would use the shorter, more dangerous route down the Liard River. After 46 days spent fighting the hazards of the Liard in a small birch bark canoe, they arrived at Fort Simpson.



The chimneys of Fort Selkirk. This was all that remained of the original Fort Selkirk after the Chilkat Indians plundered the fort and expelled Campbell and his men. This photo was taken in 1887. The old fort was situated across the river from present-day Fort Selkirk.

In Campbell's written report to Anderson he wrote in great detail about the attack and the destruction of their supplies and trade goods. He wanted permission to return with enough men to punish the Chilkats. "...to wash away the stigma the Indians will cast on the character and bravery of the Company officers," he wrote in part.

Anderson would not, or could not, grant Campbell his wish. He had known for some time that both Fort Selkirk and Fort Yukon should be closed. In his report to the Governor and Council he recommended their closure, adding that a new trading post could be established 100 miles above Fort Selkirk on the Yukon where it would be out of the sphere of influence of the Chilkats traders. He wrote also that there was no need to send Campbell back with men for a counter attack on the Chilkats. The Company had lost money every year that Fort Selkirk was open.

The closure was a terrible disappointment for Campbell after all the years he had spent in the region. The day after he had handed Anderson his report of the Chilkats attack, Campbell received his commission as Chief Trader. He was now a partner in the Hudson's Bay Company and would share in profits from the fur trade. Certainly, this must have taken some of the sting from Anderson's refusal to send him back to Fort Selkirk.

Campbell was a stubborn Scot. He wouldn't give up without a fight. He would see Governor Simpson in person and explain to him why the Post on the Yukon should remain open. He requested a leave of absence and it was granted. Campbell travelled some 3,000 miles by dog sled and snowshoes, establishing a record that stood for 24 years.

Campbell met with Gov. Simpson in Lachine. He pleaded with him to grant permission to return to Fort Selkirk and punish the Chilkats. They must be shown a lesson they wouldn't forget. Gov. Simpson, although kindly disposed toward Campbell, would not grant his wish. He told Campbell to take a leave of absence and return to Scotland.

Chief Trader Robert Campbell did just that. When he returned from Scotland he was appointed the Chief Trader at Fort Liard where he served for one year. In August of 1855, he was appointed to head the Athabasca District. He was to spend many more years with the Hudson's Bay Company but never returned to the Yukon.

From the Publisher

When the letter from L. arrived I knew I was about to lose another friend. It was a brief, handwritten note with a P. S. that invited me to send him an e-mail message. L. is the original Luddite. He doesn't even own a computer but he has an e-mail address?!

Sam and I have at least five computers, including one that is set up just for e-mail. It sits gathering cob webs at the back of Sam's shack. We rarely use it.

Yes, we have an e-mail address, which you'll find posted in this issue. What we don't have is a telephone system that will take e-mail messages. Our antiquated cellular telephone allows us to talk on the phone and send and receive faxes. If coaxed, it will even allow us to transmit an e-mail message. But, if anyone tries to send a message to Yukoner Magazine headquarters at Army Beach, they and we are out of luck.

Of course, cruising the Internet is out of the question. Even if we could access the World Wide Web (which we can't), it would cost too much. Every time we pick up the phone to make a call or receive one we have to pay — not a lot but it all adds up. The cost of downloading a big file from the Internet could send us scurrying to the bank to mortgage the house.

I like the idea of keeping in touch with my south-of-sixty friends using e-mail. In fact, e-mail is rapidly becoming the only way to nourish friendships with people who live far away. When L. sent me that letter with his e-mail address, I knew it was the last letter I would ever receive from him. I know because this has happened before.

E-mail is easier and faster than licking a stamp for an envelope and it's cheaper than a long distance phone call. But not for us. Sam has to drive 30 miles to Whitehorse to pick up our e-mail from a friend's computer.

Anyway, if you're thinking of sending us an e-mail message, we'd be glad to hear from you. A letter might reach us faster, but our telephone situation may soon change. After Sam gets this issue out, we will experiment with a new phone system that may get us out of the bush and onto the information highway. The new system is expensive to buy but, if it works, we'll be able to use the phone evenings and weekends for free. Also, we'll be able to download your e-mail messages without leaving the property. o

