

ON WILDERNESS CANOE TRAILS WITH CREW 728C

by RICHARD Q. ALBERT



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RICHARD O. ALBERT

*He gave me
some help,
Mr. Hanson.
Richard O. Albert*

7-28-60 Thursday we arrived at Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base on Moose Lake after driving 2,836 miles from Alice, Texas, by way of Philmont Scout Ranch, the National Boy Scout Jamboree at Colorado Springs, Pike's Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park, Cheyenne's Frontier Days Rodeo Parade, Mount Rushmore and the Black Hills, and Badlands National Monument. We were 38 boys and 7 men, but now were divided into four crews: 728C, 728D, 728F, and 728H. Each crew had about 15 in it, including one or two advisors, a guide, and perhaps a swamper (a boy learning to be a guide). I was the advisor for crew 728C, with Terry Word as assistant advisor. Clifford J. Hanson, the man who runs the base, was friendly enough to be a Texan, and soon got us all squared away.

Each crew was issued packs and supplies, and these were packed as tightly as possible to conserve space. For example, we took enough bread to last us the whole trip, but each loaf was squeezed up tightly so it was no more than one-fourth as long as originally. Other things, like potatoes and eggs, were dehydrated. After all was packed, we ate supper, attended a campfire where we were sort of briefed on the area and the trip, and turned in for the night in tents that had wooden floors.

7-29-60 Friday dawned bright and early. We ate breakfast, and set about the last minute preparations for getting under way. Canoes were issued to us, and Mike, our guide, gave us canoeing instructions, demonstrating the various strokes and letting us practice them while standing out in knee-deep water. He gave us safety precautions to observe, and told us what to do if our canoe should swamp (turn over).

Next, we had to paddle our canoes out into the lake, and on command, swamp them, then right them, tow them back to shore, and empty the water out. Each canoe had a watertight compartment at each end that kept it afloat, but just barely. Phil Howard (the crew leader) and Jerry J. Smith (the assistant crew leader) and I were together in one canoe, and we got it swamped and all just as well as anybody else.

Then we had to finish packing. I took as clothing 1 pr. pants, 1 shirt, 1 skivvy shirt, 1 pr. skivvy shorts, 3 prs. socks, and 1 pr. shoes. I was really travelling light, as I knew I was going to have to carry this stuff and the less I had, the lighter it would be. And each crew had its picture taken as a group.

Shortly before noon we were all loaded and finally shoved off, each crew of about 15 men and 5 canoes. We paddled up Moose Lake to a tiny rocky island that had been scraped smooth by the glacier of the Ice Age, and stopped to eat our dinner of two sandwiches, one peanut butter and one jelly. Amster Howard's crew was eating dinner on another little rocky islet only about 50 feet away.

As we prepared to move on, we cleaned up the campsite, as we were to do at every campsite we stopped at. Other campers (surely not Scouts) had left some tin cans and trash lying around, making the pretty islet much less pretty. We gathered these all up, even wading out into the water to pick up some we could see on the bottom. Everything burnable we burned, and the cans we took along in the canoes to dump in the deep water of the lake, where they are out of sight and soon rust away anyway. Thus we left a very clean campsite always, and did our good turns for the day.

We were in the great Superior National Forest in the real lake country of northern Minnesota. Soon we would cross the border into Canada where we would be in the Quetico Provincial Park of Ontario, a wilderness area where the only travel possible is by canoe. Probably none of us had ever been in as complete a wilderness as this is, and we had certainly been looking forward to this experience now before us. The Quetico-Superior embraces more than 4,000 square miles of the best canoe country in the world.

We now entered Sucker Lake, and paddled northward. One of our canoes seemed to be having a little trouble. Eddie Chamberlain was in the stern, but he apparently didn't have his J-stroke down pat, as he always went around in a circle no matter how hard he tried to go straight. But, eventually, he worked it out, and got to where he could go straight if he wanted to.

A waterfall at the end of the lake forced us to make our first portage. This was Prairie Portage, a distance of 110 yards, into Basswood Lake, which is in Canada. Here at the border I, as leader of the crew, had to check in at Canada Customs, get various forms to fill out, declare our cameras, etc. Then I had to check in at the Ranger station nearby, too, where our intended route was given the Ranger, and where I got my fishing license. Each boy's license was automatically included in his trip fee, but I had to get mine separately. Also, we had to get vehicle permits for each canoe. That struck me as a bit odd, as I had never thought of a canoe as a vehicle before.

It had started raining while we were at Customs, and now as we headed north into Basswood Lake it rained harder and harder. A strong wind came up, and in only a few minutes it whipped the lake into a sea of angry whitecaps. We paddled straight into the teeth of the wind, but the canoes were tossed about like chips in the waves, and we began to ship water over the sides. I became apprehensive and feared for our safety, but as I looked around I still saw four canoes following me, so I felt better.

The next time I looked around I saw only three canoes behind us. That was bad. Sure enough, there was the other one, nearly completely submerged, with three little black heads bobbing around in the water beside it. I debated briefly whether or not to go back to help them, but the guide and other canoes were right beside the swamped canoe, so they didn't need any additional help. Also, it would have been quite dangerous to turn around, as that

would have put us broadside to the waves and probably swamped us, too. So, we kept on going, tho it seemed we were just barely making headway into the wind and waves. And the water in our canoe rose higher and higher.

We were shipping quite a lot of water, as waves were coming higher than the canoe, and we realized we were in a quite precarious situation. There was a small wooded island about a mile ahead, so I had the boys head for shelter in the lee of it.

We made it all right, and it sure was nice quiet water in the shelter of the island, tho it was still raining pretty hard. One other canoe was behind us, and we watched the boys struggling in the rough water, which tossed the canoe about like a cork. Then they came into the lee of the island too, and glided smoothly in. We learned it was Lou Vogel's canoe that had swamped, with Jerry Conn and Marshall Fein. The other three canoes were nowhere in sight -- we presumed they had gone back or headed straight for the shore near there.

The Canadian forest ranger came out in his motorboat, as he had seen the canoe swamp. He said the other three canoes were all right, and did we want him to tow us back. Heck no we didn't -- we had made the island under our own power in that storm, and we were going to stay there. We had a tent in my canoe, so we broke it out and quickly set it up. The boys really hopped to it -- they were too cold to stand still. Jerry Smith was particularly energetic and helpful, tho he was blue and shivering with cold.

We built a fire, but that was a pretty tricky thing to do with everything wet. Some dead birch logs were split open and somewhat drier wood obtained from the center, but it got wet from the rain almost right away. Ike Terry stood over it with his poncho on while somebody else held the ends of the poncho out as sort of a tent. Finally they got a little fire more or less going, but Phil Howard and others had to keep blowing it constantly for a time. Ike Terry looked funny standing over that fire in his poncho with his legs spread -- the smoke was coming out up around his neck, making him look like a smokestack and nearly asphyxiating him.

The other three canoes finally came on, but the wind and water had calmed down somewhat by then, tho still not safe exactly. We learned that luckily the swamped canoe had lost no gear, but the food pack was fairly well soaked and some of that, like the dehydrated potatoes, probably would spoil. All in all, tho, we were very lucky.

Everybody was wet thoroughly, and cold. My hands had been sun-burned pretty badly, and now they were freezing, which gave them a peculiar feeling. The fire really felt good as we gathered around it as closely as we could.

We cooked supper, which was the most delicious soup we had

ever tasted -- potatoes, corn, tomato sauce. There was hot chocolate, but I was slow and didn't get any.

The wind was odd -- it had been a strong north wind when the storm came up, then before long a south wind, then north, then east, then north, then east again. The rain slowed down to a drizzle, and nearly stopped by the time it was completely dark and we crawled into the sack -- about 10:30 o'clock.

We really got broke in right this first day. It was fun, but we did hope every day wouldn't be like that.

7-30-60 Saturday dawned bright and early, and reasonably clear but not raining, as it had been raining almost all night. Some of the boys had slept two to a sleeping bag, because their bedding was wet. Jerry Smith and I slept together in my bag because we had decided to take only the one bag to make less of a load to carry.

After checking the map more carefully, I discovered we had spent the night in the United States, and not in Canada as I had thought. Imagine not even knowing what country I was in!

Everybody had a job to do, and it was to be that way each time we stopped. Boys had different jobs at different times, but each time had something to do. Duties assigned by Phil were cook, assistant cook, quartermaster, assistant quartermaster, navigator, assistant navigator, fireman, assistant fireman, dishwasher, and assistant dishwasher.

We dried out some things this morning at the fire, then put it out thoroughly and set sail. We paddled up into Bayley Bay of Basswood Lake to the first portage of the day, 462 yards but an easy one. Here we found about 10 teenage girls who were on a canoeing trip, coming south across the portage, so you see girls can do it, too. A guide was with them and I figured he probably had carried the canoes. We saw the girls carrying the other gear, but the canoes were already in the water when we got there. I don't believe one of those girls could have portaged a canoe.

Across the portage we were in Burke Lake, a fairly good-sized lake where we headed directly into a strong north wind that had the lake in whitecaps. I had the stern paddle across this lake and Phil the bow. We paddled like mad but it seemed we just weren't making headway into the wind and waves. But we finally made it to the north end of the lake where the water was sheltered somewhat by the tall trees and was a little calmer. Jerry threw out a lure, and sure nuff soon had a tiny bass that he threw back in.

The next portage was fairly long and pretty rough. I carried the canoe on this one -- my first try at it, and I thought it might be my last. The trail led upward pretty steeply at first, then across a log jam where the footing was very precarious and unstable, then along a little stream that was very beautiful but

that I couldn't properly enjoy because my back felt like it was about to break in two, then down a steep hill shaded by large trees but paved with boulders that stuck three feet out of the ground leaving only narrow cracks between them for footing. After I had picked my way thru all this, I sure was glad to see that water, I tell you.

We found ourselves in North Bay of Basswood Lake, which is quite a large lake. I was middle man in the canoe on this, so I trolled, finally catching a wall-eyed pike about a foot long as we were nearly across the bay. I had just put the lure (a Lazy Ike) back into the water when I caught a bass of about two pounds. However, just as Jerry was lifting him across the gunwale, he flopped off and fell into the water, so the big one got away. About as we reached shore, I caught another bass, but only about 10 inches long. These were the first fish caught on the trip (except for the tiny bass Jerry had caught in Burke Lake and released), Mike, the guide, thought neither one of those two were big enough to keep, but we sure thought they were.

We stopped for dinner on a little rocky island, and while there Phil threw in a line and landed a nice large bass. It sure was pretty, and even the guide thought he was a keeper.

From there we wound around a still narrow waterway choked with horsetails, two kinds of water lilies that were in bloom, and grasses of various sorts. After several hundred yards we came to a beaver dam across our path, which raised the level of the pond behind it by about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet. We negotiated this small obstruction by just grabbing hold and sliding the canoe over it into the pond. Another fairly short portage and we were on a small lake that had no name, and another portage found us in West Lake, a long skinny lake lying NW-SE in contrast to the usual NE-SW direction of the great majority of the lakes in this particular area.

Three more portages took us thru two tiny lakes (called pot-holes) where the next portage was only 100 or 200 feet away across the lake, into Shade Lake. Another portage took us into Noon Lake, another into Summer Lake, another into Sultry Lake, and another couple thru a pothole took us into Silence Lake, where we camped on a small peninsula sticking out from the west shore.

We had made 13 portages this day, and we were kinda tired from it. There were 3 of us in each canoe, so one man took the food pack and paddles weighing about 80 or 90 lbs., another took the personal pack and tent weighing about 50 or 60 lbs., and the third took the canoe, made of aluminum but still weighing about 80 lbs. This last was the hardest, as one man had to lift it up out of the water and set it up on his shoulders while standing on the loose slippery rocks of the shore. If he lost his footing and fell down and busted himself, that was unfortunate, but if he busted the canoe, that was really bad, as that was transportation for 3 men. There is no other way out of this wilderness except by canoe.

A red squirrel greeted us in camp, and kept coming around

CREW

728C

Front Row

Asst.Crew Leader	Jerry J. Smith	Post 123	1221 Roosevelt Blvd., Alice, Texas	MO4-3116
	Johnny Cooke	Post 101	P. O. Box 396, Freer, Texas	EX4-7166
	Marshall Fein	Post 123	720 E. Fourth St., Alice, Texas	MO4-4686
	Jerry Conn	Post 123	514 Eighth St., Alice, Texas	MO4-3295
	Ike Terry	Post 180	514 Williamson Place, Corpus Christi, Texas	UL2-7895

Middle Row

	Jay Nielsen	Post 258	720 W. Allen St., Falfurrias, Texas	FA5-2073
	Eddie Chamberlain	Post 258	P. O. Box 352, Falfurrias, Texas	FA5-2738
	Sammy Davis	Post 93	107 Kentucky Street, Alice, Texas	MO4-4600
Crew Leader	Phil Howard	Post 123	1122 Catherine Dr., Alice, Texas	MO4-4145
	Chui DeLeon	Post 123	104 Nayer Avenue, Alice, Texas	MO4-8206

Back Row

Guide	Mike Quinn		219 S. Hamline St., St. Paul 5, Minn.	MI9-3728
Asst. Advisor	Terry S. Word	Troop 253 Committeeman	1108 Hartwell Road, Alice, Texas	MO4-5696
	Lou Vogel	Post 123	767 Glendale Street, Alice, Texas	MO4-7744
Advisor	Richard O. Albert		1313 Roosevelt Blvd., Alice, Texas	MO4-3313
	Neighborhood Commissioner			
Swamper	Hal Paulson		Route 1, Hardwicke, Minnesota	4002

for a bite to eat. But we wanted a bite to eat too, so we started to work on the chow. The macaroni looked odd -- it had been in the pack in the swamped canoe, gotten wet, and had congealed into a rubbery mass that looked like cheese, shaped just exactly like the sack it was in. There was some debate as to just what to do with it, and we finally cut it up into small pieces and threw it into the stew. It chewed somewhat like unsweetened bubble gum but almost everybody ate it.

The boys were really good about keeping the campsites clean. In fact, on one occasion at least this was followed a bit too enthusiastically. Johnny Cooke was eating some stewed prunes when he found himself with the seeds in his mouth. He turned and asked me what he should do with them, and I jokingly said "swallow them". He nodded understandingly and before I could stop him, he swallowed that mouthful of prune seeds!

7-31-60 Sunday dawned clear also, and since it was Sunday we had church services. Mike had several service pamphlets, and I was the preacher. We had a couple of songs, some responsive readings, some discussions, and it all turned out pretty well. In fact, the boys sometimes called me "Father" after this instead of the "Fuzzy" they had been calling me because of my short burr haircut.

We cruised on up to the north end of Silence Lake, and a fairly rough portage took us into a good sized pothole. Across this little pond we found another portage. Everybody else went ahead and as I came along with my pack, I thought it looked rough. Then I began finding canoes, paddles, packs, etc. scattered all along the trail and I knew that it really must be a bugger. Then I saw why.

It was rough and steep to start with, but then came a stretch of down trees up to nearly three feet in diameter. These had apparently been blown down by a storm, as some were uprooted and some had the trunks broken off -- just splintered. They lay across the trail or alongside it, at varying heights above the ground. We had to pick our way laboriously over these obstructions, or in some instances walk along on the trunks, helping each other as best we could. We thought previous portages were rough, but we hadn't seen nuthin' yet. This one really took the starch out of us. Phil had the canoe on this one -- lucky boy.

At the end of this portage, as some of the boys were loading the canoes, I heard a crying noise, like that made by a wounded rabbit at times. I looked around a little, and found it was coming from under Jay Nielsen's left foot. I moved his foot, and to his surprise, he found he had been standing on a small red squirrel. It seemed pretty badly injured, but we left it there, hoping it would recover.

Three more portages, all quite rough ones, took us thru two other small unnamed lakes into Trant Lake. At the end of Trant Lake, we went along a stream with three more portages, another pothole, and another stream into Kahshahpiwi Lake.

At one of these portages we came to a beaver dam. Phil had the canoe, and as he stepped off the dam into the water he went straight down and disappeared from sight, leaving the canoe floating upside down on the surface. He did not reappear, and a look of alarm appeared on Jerry's face as he thought maybe Phil was hurt. Somehow, I wasn't at all worried.

Jerry hollered at Phil, and back came a muffled answer from under the canoe. A smile of relief brightened Jerry's face, and all was well again. I knew that Phil was just taking advantage of the opportunity to cool off in the nice refreshing water from the exertion of the portage, and was breathing the air trapped under the canoe. As we turned the canoe over, he seemed almost reluctant to get up to work again.

Here in Kahshahpiwi Lake again was a strong head wind, from the north, but by hard paddling we made it up to the north end where there was a small rapids. There was a portage around it, but we did ours by walking the canoe down the rapids, lifting it over the rocks, as there was just enough water to bear up a good portion of the weight of the canoe so it wasn't too hard.

Our course lay just about north-northeast for some miles. We paddled thru Keefer Lake, portaged to Sark Lake, then portaged into Cairn lake, where we spent the night on the south end of an island. Supper was most delicious that nite, and we all hit the sack right away, as we were really beat -- the whole crew of us. We did take time to eat the four fish we had caught (Jerry had caught a 26-inch northern pike also) and we polished them off in short order. This was the hardest day we had had -- only 11 portages but very rough ones.

At this camp we were on a large rock, which had a rather steep slope off into the water on the west side. Chui DeLeon was washing something in the water here and started sliding down and just couldn't stop. The next thing he knew he was swimming in the cold water, with the whole crew laughing and enjoying his embarrassment. He didn't lose his hat, though.

Mike sure enjoyed Chui. Chui would frequently use the exclamation "Hay! Cuidado!", which means literally "Look out!" He taught Mike that much Spanish, and after a few days of practice, Mike could say it pretty well. After that, he always called Chui "Hay! Cuidado!" instead of by name.

8-1-60 Monday dawned raining. I had heard some rain on the tent all night, and it was still raining when we got up. Mike, the guide, was of the opinion we should just ignore the rain and go, so we did. Luckily the rain shortly stopped and stayed stopped except for once later in the day when it rained on us for a time.

Some of the boys learned something the hard way today. Mike had warned us at the start of the trip to always put our gear under the upturned canoes at nite. Those that didn't do it last night

found everything wet this morning. I'm glad to say that everything in my canoe had been properly stowed and was dry.

We heard some blue jays but saw them only occasionally in the distance. We were visited by a bunch of Canada jays (also known as camp robber or whiskey pete), which were quite tame and sat around only a few feet away, looking for something to eat.

We loaded up and shoved off and at the upper end of Cairn Lake portaged over into Heronshaw Lake, then into Metacryst Lake. Here we cruised southwest for a time, and on a small island saw a huge nest in a tall pine tree with two large dark birds sitting on the edge of the nest. This was the nest of a bald eagle, our national emblem, and it was the first time most of the boys had ever seen an eagle's nest. Mother eagle sat in a tree not far away watching us, but wasn't particularly wild. Her brown body contrasted sharply with the clear white of her head and tail. Mike said there were quite a few eagle nests in this area.

Two portages north took us along a little stream and pothole into a small unnamed lake, from where another portage took us into Baird Lake. This was the farthest north that we would get. From here our course lay westward for a time, and then southward.

From Baird Lake we portaged into Cub Lake. This portage was short but very rough, as it went up steeply over a ridge, and then almost straight down with very precarious footing on slippery tree roots and rocks, almost like a ladder. Lucky Phil had the canoe again, and I was proud of him the way he came down the cliff and didn't kill himself or the canoe either. I watched Lou Vogel come down it, too, and he did just as well as Phil. This portion was about twenty feet high, and right beside it was a very pretty little waterfall.

In Cub Lake, we stopped on a little peninsula to eat, and while the sandwiches were being prepared, I got Terry Word to go with me over to a little islet not far away to take pictures of some lichens growing there. I was rather fascinated by the rich growth of many species of lichens growing on the bare granite or on little collections of humus in the depressions.

Some kinds grew to about four or five inches high and maybe twenty feet in diameter. These were very finely divided and branched -- a lump six inches in diameter had thousands of end branchlets. These came in several colors and shapes. They were of the foliate group.

In the crustate group were also many kinds. Some were grey and flat on the rocks, spreading to over a foot in diameter and looking like a large ringworm. Others were deep brown, and were also flat on the rocks but raised up in places on the edges to an inch or so high, maybe six inches in diameter. These were brittle, but when wet were rather greenish and rubbery.

I also took some pictures of the thick green moss growing on

the forest floor, in some places covering everything. It made us feel as tho we were walking on a very thick carpet, and it looked and felt so good. There were also several kinds of this moss.

Club mosses (Lycopodium) also were present in abundance, but I noted only two species. One of these grew up like a small evergreen to about six inches high, with branches and tiny needles growing out the side (in fact, it is sometimes called a ground pine). The other looked just like it but of different form. It grew stretched out flat on the thick damp humus of the forest floor, reaching for many feet and sending rootlets down as it went and a few little branches out the sides. At times it showed fruiting bodies, which were completely bare of needles, went up for about four inches, divided in two, and went up about two inches more to produce two round long smooth spikes.

On this islet we found a note in a bottle, sitting on a nice new log table. It seems that a good Irishman named Dr. Ingebrigtsen from Minneapolis had built it on July 4 of this year. He and his wife, Jeanne, and three kids ages 7, 5, and 2, were on a little canoe trip and had stopped there. They had been on the trail seventeen days already and would be going for quite a while yet (he named the lakes he had been thru, and those intended to go thru).

It just made me wonder. How did they fare on the portages -- did the poor man have to make several trips and carry everything? Was his wife perhaps a lady wrestler? Who carried the kids? Etc. Anyway, my hat's off to a man who would take his wife and three kids of that age on such a trip.

Terry and I got back to camp and ate dinner. We hadn't quite finished yet when I heard a splash, and immediately a bunch of guys laughing and jeering. I put my sandwich down, grabbed my camera, and ran over there, and sure nuff Phil had swamped his canoe and fallen in. Luckily it wasn't loaded, so no harm was done. He hollered, "Get away with that camera!" but you know, I took that picture anyway.

Another portage took us into Eag Lake, from which we followed a very pretty slow-winding stream thru three portages into Camel Lake. I enjoyed this stream, with several beaver houses sticking up out of the water, some of them all covered with grass and weeds, showing that the houses were old. The stream was bordered by thick vegetation of many species, including a few small trees. Upon touching the bank with our paddles, we found to our surprise that this was not land or mud, but a floating mat. The leaves, sticks, and logs, plus all the other debris, had formed these rafts, which got thicker and thicker with falling leaves till some seeds hatched out and the roots bound the mass together. This process had continued and these thick mats were formed.

In several places, we saw little trails that beavers made thru the vegetation of these mats. These trails ended at the water's edge in a little flattened landing where frequently were

fresh chips or some twigs or small logs they had been eating.

I saw the tall flowering stalks of pitcher plants sticking up all over these mats in some places, and then found one right on the edge where we could get an unobstructed view of it. It, too, was blooming. We saw the large hollow leaves that held it up on the water's surface, and also served to catch and digest the insects this plant uses as part of its food. The leaf is open at the top where it is lined with fine soft whitish hairs pointing downward. An insect that gets inside cannot climb out against these backward pointing hairs, so it eventually falls back down into the base of the leaf where there is a little water. The bug rots, and the nourishment is taken up by the plant. We opened several leaves and found many old disintegrated bugs in each.

We were about to leave when I saw another insectivorous plant right next to the pitcher plant -- the tiny sundew. This dainty little bright pink plant is only about an inch to an inch and a half high, and has a number of thin stems going out to the sides, each of which ends in a rounded leaf about a quarter of an inch in diameter. Each pink leaf is covered with long thin erect white hairs ending with a very tiny droplet of clear liquid at the tip. The insect is caught in these hairs, the leaf folds somewhat and gradually digests it and absorbs portions of it, then unfolds and lets the remains fall away. It is then ready for the next victim.

As we paddled quietly along in Camel Lake, I saw a fairly small long slinky black animal go bouncing along on a large rock on the left shore. I said "Look, boys, there's an otter!" He confirmed my diagnosis by sliding on his belly down his slide into the water, as otters do, and then went swimming along with just his head out of the water, apparently very happy and content with his lot in life. I learned later that Terry Word had seen three and possibly four otters in the little stream behind us. I really hadn't expected to see otters and was quite surprised, but we had seen quite a lot of moose droppings on the portages and we were on the lookout for moose.

We passed a group of men camped on the left shore, all wearing yellow hats that looked like army helmets. They asked us for smokes and in retrospect, we figured that must have been a leading question. They were smoke jumpers, had been fighting a forest fire about a mile and a half away to the south, probably parachuted in. Now the fire had been out a day and a half, and they were just camped there waiting for a pontoon plane to come pick them up.

By the way, the only way in and out of this country is by canoe -- it is truly a wilderness and I trust will remain so. It is even forbidden to fly planes over it. The Canadian Ranger planes are the only ones who can do it, as they patrol the area once in a while and put out fires and things like that.

We messed around a little in the lower end of Camel Lake. Soon a commotion in one of the other canoes told us Jerry Conn had

CREW

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Front Row

	Joe Mansilla	Post 42	864 N. Aransas St., Alice, Texas	MO4-4935
	Mike Hebert	Post 42	1909 Encino Avenue, Alice, Texas	MO4-3526
	Jimmy Evans	Post 42	116 Mississippi St., Alice, Texas	MO4-4606
Crew Leader	Bob Appling	Post 93	Route 2, Box 466, Alice, Texas	MO4-5957

Middle Row

	Marvin Diebel	Post 42	101 Kansas Street, Alice, Texas	MO4-7515
Assistant Crew Leader	Gerry Parker	Post 42	802 Haskell Avenue, Alice, Texas	MO4-4976
	Tim Word	Post 93	1108 Hartwell Road, Alice, Texas	MO4-5696
	Billy Brock	Post 42	1014 Gibson Street, Alice, Texas	MO4-6217

Back Row

Swamper	Mike Smith		405 S. Fairview St., Luverne, Minn.	AT3-4698
Advisor	Ted Burke	Troop 101 Scoutmaster	P. O. Box 1243, Freer, Texas	EX4-7832
Guide	Gene Kersey		5620 Bernard Pl., Edina 24, Minn.	WE9-2542
Asst. Advisor	W. H. Curley Fogle	Post 101 Asso. Advisor	P. O. Box 1312, Freer, Texas	

hooked a fish so we watched him fight it and land it. It was a 24-inch walleyed pike, and a very nice one, too. In a minute or two I hooked and landed one, and it was an exact twin of Jerry Conn's.

The portage out of Camel Lake was 704 yards -- a long one by our standards. I had the canoe on this one and the first thing was a long steep climb to the top of a ridge. By the time I got to the top my legs were about to collapse and I was breathing as tho I had just run a mile. Fortunately I found a rock about six feet high to lean the canoe on, and I could rest a bit. After a while I could go on all right, and so I made the whole portage in stages by stopping to rest four or five times. But I didn't feel badly about it, as at that I caught up with some of the other canoes that had gone on before me.

On a previous portage I had gone between two trees that were so close together both sides of the canoe scraped rather tightly against them. On this portage the trail led between two trees that were so close together that the canoe stuck -- wouldn't go thru at all. I bet I'd be there yet if my two buddies hadn't come along and lifted the canoe up, turned it on its side, and helped me get it through there.

I came to one place where a tree had fallen across the trail, hanging about four and a half feet high. There was no possible way around it, I couldn't jump over it, so I had to go under it. Did you ever try to duck walk with an 80 lb. canoe on your shoulders? It presents its problems, I assure you.

These canoes are 16 feet long, with a beam of about 34 inches. They have a yoke across the middle with two pads on it that fit on the shoulders on portages. Theoretically, one man can grab the canoe across the middle, raise it to rest on his thigh, change hold on it, and with one deft maneuver raise it up over his head and down on his shoulder, and trot off with it. Mike the guide made it look so easy, but when we tried it it didn't always turn out that way, especially when we were standing on the slippery moveable rocks of the lake shore, or in mud, or on a log. We sometimes had to have help to get it up there. One boy fell flat on his face with the canoe on top of him, but fortunately the neck didn't break -- only the canoe yoke.

This yoke is necessarily so constructed as to come forward a little on each side of the neck; consequently when we picked a canoe up or put it down we had to move the head forward to make room. Once Jerry forgot to do that when he put the canoe down, and nearly pulled his head off.

On this portage we also had a lot of flies. They looked just like house flies, but they stung a lot worse than any mosquito you ever saw, and were too fast to catch. And here the mosquitoes were out too - the first time they had been out in the daytime. Imagine walking thru heavy timber with this heavy unwieldy canoe balanced uncertainly on your aching shoulders, maybe climbing a steep slope,

chasing flies and mosquitoes, stepping over logs and slippery rocks on a very uneven footing, wet brush slapping back in your face and you don't have a free hand to protect yourself, you're trying to follow a dim trail along the forest litter or by an occasional blaze on a tree, you turn and wait a few seconds for the long canoe to slowly turn and catch up with you, then start up again and bang against a tree that jars you all the way down to your heels and you almost lose your balance or your canoe; you back up and try again; maybe somebody is coming back to get some gear he left and you ask him how far it is yet and he says just over the hill so you feel refreshed or at least encouraged slightly and stagger on before you realize he had neglected to say which hill it was just over. Yep, it sure is fun.

After that 704 yard portage, we paddled about a hundred feet or so, and then had another 286 portage into a pothole. Then another little portage took us on into Veron Lake. Just as we reached the end of the portage we saw a beaver swimming back and forth just a little way out. We watched him a little while till he suddenly gave the surface of the water a resounding whack with his broad tail and dived down out of sight.

On down Veron Lake I was middle man in the canoe and trolled with the yellow Lazy Ike, catching four more walleyed pike all over twenty inches long. Strangely, nobody else caught anything, tho one was hooked for a few minutes by Jerry Conn. However, we had fish enough to make two good meals for everybody the next day.

We camped on a little peninsula in the far west end of the lake where we cleared a new camp site because we couldn't find one anywhere. We always used an established camp site if at all possible, because it was so hard to find a level spot anywhere in these rock hills large enough to pitch three tents, beach five canoes, and cook in. Even if we did find one, then we had to clear it of rocks, down timber, and other debris to make it usable, and build a rock fireplace to cook. It all turns out to be quite a job and takes a lot of time, so we never did it unless we had to.

Here, as elsewhere, the mosquitoes came out so thickly at nite that anybody who stayed out after dark took his life in his hands. Those mosquitoes must all have gone by the same clock, too, as they came out all at once, and we had to run for cover. We tried to decide what they lived on when we weren't around, as surely there weren't enough animals in all the forest to feed them. Some of them certainly must starve to death.

But that was time to be in bed anyway, as 10:30 or 11:00 p.m. was when it got dark. Our tents had a mosquito net front, and this very effectively kept them out. These were six man tents (tho we had only five men in a tent), and from anywhere in them we could hear the roar of the mosquitoes outside as they gnashed their teeth and beat on the tent walls trying to get in.

We were tired, but not nearly so much so as the day before.

we had made 14 portages today, but tho some of them were longer, they were not so bad as those of the day before.

8-2-60 Tuesday was our layover -- we got up a little later than usual and stayed all day in the same place, just resting and fishing and washing a few clothes and just being lazy. Mike the guide made us some hot cakes with blueberries in them for breakfast, and later in the day baked a cake and a couple of apple pies and some pizza. He was quite a whiz with that little reflector oven, and we really enjoyed his meals.

In fact, he is quite a whiz anyway. He is a sophomore in Wildlife Management at the University of Minnesota, and has been a guide here for four years. He has a bushy head of hair and a sparse little beard that hasn't been shaved in months. He's 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighs 140 lbs., but he handles his canoe and pack on portages and in the water as tho it were the lightest and easiest thing one could wish for. It made us all feel ashamed of ourselves just to watch him. He is an extrovert and enjoys talking and joking, and I never once saw him even a little bit mad or ruffled. We all agreed he is an excellent guide and we were lucky to have him. He hails from St. Paul, Minnesota.

Hal Paulson is a little larger and hails from Luverne, Minnesota. He is the swamper, or a boy who is learning to be a guide. He has been here a couple of times as a Scout on a canoe trip, but this is his very first trip as a swamper, where he helps the guide. He is much more reserved, and doesn't talk or joke much. He will enroll at the University of South Dakota as a freshman, also majoring in Wildlife Management.

We saw a number of loons on this lake, as we did on all the lakes. This bird is about the size of a large duck, and in breeding plumage is very handsome in black and white striping and mottling on neck and body. Their legs are set so far back on the body that they can't walk on land at all, which is some inconvenience since they insist on nesting on land, at times a short distance away from the water. They go back and forth by just sliding along on their bellies, which they can do pretty well. They can take off from the water, which they do by getting a running start and paddling faster and faster on the surface till finally they can get airborne.

To me, the most interesting thing about this bird (which is also called the great northern diver) is his call. All thru the day we can hear his rather high pitched, quavering wail. At times, we can see the loon and at times not, but sometimes we cannot tell really from which direction the sound comes -- it seems to be everywhere at once.

But occasionally the loon gives out with a long scream that doesn't quaver and is on a lower pitch and lasts two or three times as long. This is very loud and carries for at least a mile, and sounds not too unlike the wail of a coyote. This scream will really chill ones spine if he doesn't know what it is, and may do it anyway. It is really a wild call, coming from something untameable and for-

ever free.

The loon lives on fish that it outswims under water. At times we see it sitting high in the water like a duck, and at times it is so low that only the black head is visible. Obviously, he is a good submarine.

A lot of herring gulls were around, too, as on all the lakes. We have some of these in south Texas in winter in the dark plumage of immature birds, but these here on the lakes were resplendent in immaculate white with a light gray upper surface to wings and body.

We saw few ducks -- about six so far, I guess, and all seemed to be quite small. I saw none of them well enough to identify them. Nighthawks were fairly common -- they should really get fat up here on all these mosquitoes. So should the dragon flies -- I saw a lot of them out just at dark stuffing themselves on mosquitoes. Robins were evident by their voices but we rarely saw one. Cedar waxwings were here in singles or in pairs but never in flocks as we see them in Texas. On two occasions I saw them feeding young in their nest high up in a conifer. Several great blue herons had flapped slowly by.

Here at our layover camp we saw some hawks circling high overhead or flying into the treetops of a distant hill. They never came close enough to identify by sight, but by their peculiar two-syllabled high-pitched call I knew them to be broadwinged hawks.

Somebody down at the water's edge hollered to come see what was swimming around. The peculiar critter he had found was about ten inches long and about half an inch wide, brown in color, legless and finless, and swam with an odd undulating motion that was not side-to-side but up-and-down. This was a leech, a close relative of the common earthworm. As I caught it, it shrank up to only about three inches in length -- contracted, that is. When left undisturbed for a while, it again stretched out and began to swim. Some of us had seen two or three small ones before, including one that had scores of tiny babies attached to her ventral surface, but this was the first large one, and the first one all of us had a chance to see. Leeches are parasites, with a suction cup at each end of the body to attach to the host, and a mouth to suck blood from its victim. No leech ever attached itself to one of us, however.

This might be a good time to give a little geology of the region. I had expected the hills to be glacial moraine, but I saw they aren't. They are solid granite, with the tops quite rounded off by glaciation. This is very evident and in many places scratches and grooves are still visible on the surface where rocks on the bottom of the glacier were dragged across under great pressure. This had so effectively scraped off these hills that even now there is very little soil on them and there are fairly large areas of just bare rock. I believe all the hills are less than a hundred feet high, and the elevation of the region is almost 1250 feet with perhaps 75 or 100 feet variation up or down.

There are lots of large boulders along the lake shores and on the bottom. These, I presume, are actually glacial moraine, tho there isn't much of it. In the ravines between hills where streams have cleared them off, there are many large rounded boulders, also probably left by the retreating glaciers of the Ice Age.

The hills are covered with a rather dense forest of mixed coniferous and deciduous trees. The conifers are represented by at least two species of pine, spruce (probably several species), and a cedar. Some of them must have been balsam fir, too, as the bark of some trees was covered with many resin blisters. The broadleafed deciduous trees I saw were the paper birch (of birch bark canoe fame), an aspen, and a small maple that was only brush about five or six feet high but occasionally reaching ten feet. Several other small shrubs I noted were one that looks like witch hazel and one that looks like some species of rhododendron. On the thick mat of forest litter are the previously mentioned mosses, lichens, and club mosses, plus blueberries, many different ferns up to three feet tall, some grasses, some plants with a rosette of broad green leaves and a tall spike ending in several large deep bluish-purple berries, other plants with little clusters of red berries, and a host of others, mostly unfamiliar to me. I wish I were more of a botanist so I could know what I am looking at.

The pines seem to be particularly brittle, as we saw lots of them broken off about six feet or eight feet above the ground, apparently by wind. Many others had been just simply blown over, all roots intact in a mass and lifting up the soil they were in right down to the bare bedrock. This mass was from two to six feet in diameter (depending on the size of the tree) and four to six or eight or perhaps ten inches thick, and consisted not of actual soil but of half-rotted leaves, twigs, moss, etc.

The lakes had names that sometimes seemed odd to us. Some of those we saw on the map were This Man Lake, That Man Lake, Other Man Lake, No Man Lake, Yum Yum Lake, Poohbah Lake, That Lake, Your Lake, Wet Lake, Windigoostigwan Lake, etc. I guess they just ran out of names and had to name them something. Yes, one was even named No Name Lake.

For the still more geographically minded, let me say that our layover camp on Veron Lake was at about 91° 31' west longitude, and about 48° 22' north latitude, give or take a minute either way.

On this layover day, most of the boys fished from the bank or from canoes, but the only fish caught was a small northern pike by Jerry Smith, who promptly threw it back. I wrote some that morning and got so sleepy and lazy I just had to lie down and rest. In fact, when a loud splash near shore followed by a lot of raspberry told me somebody had swamped their canoe, I didn't even have the energy to get up to see who it was. (I learned later it had been Jay Nielsen and Phil Howard.)

We ate our six walleyed pike today for dinner and for supper. They were really good. I saved all the livers, egg sacks, hearts,

CREW

728F

Front Row

	John Herring	Post 129	1817 Agarito Ave., Alice, Texas	M04-3155
	Jack Shuford	Post 129	1000 Anderson Street, Alice, Texas	M04-4269
	Ronnie Pfost	Post 93	823 Washington St., Alice, Texas	M04-3736
Crew Leader	Roy Rushing	Post 129	1905 Alta Vista Ave., Alice, Texas	M04-5215

Middle Row

	Mackey Talley	Post 42	1004 E. First Street, Alice, Texas	M04-7260
	Jimmie Keliehor	Post 129	1333 Jefferson St., Alice, Texas	M04-3266
	Jerry T. Smith	Post 93	705 E. Hill Avenue, Alice, Texas	M04-5674
	Larry Sanderlin	Post 93	202 Mississippi St., Alice, Texas	M04-6315

Back Row

Guide	Mike Tuttle		521 Roosevelt Ave., Eveleth, Minn.	SH1-1605
Asst. Advisor	Glenn Wilson	Post 123 Asso. Advisor	1100 Hartwell Road, Alice, Texas	M04-4235
	Don Wilson	Post 123	1100 Hartwell Road, Alice, Texas	M04-4235
Advisor	Amster K. Howard	Mesquite Scout Executive District	1122 Catherine Dr., Alice, Texas	M04-4145

and eyeballs, and fried them myself. The boys thought I was kinda peculiar, but Terry Word and Mike Quinn sampled a little of all of the goodies -- and survived, too.

8-3-60 Wednesday morning, bright and early, we paddled about half a mile across the lake to a small waterfall we had seen and heard ever since we had camped in Veron Lake. A portage of 132 yards took us into a little unnamed lake, from which we walked the canoes thru a little shallow stream that contained many perfectly round rocks and boulders, into Delahey Lake.

We paddled westward across the lake, and we knew we had our work cut out for us -- long portages. A portage of 1056 yards took us into a tiny pothole, where we paddled about 60 yards to our next portage -- 1584 yards, nearly a mile. I foolishly volunteered for the canoe on this one, and nobody argued about it, either.

It really wasn't a bad portage, just long. I went along as far as my aching back would let me, then found a broken off tree trunk to rest the bow of the canoe on while I panted and sweated for a while, and then went on. Luckily, each time I rested I found a tree trunk about eight feet high that would support the canoe while I recuperated. I was real proud of myself because I had to stop and rest only five times in nearly a mile of portage. I asked Mike how many times he'd had to stop and rest on this portage, and he said he'd never stopped on any portage in the last three years. There's always some killjoy like that around, deflating a poor guy's ego with a few ill-chosen words.

Next, we hit a little stream and paddled down it about a hundred yards till we hit our next portage of 770 yards. This also wasn't a bad one, and soon we found ourselves in a very beautiful little beaver stream that went down in a series of steps as we eased the canoes over beaver dam after beaver dam. Some of these held the upstream pond to a level of five feet above the downstream pond, and were nearly watertight. The beavers had plastered fresh mud down on some of these, while others were so old they were overgrown with vegetation. The last dams were so bad and had so many rocks between them we had to portage for a short distance.

We now found ourselves in a very smooth quiet little stream with hardly any current at all. The sides grew thickly in floating mats of pitcher plant, sundew, pickerel weed, wild iris, a few cat-tails and water lilies, etc. The water in places was a foot or three deep, but in places only a few inches. The bottom was a thick to thicker soup composed of muck (not mud) made by rotting leaves, twigs, weeds, grass, beaver gnawings, etc. anywhere from knee deep to hip deep. The water was too shallow to float the canoe thru much of it, and then we had to get out and wade and just pull the canoe by hand.

This had its problems, too, as we'd get stuck in the muck and have to have help to get unstuck. Finally, we unloaded the canoes and let some boys carry the pecks along the bank, and then farther

down walked out to the canoes and reloaded. Sammy Davis started to do that and got so stuck he couldn't move. Phil went to help him and got stuck too. We threw some beaver logs on top of the muck, unloaded Sammy, and then helped pull him out. All went well. Later Mike said he had taken us thru this "loon crap", as it is affectionately called up here, because if there were any mamma's boys among us, it should help wean them. Mike is pretty smart.

The water in all this nearly stagnant stream is very dark from the rotting vegetation, but just a cupful of it by itself is clear enough to see through. It tastes a little strong, but not too bad.

A short paddle took us to the next portage, where we loaded up and started up a steep low ridge, from the top of which we looked right down into the next lake. We all hooted our disappointment, as after what we'd been thru it seemed downright ridiculous to make a portage of only 66 yards.

We were now in Conmee Lake, but we turned down the first long arm to our left and portaged into Suzanette Lake. At the end of it we portaged 220 yards into a tiny pothole or really a beaver pond, where we paddled about 100 yards and then portaged 132 yards more on into Burt Lake.

Here we in my canoe rather lazily paddled along, following the two canoes ahead of us, till we realized they weren't following the canoes ahead of them and were lost. So, we in my canoe decided to try the channel to the south, to see if Mike had gone that way.

Right at the end of the little channel we saw a mother loon with five young about one-fourth grown. They started swimming away from us, and then as we got closer they began scooting along on their white breasts directly on the surface, using their feet as paddles and their wings as oars. We paddled as fast as we could, but still could not catch them when they moved in that way. We had to give up. Later we saw some quite a bit smaller. These were riding along on mamma's back, just like the books say they do.

We just drifted while I perused the maps. However, this didn't help too much, as I had not kept close track of the route the last couple of hours so was not even sure just which lake we were in. And since the boys in the two canoes directly ahead of us didn't come following us now, we reasoned they must either have found the first two canoes or found another way to go, so we headed back.

Phil was middle man, and as we came back thru the channel where we had first seen the loon with young, he hooked and landed a walleyed pike about 16 inches long. Jerry said it wasn't keeping size and should be thrown back in, but since it was the largest (and onliest) one we had, he was outvoted and we kept it.

We found another channel, followed it, and there just a

little ways on found camp all set up on a small islet, with the boys busy cooking supper. We landed, cleaned our fish, and joined them.

Our camp was surrounded by a forest of blueberry bushes (about a foot high). We had seen lots of blueberry bushes before, all along the way, but the berries had been small and dry, with little flavor and almost no taste appeal. These here were just as big and fat and juicy and sweet as they could be, and I picked and ate them till I felt I couldn't look another blueberry in the eye. Mike made some beautiful blueberry pie, but I just couldn't go for it. I saved my piece till the next morning, when it really was delicious.

This was Jerry Conn's birthday, and he was 17 years old. Mike baked him a birthday cake and all in all it was quite successful -- he was just as old as he would have been had he had his birthday down in Texas.

8-4-60 Thursday morning we paddled on around to the south end of the main portion of Burt Lake and portaged 396 yards into Marj Lake. Phil was middle man again and on down at the south end of the lake hooked and landed two lake trout -- the first ones caught on the trip. These put up more fight for their size than did the other fish we had caught. These two were about 16 inches long.

At the end of the lake we found some signs of an ancient portage trail going south towards Sarah Lake. Mike had planned on cutting a new trail, so we set to work, first clearing a landing and then a trail on into the forest.

At first I worked, too, but then I sat down and started writing on this epistle as I always seemed to be a day or two behind. And as I sat there quietly, with everybody else gone back into the woods, I became aware of some birds around me.

First I saw a tiny winter wren flitting around in the denser growth near the ground. This little bird, which is the smallest of the wrens and has the shortest tail, comes down into south Texas in the winter time only. An immature white-crowned sparrow hopped about on some of the down timber. This was the first one to come to view, tho I had heard quite a few of them giving forth with their soft plaintive whistling songs in the distance. A little later, two black-and-white warblers came flitting along, busily climbing up one tree trunk searching the bark cracks and crevasses for insects and dropping down to the base of the next tree to work up it in turn. A blue jay screamed in the distance and a loon called nearby.

The little winter wren came back around again and seemed a little worried. This time it had something in its bill, so I knew it was feeding its young somewhere. I sat very still and watched it nervously flit around, getting closer and closer to me until it was only about five or six feet away, when it disappeared into the moss and sticks on the ground. In a few seconds I saw it fly away.

Well, that nest won't be hard to find, I thought, and stepped over to look for it. But I searched diligently, yet could not find it. I sat down again and in a few minutes the wren was back with another dainty morsel for the children. This time it went a couple of feet farther east before it disappeared, right at the edge of the lake.

This time I found it, but I believe it was about the best hidden bird nest I had ever seen. In fact, I could hardly see it. A spruce tree was growing in such a way that its roots formed a roof, solidly covered with moss and debris. Underneath this, about a foot and a half back in the hollow underneath this overhang, was the nest, hanging tightly to this roof. The lake waters lapped gently about a foot or so directly beneath the nest. It was only by lying on my belly and just about standing on my head off the edge of the overhang that I was able to get a partial look at that nest with its load of newly hatched birdlets.

Soon the boys came back. It seemed they had cut quite a lot of portage trail but then it was still too far on across difficult terrain to the next lake, so the project was abandoned. We would retrace our steps.

We paddled across Marj Lake again, portaged those 396 yards back into Burt Lake, and soon passed the island where we had camped the night before. We turned into the south end of the lake, and here Phil hooked and landed a nice northern pike about two feet long. Later he hooked another one the same size, and as he lifted the fish up out of the water, it flipped right off the hook and jumped into the canoe directly in front of Phil who was so startled to see the fish flopping and snapping right between his legs, I thought he was going to jump over the side.

Jerry and I laughed and hollered "Stab him! Stab him!" This was sort of a standing joke -- advice we always gave anyone who had a fish jumping around in the canoe. Fortunately, no one ever took that advice, as to have stabbed at a fish in a canoe could only have resulted in holes being stabbed into the thin bottom of the canoe, which would have been frowned upon by the other passengers.

We portaged 484 yards into Paulette Lake, paddled along the length of it and then portaged 616 yards into McIntyre Lake. This is a rather large lake, and in it we saw a canoe -- the first people we had seen since the smoke jumpers three days before. Yes, this is a wilderness area, all right.

In the south end of McIntyre Lake, we stopped to camp on a smooth rock island. There were trees on the west end of it, but here at the east end the bare granite had been smoothed off very well by the glacier, and many quite prominent grooves were clearly visible where rocks had been dragged across the surface.

We cleaned and fried our fish and thoroughly enjoyed them. I really didn't remember that fish could taste so good. And just about dark, the clouds of mosquitoes came out, as usual. Again to-

night, as on several previous occasions, I noticed that several dragon flies stayed very close around me, feasting on the mosquitoes that were about to feast on me. I wished for a million dragon flies, but since they didn't appear, I ran for the tent and crawled in.

8-5-60 Friday was bright and clear. This morning I got a picture of Eddie Chamberlain, which I had been wanting to take. He had a straw hat that looked as tho it had been wadded up and sat on several times -- it was all kinked and beat looking. And he had a tin plate that looked just exactly the same way -- all kinked and beat. He had to straighten it out a little each time before he could eat off of it. His cup was the largest in the crew, which was very handy when we had hot cocoa. He was wearing a pair of khaki shorts, that had started to rip on the front of the right leg, which rip had by now gone all the way up so that only the belt was still holding it together. It all made an interesting picture.

Eddie was rather an interesting character anyway. He was kinda fat and liked to eat a lot, and the boys kidded him about it. Once I heard somebody by the fire say "Okay, let's eat it now -- Chamberlain's not here". Eddie was about fifty yards away doing something else, but he heard "eat", so he dropped what he was doing and went galloping over there to see about it.

He liked to fish and did it every chance he got, but I don't believe he ever caught anything, except one tiny thing that looked like a crappie, which he threw back in. Also, he was quite interested in ducks, and when a female gadwall flew over this morning, he recognized it as a female gadwall.

I had thought at first that Eddie would be lazy and a griper, and in fact wouldn't be able to do the physical labor involved in a trip of this kind, but I sure was fooled. He carried the canoe on almost every portage we made, and did it well, too. Many times I saw him on the portage trail under his canoe, breathing hard from exertion and with sweat streaming down his face, but he went right on and never made a single complaint that I know of. He stayed right with it all the way, and I admired him greatly.

I was really lucky to have gotten the two canoe partners I did. Phil weighs 210 lbs. and could handle the canoe and pack on the portage trails very well. Jerry weighs only 126 lbs., but he too could carry that canoe as well as anybody. He was stronger than his weight would indicate. So, we could swap the heavy loads around and it wasn't too hard on any of us.

Today we started off with a little portage even before we got the canoes wet, as we had to put them into the water on the other side of our little island. The water here, as in all these lakes, is very clear. One can see bottom at least 15 feet down, and we always had to be careful as we came to shore that we didn't step out into deep water.

You see, we always stepped out of the canoe into the water

CREW

728H

Front Row

Crew Leader	James Williams	Troop 35	P. O. Box 477, Odem, Texas	3323
	Burt Harrison	Post 44	P. O. Box 395, Benavides, Texas	CL6-3215
	Elmo Barrera	Post 44	P. O. Box 95, San Diego, Texas	CR9-3424
	Rudy Couling	Post 44	P. O. Box 803, Benavides, Texas	CL6-3338

Middle Row

	Gilberto Everett	Post 44	P. O. Box 811, San Diego, Texas	CR9-3713
	Rob Stalcup	Troop 35	Route 1, Box 59, Odem, Texas	3329
	Joe Hill	Post 107	3104 Bluebonnet St., Victoria, Texas	HI3-9319
	Dennis Natho	Post 107	2207 Locust St., Victoria, Texas	HI5-5323

Back Row

Asst. Advisor	Rey Ramos	Troop 47 Scoutmaster	P. O. Box 944, Benavides, Texas	CL6-3240
	Dennis Lorenz	Post 107	Route 4, Box 100F, Victoria, Texas	HI5-2031
Advisor	Jim K. Polk	DeLeon	1806 Walnut Street, Victoria, Texas	HI5-1110
	Scout Executive	District		
Guide	John Gilchrist		514 S. State St., Glenwood, Minn.	201

as we came to shore, to float the canoe in very gently by hand so as not to bang it against the rocks. Likewise, when shoving off from shore we always put the canoe in first, loaded it out away from the rocks, and then climbed in ourselves. Of course, our shoes or boots were thus always wet, and thus there was always a little water in the bottom of the canoe, in which we sat. I'd never had wet feet and a wet bottom continuously for so many days before in all my life.

At the end of McIntyre Lake a very short portage of about ten yards took us into Deer Lake, and another short portage into Cecil Lake. A longer portage of 462 yards took us into Dart Lake, and another portage into Robinson Lake.

Several canoes were trolling, as this was the last day we could fish. Jerry Conn snagged his lure on something, and soon he discovered it was a fish. He played it for a while as we watched, and finally landed it into the canoe. (Of course, we hollered "Stab it!" but he would not do it.) It turned out to be a lake trout 26 inches long, a very nice fish.

Then as we got to the next portage he reeled in his line, and found he had another fish on it -- a tiny thing hardly larger than a minnow -- that he didn't even know he had. It looked ridiculous to see one that small alongside his big lake trout. Of course he threw it back.

We portaged 110 yards into a small unnamed lake, and then 352 yards into Nub Lake. These portages were rather steep, as these little lakes are quite a bit higher in elevation than the others. Then two portages of about 300 yards each took us thru a pothole into Kett Lake.

At the other end of Kett Lake was a portage of 902 yards where I took the canoe, a small pothole, and then a long portage of 1540 yards where Phil took the canoe. These were down hill, as we had to descend again from our climb of a couple of lakes back. I was coming last on this trail, and I heard something off to one side like something large moving around, and then some clattering of something (antlers?) against the trees. I noted a lot of moose tracks around, so figured this was probably a moose, but I of course can't say for sure.

Along this trail I found two little trees about eight feet high that looked just like peach trees, tho I didn't think they could be. A little closer examination revealed a lot of tiny red balls hanging from the tree, so then I knew these were cherry trees, probably choke cherries. I picked them all and took them along with me, tho they were rather sour and a little bitter too. It took about six of them lying side by side to reach an inch.

We were now in Basswood Lake, which is easily accessible, and we found it was truly Motorboat Lane, as Mike had dubbed it. Numerous of these noisy craft whined up and down the lake, and some of the islands had houses on them, so we were back in civilization again.

We paddled for some miles east and then south in Basswood Lake, right along the Canada-United States border. We saw several boats fishing, and one woman gave us a two-foot pike she had caught.

By now we were pretty good canoeists, we thought. We even got to where we could swap positions in the canoe and not swamp it. To do this, one boy carefully gets both hands and feet on the gunwale of the canoe, raises up and the other boy crawls through underneath him. Rather tricky.

The waves were rather high and we were always paddling against the wind, but finally we made it down to the Canada Customs station on Ottawa Island. Fortunately I still had the proper papers, so the customs man (who was just going swimming with his wife and kids) passed us out of Canada and we were back in U. S. territory once more.

We paddled on south into Wind Bay of Basswood Lake. This bay was shallow, only about eight feet or so deep in many places, and had a mud bottom on which grew various water plants that reached up to the surface.

Near a little stream we portaged into Wind Lake. There was a sign that said the portage was 160 rods (840 yards) but I'm sure it was much farther than that. It was an easy level portage, but still a lot longer than 840 yards. I noticed that a lot of the trees along this trail were hemlock, which species I had not noticed anywhere back in Ontario.

As we paddled across Wind Lake, I noted that while some of the rock along the shore or sticking out of the water was granite, a lot of it was now Ely greenstone. This rock is found along the International Border here, and in very few other places in the world. It is noteworthy because it is supposed to be the oldest rock known, as it was formed from the very first cooling of the earth's surface. It is dark and greenish in color, and characteristically breaks or cracks in straight planes with rather sharp angles.

We pitched our last camp near the east end of Wind Lake on a little point of land. Here, as nearly everywhere else we had camped, the soil was too thin to permit the driving of tent stakes. In fact we had no tent stakes, so we didn't have to worry about driving them into the rock. The two ends of the rope that made the ridge-pole of the tent we always secured to two convenient trees, while the side ropes we tied to rocks, and then piled other rocks on top of them so they wouldn't slide. It worked very satisfactorily.

At this place I noticed a lot of oysters in the shallow water near shore. (Of course, they were really mussels, but it seemed easier to call them oysters.) These were only half buried in the bottom -- I guess the rock stopped them, too. I started gathering them by leaning over the leeward side of a canoe where I could see well in the still water, and reaching down for them. Jerry held the canoe for a while so it wouldn't swamp, and then Johnny Cooke held it till we had enough.

We started shucking the oysters, and some of the braver boys ate a few raw. They tasted good, almost like real oysters, but the foot was rather tough. Eddie Chamberlain saw the goings-on and decided he wanted some, too. As soon as I had told him how to find them, he went out and soon came back with another hatful. I don't know how many dozen we shucked. Mike came around and wanted to know if those were really good to eat. When I assured him they were, he laughed and said he'd sure like to go on a survival hike with me sometime.

After supper we had visitors in camp. About half of the members of Crew 728H, headed by Jim Polk and Rey Ramos, came over to see us, as they were camped only about a mile or so south of us. We exchanged tales of our trips and the adventures we'd had, and really enjoyed the visit. The most interesting incident they related was about a boy named Elmo who had a nightmare one night and got lost inside his sleeping bag. A beautiful golden full moon shone over the lake as our visitors departed and the mosquitoes chased us into our tents.

8-6-60 Saturday we awoke to the song of the red-eyed vireo in the trees right above us. We fried our fish and oysters for breakfast, and yes, the oysters were very good, too. That is, we fried them until we ran out of grease, and then we had to throw the rest away. However, by that time we were so full we couldn't hold any more anyway, so we didn't mind too much.

Since this was the last day out on the trail, we had to thoroughly clean all the pots and pans so they would be in good shape for the next crew that would take them out. They weren't very dirty, as each time they were used the outside was smeared with soap to keep them from getting too black, but an extra good scrubbing this morning certainly didn't hurt them any.

Terry Word and I walked around our little island, which really seemed to be a small peninsula. Most of the trees on it were hemlock, but we did find one basswood or linden tree, which we had not seen anywhere else. A number of young Canada warblers were busily chattering away in several trees near the south shore. We saw one thrush, which I identified as the gray-checked. A group of crows talked noisily in the trees across a still inlet on the north side.

This was Ike Terry's fifteenth birthday. Mike baked him a cake, and we all ate that. Then he baked more cake just on general principles, and we all ate that, too, but it didn't taste so good as Ike's birthday cake because we were already so full of cake. Everybody liked Ike -- he is such a friendly, eager, helpful kid.

By noon, all the gear was clean, and dinner was ready. Again today, as usual, we had two sandwiches of peanut butter and jelly, and two of peanut butter on hol-rye. Hol-rye is a very dry cracker-like thing that tasted to me just like charred corrugated cardboard so I couldn't eat it, but there were always some of the boys around who gladly pounced on it when I didn't want it.

We always said a prayer before each meal, and this last meal was no exception. We recited together the Wilderness Grace, as follows: "For food, for raiment, for life and opportunity, for sun and rain, for water and portage trails, for friendship and fellowship, we thank Thee, O Lord."

We loaded our canoes and paddled off to the lake shore on the east where lay our last portage. I had already spoken for the canoe on this portage the previous day. I was going to see if I could make this 840 yards without stopping to rest.

It was a fairly easy portage -- a few little low hills but no real climb of any kind. I started out bravely, but before long the canoe got heavier and heavier. I kept looking thru the trees for an opening that would indicate the shore of Moose Lake, but around bend after bend in the trail I saw only more trees. Finally I gave up and propped the bow of the canoe on a convenient stump about eight feet high and rested a while.

I resumed my journey shortly and to my chagrin found that the lake was less than a hundred yards away! If I had only known it was no farther than that, I could have made it without stopping to rest. Oh, well, nothing hurt but my pride.

You know, now we were in a much better position to understand what Mr. Hanson had told us at campfire that night at the base camp. It seems this lake country up here was once a great highway, before the days of roads and stream. The French voyageurs came up along here to trade furs from the Indians and transport them back down the St. Lawrence River to Montreal. They travelled by canoe, since that was the only way possible.

Those men were real men, too -- they had to be. They could be no more than five feet six inches high, as larger men wouldn't fit into the canoes so well. For food, all they could take with them was dehydrated soup. They did have their choice of three kinds of soup: bean, pea, or corn. They could choose any one of these, but only one. Anything else they ate they had to catch themselves or get from the Indians.

There were two men to a canoe, and they had to get furs to bring back. These they bound together tightly into packs of 90 lbs. each. Of course, the more packs of furs they brought back, the more money they made. But remember, they had to carry all this on the portages, as well as the canoe and their own gear. Some of those little fellers carried two or three packs of furs, and a few even four or five! Yep, they were real men.

Most of the portages were not too long, but one of them, over on Lake Superior, was nine miles long! Small wonder that they called this Grand Portage. A town of several thousand people sprang up there, and was also named Grand Portage. Mike talked about making a trip up there sometime, just to say he had been along that trail and had made Grand Portage. He knew some guys who had made it -- said it took them three and a half hours to make that nine miles.

My hat's off to them.

Anyway, here we were in Moose Lake now and only a short distance from the base camp, where we were due at 2:00 p.m. I was middle man on this last lake, just enjoying seeing the others paddle, when Jerry turned to me and said, "You know, Fuzzy, we've heard a lot of guys say doctors are soft, that they sit around in an office all day and never get any exercise and can't do anything. If we ever hear anybody else say that, we'll sure set them straight, 'cause we know better now." And I was glad to have upheld the honor of the medical profession.

Soon we saw the landing at the base camp. Jerry and Phil had been paddling a little fast in order to get there first, so we were the lead canoe in our crew. But now we saw Roy Rushing in his canoe (from another crew) come sneaking along close to shore from another direction, so Jerry and Phil turned on the steam -- really made our canoe move. We were the first canoe to reach the landing, with our little Texas flag waving proudly at the bow.

We were at the base now, but a lot still remained to be done. We had to unload our canoes, wash them and put them up on the racks nearby. All the packs had to be turned in after they were emptied and had the straps oiled. All our personal gear had to be carried up the hill and back into our respective cars or bus. A lot of other things came up, too, that had to be done.

As some of the boys walked by the camp garbage dump, they saw a bear cub looking around for something to eat. This was the only bear we saw on the whole trip, although they are apparently not rare around here.

We got ready for our sauna, which is a Finnish bath -- sorta like a Turkish bath, I guess. We awaited our turn, as we went in by crews, and theoretically it should take about 20 minutes for a crew. I'd never heard of a Finnish Turkish bath before this trip.

When Crew 728C took its turn, we all went inside and stripped down, then went into the second room, the steam room. There were two rows of benches, the back one higher than the front, and I couldn't help but laugh to see those two rows of naked boys sitting there, looking for all the world like plucked chickens sitting on a roost.

The room was hot -- about 140°. The heat was supplied by a large oven that was fired from outside the building. The oven was covered with a layer of rocks which of course were very hot too. We sprayed water on these rocks with a hose, and clouds of steam filled the room. It was rather an oppressive heat, and my chest felt as tho I couldn't take a deep breath. We began to sweat and sweat, so we soaped down real well, feeling that what dirt the soap wouldn't take care of we would sweat it out of the pores. And the temperature continued to rise.

About that time, somebody came in and said they were working

on the water pipes outside and in order to make a new connection had to turn the water off for about five minutes. It would soon be back on, he assured us.

So, we soaped down some more, and waited. It was so hot in there that when somebody blew their breath on me I jumped because I thought I'd been burned. I blew my breath on my own arm, and it felt unbearably hot. The thermometer on the wall now read 175^o, and still no water. We were getting dizzy from the heat.

We wanted to wash the soap off and get out of there before we cooked, so we sent a messenger out to see what was going on. He returned in a moment and said the workers had fouled up some way and the hole they were working in was all filled with water, so they now were bailing it out so they could see something. They had evidently grossly underestimated the time it would take them to make the new connection.

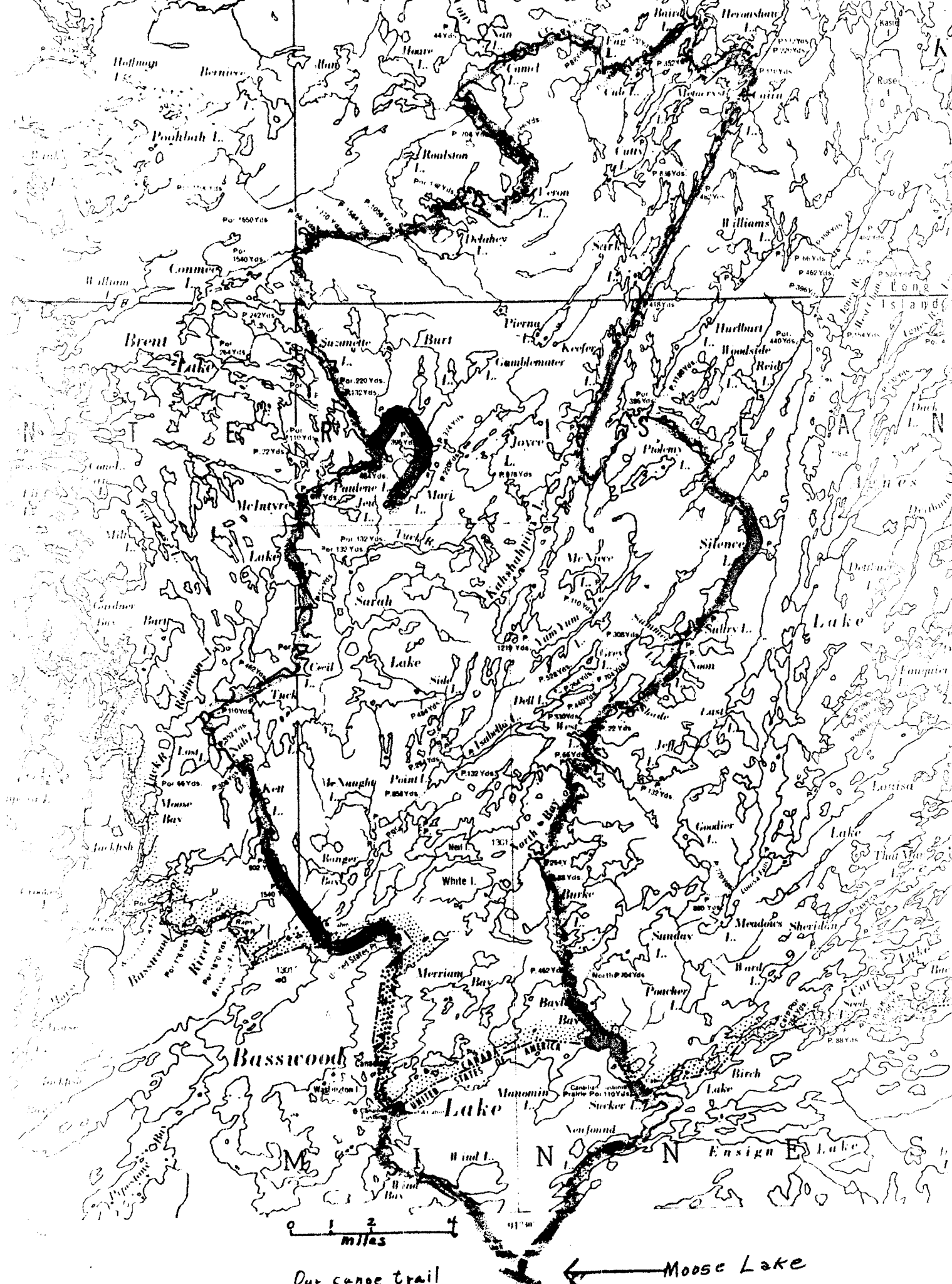
Well, we all grabbed our towels and, all covered with soap, ran down to the lake and jumped in. That was quite a shock, from the hot box to the icy lake, but we all survived and we did get the dirt from our hundred miles of trail off, too, as we felt so clean and really dressed up in a change of fresh clean clothes. Some of us even shaved, which no one had done during the whole time out on the trail.

They had a big turkey dinner prepared for us that night, and we ate everything in sight. It tasted so good.

Later, we had another campfire, at which all the crews that had returned from the trail that day (about eight crews) told of the highlights of their trip, the route they travelled, etc. It seemed that each crew thought their trip must have been the best, but we of Crew 728C knew that ours was the best. We had lived intimately together, and very well, too, as there had been no fussing or anything at all to mar the beauty of the relationship. I will always feel a particular warmth for these fine boys as a result of our adventures and experiences together, and I believe each of them feels the same way, too.

We were particularly fond of Mike, our guide, so as a parting gift we presented him with the little Texas flag we had been flying on our canoe every day, made him an honorary citizen of Texas, and told him that now he wouldn't be required to have a passport when he came to Texas. Jerry Conn and some of the boys had even written a poem about him, which they read before the group.

After the campfire we packed our cars and bus, and drove off into the night in a blinding rainstorm. We had had an experience none of us would ever forget. I am sure that in the years to come we will think of this voyageurs' trail, and as we lie in bed some moonlight night, at least a few of us may raise up on an elbow to listen, thinking perhaps we again had heard the scream of the loon in the distance.



0 1 2 4
miles

Our canoe trail

← Moose Lake