

Hudson Bay Trip Log -- by Peter M. Vial

July 25, 1969

Arrived at Winnipeg Airport at 8:20 AM. Took off for Norway House at 10:00 AM. Landed at Norway House at 1:00 PM. Picked up canoes and crates from Bay Co. store, repacked gear, wrote letters, and took off at 5:00 PM. Checked out with RCMP, and stopped by Forestry cabin but C.O. was out. Paddled up Little Playgreen Lake until 7:30 - water and two Milky Ways for supper. Set up tent and went to bed.

Long day and everyone is happy to finally be underway, but we are tired and patience is a little short. Old Indian standing on dock as we loaded canoes said "...small boats. Not go far."

July 26, 1969

Broke camp at 10:10. Dave and Pete had a bit of a hard time with the tent and personals. Paddled into light headwind. Stopped for lunch at 12:30 beside an old mower. Headwind got stiffer as afternoon wore on. Portaged Sea River Falls at about 4:15 PM. Shot first small rapids at 4:30 PM. Made camp at 6:30 just south of high rock - biscuits, chocolate cake and chicken and noodles for supper. Pheas pitched OJ, water cube, nylon rope and rock into river! Went to bed at 9:30 PM.

Many terns and much fowl, but no loons. Everyone tired from paddling into wind all day, but spirit is good.

July 27, 1969

Broke camp at 8:00 AM. Saw a loon fly by as we were finishing breakfast. Were strafed by many terns and ducks on our way down the Nelson. Paddled into Echimamish at 10:00 AM. Very distinct change in water - clear line between muddy water and clean water where Echimamish met Nelson. This is a pretty river as compared to Nelson, very much like Wawiag. Reached Hairy Lake at 11:15 AM - one BF sea of weeds and bullrushes. Stopped for lunch at 12:00 beside an old sled. Bit of confusion finding where Echimamish left Hairy Lake. Stopped at 4:00 PM to cook supper - beef stew and lemon filling. Dave and Wes put clothes back on - had been "tanning" since lunch stop. Pulled out again at 6:45. Paddled until 9:00. Made camp in high grass on bank beside river. Went to bed at 9:45.

Good day. Things are starting to go a little smoother, now that we're out of that darn milky water and have gone a day without seeing anyone. (We saw one Indian woman at old cabin and two boats with Indians in them yesterday.) We all seem to feel we're finally on our way into the wilderness. Wes is acting pretty flaky tonight.

July 28, 1969

Woke up at 7:00. No one seemed overly eager to roll out so we slept until 8:15. Had HB bread, salami, and funny face for breakfast. Broke camp at 9:00. About 9:30 we hit a fork in the river, studied map, went NW (left fork) for about a quarter mile, hit a portage, turned around and paddled back to fork and took the other branch. Passed several claim stakes and pulled over a few beaver dams as morning passed. At 1:00 we stopped for lunch on flat rock campsite just east of beaver dam - pancakes, OJ, milk, and Milky Ways for lunch. Found drilling core on campsite. At 2:30 we pulled out of lunch stop campsite. We passed a trapper's cabin with sod roof in woods beside river. Pulled over a few more beaver dams and several very old man made dams. We were pretty well lost most of the afternoon. We knew what direction we were going, but we had no idea what part of the river we were on. Finally we made a long south turn and got our bearings. We were a ways behind where we thought we were. Pulled into an old Indian campsite at 5:30 - spanish rice, cornbread, chocolate pudding. There was a smoking rack on the site. We went swimming after supper.

Beautiful day, hot and sunny all day. Paddling in sun all day really tired us out, but the river was pretty, if somewhat boring, and it was a good day for all. Went to bed at 9:00.

July 29, 1969

Dave got up at 6:30 to cook breakfast. Everyone else got up at 7:00 to eat. We broke camp at 8:30 and arrived at portage out of Echimamish by 9:15. Everyone was surprised to find what we had expected to be a half-mile portage was only about 25 yards. Yesterday evening the current was indistinguishable, but this morning we noticed that current had turned around and was now going with us. Saw a spectacular loon dance on narrow arm of Robinson. Stopped for lunch just after coming on to Robinson proper. Sat in canoes and held onto bullrushes. Took first long portage (one mile) at about 4:15. Portage went around falls and several sets of rapids. There were old rails and ties along trail and old wheels at one end. It appeared to have been an old horse drawn train. Met two boys from Toronto at far end of portage. They had started out two days ahead of us, and were on their way to the Bay via Oxford House and the Hayes River. At 6:15, we made camp on N shore of Logan Lake - spaghetti, maple pudding. Went swimming, then to bed at 9:15. At 9:30, just before we fell asleep, we heard what sounded like a waterfall coming down the lake towards us. We barely got sprinkled on, but it sure gave us all quite a start.

Another good day. Hot and long, but we're getting in shape, and had fun with tailwind on Robinson.

July 30, 1969

Got up at 9:30 - OJ for breakfast. Passed in camp by the two boys from Toronto at about 10:00. We were a little down on ourselves for having slept so late, but we had been tired and bed sure felt good. Broke camp at 10:30. Found portage out of Logan into pothole at about 12:00. At lunch on Logan side of portage, as everyone was pretty hungry. Pete found a rock with "D SHAOERMW JULY 18, 1934" written on it. It was partly turned over protecting writing (pencil) and we left it that way. Much very old corduroy on trail and broken down docks at each end. Paddled beaver streams and "ottertracks" all afternoon. Quite a pleasant change. Apparently our route was quite a highway in the years before amphibious planes, as all portage trails had at one time been corduroyed. Had a little trouble finding suitable campsite. Had trail cookies on one reject at 6:00, and finally pulled in to rocky point at 7:30 - "Pheasant supreme" beef gravy on mashed potatoes and peas with spice cake.

Good day, change in weather (cloudy and cool), change in schedule (no breakfast), and scenery made it an enjoyable day.

July 31, 1969

Got up at 7:00 - Beautiful morning, not a cloud in the sky. Sun had been shining in front since about 3:00 AM. Scrambled eggs with bacon bar for breakfast - quite a success. Broke camp at 8:30. Had fun all morning guessing where portages should be and then hoping to find them there. Stopped for lunch at 12:30 and then played same game all afternoon. Looked over sand beach at end of Aswapiswanan Lake and were surprised and disappointed to find human footprints. Made camp at 6:30 - chicken and rice, chocolate pudding - went swimming and went to bed at 9:30.

Beautiful day, bright and sunny. We rode with W wind all day. We made good time with the help of the wind and currents, but everyone was still pretty tired at the end of a long day.

August 1, 1969

Woke up at 7:30, broke camp at 9:00; another bright, sunny day. We were helped along by a gradually increasing tailwind as we paddled E on Aswapiswanan. Stopped for lunch at 12:30 on small, rocky island. Found what we believed to be a seagull egg (large, brown, black specs). Shot first challenging rapids of trip

on stream out of Aswapiswanan. First canoe took in some water but came through OK. Second canoe had a little trouble getting past big rock at start, got turned around, shot rapids sideways, but came out OK too. Wasted a lot of time in the afternoon looking over, walking over, tripping over and shooting rapids where we should have portaged. Stopped early (4:30) below last rapids on Mink River so we could fish. Dave and Pete caught enough fish for supper - good meal and fried fish until it was coming out our ears, macaroni and cheese, and lemon pie. Did a little fishing after supper, boiled dishes, and went to bed at 10:00.

Fun day, lots of fooling around riding wind on Aswapiswanan, shooting rapids, fishing, etc.

August 2, 1969

Woke up at 7:00 to the sound of a thunderstorm - went back to sleep until 8:15. Dave got up and got breakfast started. Pheas, dishwasher of the day, slightly torqued because we cooked with pots that had soap washed off in the rain. Broke camp at 10:15. Spotted moose skull and rack stuck on stump, on our way down the Mink River. Wes went over to check it out, but decided it was too broken up. Remington rifle and 100 rounds of ammo started to burn a hole in the pocket of four mischievous little boys on the way down the Mink River, to the dismay of two ducklings. Used up the last of premade cigarettes on the way across Touchwood. Pulled into camp at 6:15 on narrows into Vermillion Lake. Camped on very sloppy Indian campsite. Ducks came out a little well done, but at least the wild flavor had cooked out. Beef stew and white cake for supper. Went swimming and went to bed at 9:22 (and 56 seconds).

August 3, 1969

Wes got up at 7:00 to get breakfast started - broke camp at 9:00. Had a bit of a difficult time finding exit out of Vermillion, finally got on small stream to the N of one we wanted. It intersected with it further down. Beautiful view of God's Lake from stream right above rapids that ran into God's Lake. Stopped to fish below rapids - discovered that Pete's rod had been broken - good fishing. Started trolling as we began to cross God's Lake. Both Pheas and Dave caught two northerns apiece before wind picked up and we had to reel in and pay attention to what we were doing. Passed several boats of Indians shooting at gulls. Decided to push on into the "town" of God's River Narrows - quite a disappointment, no one was around and no one seemed to notice us or care much that we were there. Ended up taking a butt break on the end of the HB Co. dock and then paddling back the direction we had just come in. Camped on an island campsite - had no contact whatsoever with the friendly people of God's River Narrows. Spanish Rice and C-jel for supper. Dave and Pete took a swim and everyone was in bed by 10:00 - serenaded by Indian sled dogs.

About 11:00 we heard some small noises, then a cough, then some giggling. It sounded like it was coming from where our canoes were beached. Dave grabbed a knife and his pants and was out to investigate. Everyone else was close behind, Pheas in his jolly green undies. Prowlers turned out to be four young Indian girls who had paddled across the lake "looking for matches". We swapped cigarettes for candy bars, and talked. They weren't too talkative, but they weren't in any hurry to leave either. Hmm? Pheas was getting worried and suggested that it was getting late and that maybe their parents might start to worry. Giggle, Giggle. Pheas and Pete went back to bed. Dave and Wes stayed up to be polite and entertain our guests. Northern lights were out bright, but girls said they were much brighter in the winter. They said chief was a good guy, just a nice old man. They couldn't see boys except on Friday nights at mixers because in the summer the boys all worked on houses. Girls wanted to see tent. Hmm? Dave and Wes showed it to them, but said it was time to go to bed as we had a long day. Girls had a hard time taking hint. Wes escorted them back to their canoes. They offered to take him with them. No thanks, said Wes. They offered to stay with us. Wes thanked them but explained that we didn't have room. They offered to go get another tent. No, thanks anyway, said Wes. His halo was pinching. Finally the girls paddled off and we all got back to bed about 12:30, except for Wes, who was disgusted with himself and waited up until 2:15 hoping they might come back.

August 4, 1969

Got up at 8:15 (it had been a long night). Dave and Pete got breakfast while Pheas and Wes worked on tent and personals. Broke camp at 9:30. 10:00 arrived at Hudson Bay Co. store dock. Met by Tom (HBC store clerk) who greeted us with "you're right on time". We were all a little surprised at first but it turned out that he had been notified by the RCMP that we were coming. Today was a Manitoba holiday and everyone was away for the long weekend camped on a sand beach about 12 miles down the lake (the reason nobody was around yesterday) but Tom opened the store for us so we could mail letters and pick up a little extra PB and lard. Also bought a fishing lure and a box of cookies. Had a nice talk with Tom.

Worked our way through islands to Josey Island where we hoped to catch lakera. Inspected an old gold mining site. Camped on small island just across from old mine. Pheas ticked off several Indian guides by pulling 8 lb. laker out from under their noses when their parties were being skunked. Pete repaired fishing rod. Great supper - lake trout, cheese potatoes and chocolate cake. Very windy evening.

Good day - Everyone is glad to be back in the woods.

August 5, 1969

Dave and Pete got up at 7:00 to cook pancakes. Pheas slept in. After breakfast, Dave and Pete went out to try for some lakera while Pheas and Wes finished breaking camp. Somewhere in God's Lake there's about a 12 lb. laker swimming around with a silver bomber snagged in his left gill cover. Pheas and Wes paddled out after they had everything packed up. By a little past noon, Pheas had two big lakera, both over 10 lb. and Dave and Pete each had a big Jack (again both well over 10 lb.). We paddled back to camp and ate lunch, reset camp and spent the rest of the afternoon reading, washing, swimming, and baking. Had real fish feast for supper. More fried laker than we could eat topped by apple spice cake. After dishes, Pete and Pheas went back for another try and caught one nice walleye. In bed at 9:30.

Fun, lazy day - everyone enjoyed the free time and feeling of not having anything pressing to do. Gave everyone a chance to repair and recondition gear.

August 6, 1969

Woke up at 6:00 to the sound of rain and high wind - everyone pretty discouraged because we had planned on getting early start across remainder of God's Lake - went back to bed until 9:00. Pete got up to cook breakfast. Broke camp at 11:00. Quartered high wind across God's Lake for several hours. Pulled over at 2:00 for lunch and looked apprehensively at a storm gathering WSW. Finished lunch and decide to try for God's River settlement by island hopping for safety. At 4:30, pulled into Ruminski's Lodge, talked to bush pilot for a minute, then went to store. Bought soap, coke, peanuts, and Pete bought another fishing lure (this one didn't even last as long as the bomber - an "onry" jack got it later the same evening). Store clerk's first comment when we entered store was "My, you look like explorers." Slight double entendre, but she didn't realize it. Spent about a half-hour with Tom Ruminski going over map of God's River rapids. He was quite friendly, very informative, and very knowledgeable. He probably hadn't looked at a map of God's River for 20 years. Rather foolishly shot a set of rapids without checking them over carefully, but everyone was lucky. Made camp at about 7:00.

Did a little fishing after supper but couldn't interest any brookies, just jacks. Went swimming - in bed at 10:00.

August 7, 1969

Wes got up at 7:30 to start breakfast and Dave got up with him to do some fishing. Pheas and Pete good naturedly agreed to take care of the irksome responsibility of holding the tent floor in place until breakfast. Broke camp at 10:00. All morning and afternoon were spent making our way down the God's River. We shot about a dozen sets of rapids of varying difficulty, some marked and other surprise bonuses. A strong headwind slowed us all day and made it quite difficult at times to read the water. There were a few scrapes

and bumps, but nothing very serious until the last set. Probably it was a combination of our increasing caution and skill and our guardian angels were probably working overtime - On the last long set, Pheas and Wes came through OK but Pete and Dave got hung on a shelf in strong current right at the end of a quarter mile long rapids. It was a rather precarious balancing act, but they finally got off safely. Apparently it was quite a show, because Pheas and Wes seemed to get their full share of enjoyment out of it. It would be a bit of an understatement to say that Pete and Dave failed to see the joke. Ate supper, in bed by 9:00. Dave and Pete took a quick swim.

Good day. It was our first cold day since we started, and the rapids certainly added a bit of excitement.

August 8, 1969

Pheas and Pete got up at 6:30 to cook breakfast. Broke camp at 8:30. Saw many ducks as we started out, so we decided to try for a duck supper. Pheas missed a few long shots, then turned the honors over to Pete. Pete managed to hit one, but it dove and apparently tied itself into the weedy bottom. We waited and searched for 15 minutes, but without success. At lunch time, as Wes and Pheas pulled out the meal (we ate on the water to take advantage of the current), Dave and Pete decided to give roast duck a second try. As Bwana Dave paddled for position, the great white hunter from Maryland took several close shots. He became increasingly bewildered by the ability of Canadian ducks to fly off when they were seemingly so full of lead. The rifle went back to its case as we approached the rapids known as "the gorge". Owakonzie's journal had made quite a big deal out of these rapids, and Tom Ruminski had described them as quite frightening but relatively safe. We were all a bit apprehensive. Pheas and Wes rounded the bend first so they could get a picture of Pete and Dave as they came through. After giving them some time to get through and set for the picture, the second canoe took off. They hit three consecutive sets of steep cascades, shooting out of the third into a blind turn. They rounded the corner steeled for "the gorge" to find themselves in a calm pool beside the first canoe. The gorge had already been shot. Everyone was a bit disappointed, but we all had to agree that if we hadn't been so psyched up by previous accounts that the gorge would have indeed been a hairy experience. We turned the corner, the gorge being rapids around one side of an island, and headed back upstream to camp beside some rapids on the other side of the island where Tom Ruminski had told us there was a pretty rapids, good campsite, and good fishing. We found the rapids, the campsite, but not the fishing. Dave caught enough jacks for supper though, and we all enjoyed the rest (it was about 2:30 when we pulled in). Pheas and Wes boiled and washed clothes (Pheas even got his t-shirt clean). Dave caught fish. Pete swam after snags and worked on his rod some more. Fish, high-rise brownies, beef soup and dumplings for dinner. Dried, sorted and repacked wet food packs. Very little was spoiled, but we had about a quart of home-brew in the bottom of each pack.

Good day - disorganized but fun.

August 9, 1969

Wes got up at 6:30 to cook breakfast. Broke camp at 9:00. Paddled several miles before we hit first rapids. They looked pretty steep, so we pulled over a rocky point around the first drop, then shot the rest. Second set of rapids were about a half-mile long. They started steep, then there were a few hundred yards of v-picking and rock dodging and then they finished with a final steep chute into high haystacks. We encountered several smaller sets of rapids as the day wore on, but nothing that presented problems. We even shot one small set in the middle of lunch, breaking apart only long enough to hit the v's, then rejoining at the bottom. Our skill with rapids seems to be increasing slowly, but we are also becoming more aware of the force and power of this water and it seems we are being even more respectful and cautious than we were at the outset. About 2:30 we portaged a very wide set of falls followed by a stretch of rapids and as we paddled out of the current, we stopped at Ruminski's 50 mi cabin. It was unlocked and well supplied. The beds were made up with sheets and the kitchen shelves were full. The toilet had a seat, TP, and bug spray. We were a little tempted to spend the evening in sheets, but we resisted and pushed on. About 5:00 we turned a corner to be faced with quite a wicked looking set of rapids. They ran through a steep, narrow, rocky channel and disappeared around a corner to the left. We found a portage on the left hand shore and took it. It brought us

out below both the rapids and about a 15' waterfall which had been right around the blind corner. Pete put on a bit of a show by taking one step too many on a slippery rock ledge at the end of the portage, and then demonstrating how to tread water with a pack on. We made camp just below the falls. After supper, most of the crew took a bath and a swim. Pheas and Wes hit the sack a little early. Pete and Dave had quite a fun time fishing. They caught a jack on just about every cast and got so tired of taking them off the hooks that they went through the tackle box trying to find something that the fish wouldn't hit quite so often.

Good day. Stop at 50 mi cabin added an interesting break.

August 10, 1969

Dave got up and got breakfast started. Broke camp around 9:30. After a short paddle, we arrived at a very beautiful set of falls. A tremendous volume of water funneled through a natural rock chute into a pool of foam 6-10 ft. deep. We portaged around the right side of these falls and shot out of a set of rapids below them. The next set of rapids we came to, we debated shooting, but decided to float our canoes around a shallow rocky point on the left, paddled a short distance, then left over another rock shelf to a pool. From here, we shot the rest the way down the rapids. Below these rapids were many weed beds and we saw our first flight of Hutchies, one of which Dave bagged for supper. We ate lunch afloat again, also shooting through another "Sturgeon Narrows" while eating (for the second day in a row). The next set of rapids that we came to had been portaged by Owakonzie. We looked them over and decided to shoot them. The first canoe through took on a lot of water bouncing through the haystacks at the bottom and came very close to capsizing in the swift current beyond. The second canoe also took on water, but not nearly so much. Both canoes were emptied out and we were on our way. It had been "quite a trip". We had been noticing quite a change in the land all day. The clay banks were narrowing and becoming steeper, the water swifter and the spruce thicker. More and more often we would round a bend and see a long stretch of shallow rapids where the water rushed over the exposed rock surfaces. Late in the afternoon we noticed what seemed to be a log superstructure high on a spruce covered clay cliff. We stopped to investigate. We found what had obviously been a campsite and a very carefully and well constructed log platform, about 8 feet high and about 15' x 10'.

We couldn't arrive at any conclusions about its purpose. Nearby, Pheas found a moose rack, one half of which we added to our gear. We were having a very difficult time finding a place to camp, much less a campsite. Finally, we pulled over and had candy bars and salami and pushed on. About 7:30 we came to a flat rock shelf pointing out into the river. We stopped here, had a supper of beef stew, brownies, and roast goose, and hit the sack.

Long day, hot sun, everyone was pretty beat. Roast goose sure hit the spot.

August 11, 1969

Pete got up at 6:15 to start breakfast (cornbread, scrambled eggs with bacon, OJ). Broke camp at 9:15, with things moving a bit slow. We paddled all morning down stiff current between spruce covered clay hills and cliffs. In many places, the river rolled over rock shelves, causing very swift current and tricky going. At 12:00, we stopped to eat lunch on a rock point. Indian campsite at the top of Red Sucker rapids. After lunch, with everything securely tied in canoes, we apprehensively pushed off. Shooting down the left side of the river as recommended by the Owakonzie report, we soon encountered several steep shelves which could not be shot, but which they had apparently pulled over. We worked our way back upstream and out to the middle and then the shooting action began in earnest. No one place was particularly treacherous, but it was continuous sets of drops with whitewater everywhere. The real trick was being able to pick your next shot as you were in the middle of the one you were shooting. This called for close coordination between bowman and stern man, quick reactions, cool heads, and a little luck. The boiling water didn't afford many second chances. The most exciting part of the rapids lasted only a quarter to half a mile. The next mile or so contained plenty of action, but the steep drops were strung out between stretches of swift open current so that we usually had plenty of time to carefully look over our route and choose the best chute. Both canoes took in a little water and both left a little aluminum, but everyone came through safely. We had one close call when Pheas, seeing a rock in some pretty heavy waters, yelled "left!". Wes, wishing to acknowledge and

affirm the decision, answered "right". Pheas took this as a counter command, and thinking that Wes saw something he didn't, began cutting right. Wes, feeling the canoe shift left, yelled "left, Pheas!" seeing the rock coming closer and faster and not taking time to try and figure out what the heck was going on, cut back left just in time. It was quite a show, but not so funny at the time. We paddled another 6-8 miles below the rapids and set up camp on a gravel point with a stream coming in just above it on the left hand side of the river. Did a little fishing after supper, but with no luck. Everyone took a swim and got to bed by 9:15.

August 12, 1969

Everyone got up together this morning to cook pancakes and get the tent rolled up. Broke camp at 9:00. Paddled all morning down swift current - no rapids, but many places where water ran white over shallows - saw mink and otter running along shore. Ate lunch afloat again. Just after lunch we passed an Indian family fishing camp. Everyone waved back and forth and their big white dog followed down the shore for a mile or so, twice swimming out to our canoes. Made camp about 6 miles south of Shamattawa. Plan tentatively to paddle and float tomorrow and tomorrow night and the next morning and make it to the Bay by the 21st day (120 miles). Went to bed at 9:30.

Good day. We pushed harder today than usual, in spite of the sun. Everyone is tired of lazy days and excited about tomorrow's push. Maybe we won't make it, but it will be an experience trying...

August 13, 1969

Pete got up at 6:00 to start breakfast and Wes and Dave got up to start rolling the tent before Pete could get breakfast on. Pheas, bright eyed and bushy tailed person that he is in the morning, rolled out a few minutes later. Breakfast was on before the tent was dropped. Broke camp at 7:30, forgot the moose rack, and finally headed out for good at 7:45. Arrived Shamattawa at 9:00. Indians were heading for the Bay Co. store to watch the show at least 10 minutes before we hit the shore. We climbed the steps up the clay cliff to be met by HBC clerk and half of Shamattawa. Indians seemed friendly and curious. We left one man to watch gear as the rest of us bought candy, cigarettes, toilet paper in the store. The watchman was periodically relieved while we had coffee with two of the Bay employees. We had an enjoyable chat with employees and an interesting talk with a half a dozen Indian boys, all around 8-11 years old. In conversation, Pete mentioned Washington, DC, which none of them had ever heard of. The taught us several Cree words: Polar bear = Mus-qua, polar bear cubs = mus-coo-ses, thank you = ace-coo-say, friend = chew-wam. We departed Shamattawa at 11:00. Everyone agreed that we had enjoyed this stop much more than our other stops in "civilization". We ate lunch afloat again. Current and slight tailwind are really keeping us moving this afternoon. About 3:00, Limestone rapids caught us with our pants down, so to speak (Dave's and Wes's literally). For about 5 miles the river rushes over a limestone shelf between high clay and limestone cliffs, usually about a half mile apart. These rapids are unmarked and very underrated in all accounts which we have read. Possibly it is the very shallow water this summer that makes these rapids so treacherous. The current is extremely swift and in many places the bottom of a whole stretch of water will come up suddenly, making it almost impossible to find a safe chute and at the same time making it very dangerous to bail out until the last moment because the approaches to these shelves are so fast and deep. Considering the conditions, we came through in very good shape, but the canoes had to take more of a beating than we would like to have seen. When we finally broke out of the rapids after the 35 minute ordeal, we were all pretty drained. We emptied the water from our canoes, inspected our gear, took a super long butt break, and did a little fishing (caught only jacks, though). About 7:30 we stopped to cook supper.

Pulled out at 9:30.

A storm blew up on us from south - high wind and heavy rain - cloud cover made night very black and navigation impossible. We could hear fast water ahead, but couldn't every tell which way to go until the last second, sometimes not even then. At about 11:00 we pulled ashore and set up tent on a grassy clay bank in the rain. In bed at 12:00.

August 14, 1969

Woke up at 9:00 to the sound of very heavy rain. It had stormed all night and the bad weather was still with us, only now the wind was out of the north. It had been a mistake to pitch the tent where we had, although there had been no complaints at the time. There was at least as much water in the tent as outside. Some had come through tiny punctures in the floor and the rest had come through the nylon, over the floor on the uphill side of the tent where the edge of the tent was forming a dam across a miniature Mississippi Delta. Everyone was cold and wet and no one felt like breaking camp in the rain, but no one felt like staying in the tent either. Had HB bread breakfast, rolled tent, laid fly across packs in Dave and Pete's canoe and pushed into rainy headwind. Ate lunch at confluence of Hayes and God's Rivers at about 1:30. Headwind and rain were increasing. Paddled on to low gravel beach at about 3:30. Lashed paddles for fly poles, set the fly (that kept trying to take off in the wind) and then set up tent under it. Cooked supper and hit the sack at 8:00.

August 15, 1969

Woke up at 6:00. Everyone got up together to cook breakfast and break camp. Very cold morning, a strong wind flowing in a heavy fog and freezing mist. Broke camp at 8:15. Paddled all morning into strong headwind and cold rain and fog. Everyone was disappointed progress into the wind is so slow that we won't make it to York Factory by evening, even though we are pushing hard. Stopped for a quick lunch at 12:00. Too cold to stand around on shore. Have to keep paddling to stay warm. Made camp at about 3:00 just south of the Pennycutaway River on E shore of Hayes River about 1 mile N of two 25 gal gas drums. Made camp early again because widening river and strong headwind made going so slow that the distance we were gaining wasn't worth the work we put into it. In bed at 7:15.

August 16, 1969

Woke up at 6:00 to another cold morning with a heavy fog blowing in on us from the north. There wasn't the rain or freezing mist of the past two days but we had only about a maximum visibility of 25-50 feet. Broke camp at 9:00. About 9:45 we passed the Pennycutaway River, and discovered we had pulled up a few miles short the night before. The wind let down as morning went on. No one was too disappointed. We stopped for a quick lunch ashore because although wind was dying, it still made it impossible to eat afloat. Pete spotted a large buck caribou browsing on a bush island. He spotted us about the same time, and swam for the south shore. Too far away for a picture, but it was still quite a thrill. We spotted a large black bear a little later on. About 3:30, the fog suddenly lifted and we saw the sky for the first time in three days.

Arrived at York Factory at 5:30. We were met by Al Crookshank and his "renovation team". We were happy to see people again, but we were totally unprepared for the welcome we received. We barely had our canoes unloaded before they herded us in for supper. Quite a fine group of people - Al Crookshank, director; Bob Browning, handyman; John Glasco and Gordon Lebrendt, student draftsmen; Gary Simms, cook; John Redhead and several other Indians with families. After supper the crew took us on one tremendous tour of the old depot. They have quite a thorough knowledge of not only the Factory, but of the history of the whole area. We were all quite taken in and wished we had done more reading before we got here. After the tour, we went back to the old manager's residence and talked and drank coffee until past midnight. These people are really showing us a tremendous time. We finally racked up in the spare bunks of 5 of the crew who were stuck in Gillem after a weeks vacation (because the planes couldn't get through the fog).

Quite a day. Everyone's still a bit dazed by the reception we've received at the Factory. These people are tops.

August 17, 1969

Gary had breakfast ready when we got up. Today being Sunday, it is everyone's day off and people rolled out at their leisure. After breakfast, we had a Sunday service with OJ and Beefeaters. Can't say enough good about this crew. We're just about chain smoking their cigarettes. Their supplies are a week behind and

they're feeding us their own meals and now even sharing their booze with us. Al has been a bush pilot, worked for some of the local lodges, and is now a professional draftsman. He is a man who does what he wants, and does a good job doing it. He is quite in love with the North. Bob is bar steward at the Officer's Club in Winnipeg and just one hell of a guy. He has a tremendous sense of humor, and it is just funnier than heck talking with him. After our service we went back to the depot to get pictures and then over to an old graveyard and powder magazine. The oldest stone we found at the graveyard belonged to an old Factor who had died in 1818. After picture taking tour, we split up, some of us helping with chores and straightening our own gear, and some of us walking down to the abandoned Anglican church and looking around. After supper an Otter arrived with a researcher (Berringer Research Ltd.) and some gear for his party which we unloaded and carried up to the residence. A couple of us helped the "chap" set up his tent and he was quite appreciative to us "lads". He was probably about 21. We had coffee and another evening around the table and then everyone racked out at about 12:00.

Everyone enjoyed the day's layover and the hospitality and company of our hosts, but we all wish there was some significant way that we could return their courtesy. We will all be ready for "the point" tomorrow if the weather makes it possible.

August 18, 1969

Wes got up shortly after Gary to bake a batch of his world renowned cinnamon rolls, so they would be ready for breakfast when everyone rolled out. After breakfast, we helped with chores (dishes, sweeping, firewood, etc.) while the crew took off to start another week's work. After the 10:00 coffee break, Bob took us all over the Indian camp to get a picture of the camp, the Indian children, and last but not least, a picture of Wes with Bernadette, her mother, and Harry's wife. After pictures, Bob passed out cigarettes to the women and gave a bag of peppermints to the children. It's no wonder that they like him. He is friendly and respectful when he is with them, and never acts condescending towards them. We spent the rest of the morning finishing packing up our gear. We planned to pull out shortly after twelve, giving ourselves three hours to reach Marsh point at high tide (which we figured would be about 3 PM). According to Al, this would be the best time to attempt the rounding of the point. At about 12:50, after lunch and final farewells, we started for the point. Going was slow against the incoming tide and a brisk N wind. At 2:30, we spotted radar dish (DEW) marking the end of the point. At 3:00, we rounded the point. We spent the next 5 1/2 hours paddling just off ever growing mud flats in high seas. The combination of strong wind, strong current, and receding tides kept the water pretty whipped up. No cigarette breaks, but we did pull onto the mud flats several times to empty water out of canoes and bladders. At 7:00 we spotted the first, last, and only ship to use "Port Nelson", it being stuck fast where it ran aground. At 8:30, we pulled up to a grounded barge on the South shore, a little ways upstream from Port Nelson. We carried gear across mud flats to the barge and pitched our tent on the deck of the barge, had HB bread supper and hit the rack. We loaded the .22 before we went to bed because there were bear tracks in the sand around the barge. Hopefully, the barge would be a safe place to camp in this area frequented by polar bears. At least it would be dry when the tide came back in.

It was a long, hard day. Everyone was plenty tired when we racked up. Sorry to have left YF because it had been such an interesting and enjoyable layover, and because we had developed strong feelings of friendship with different members of the survey team. Everyone is also glad to be back underway and relieved to now have passed the point.

August 19, 1969

Woke up at 9:30 and got a very slow start. The unusual nature of the campsite, combined with the nuisance of getting our own breakfast again made it difficult to get things moving. Broke camp at 11:30. Strong tailwind gave us a boost, so we were able to paddle almost to the western tip of Seal Island. The paddling was slow but exciting with a strong wind blowing off the Bay directly against the Nelson's strong current, causing two to three foot rolling waves that really kicked the canoes around. Shortly before lunch, Dave spotted a seal, but before the rest of us could locate him, he dove. Our first try at tracking was really pretty successful. The footing was good along the south shore, so once we got the hang of what we were doing,

we made fairly good time without too much difficulty. Made camp at 7:00, about a mile or so west of Gillem Island, beside a small stream. Everyone was beat and the tent site left something to be desired, but no one heard any gripes. Super supper - beef stew, biscuits, and chocolate pie. Hit the sack at 9:30. Northern lights put on quite a show.

August 20, 1969

Woke up at 6:30 - had a chilling breakfast of spotted dog, packed up gear, and hit the ropes at 8:30. Tracking this morning was fair, but not quite as good as yesterday. 1/2 to 1 mile long stretches of clay slides slowed our otherwise good speed. These clay banks are just about like walking in knee-deep wet cement. We changed trackers every half-hour and it seems to be a good time - long enough to get a good pace going, and short enough so as not to completely fatigue anyone. Stopped for a half-hour lunch break at 1:00.

Tracking went from fair to poor as afternoon wore on. Made camp at 5:30 beside a small stream at the west end of Deer Island. Ate supper and in bed at 8:30.

Long day. Tracking is really taking it out of everyone after three weeks of sitting.

August 21, 1969

Pete got up at 6:15 to start breakfast. Broke camp at 8:10. Began tracking a rather dense and mucky shore, after about an hour, we finally decided that we would try paddling. We seemed to be making fair progress, but Dave and Pete decided to try the W shore as recommended by Owakonzie. They found footprints, probably of the Owakonzie crew of '69 that was about 2 weeks ahead of us. They also found many wolf tracks, some in packs, and some alone. At one point, they could hear rustling in the bushes above them where something was stalking Dave, who was tracking at the time, but nothing came into view. The tracking was very good, but the current was strong and Pheas and Wes paddling the S shore gained steadily. Dave and Pete crossed back over at Weir River, a bit behind and very tired and P.O.'ed. After lunch, we continued paddling the S shore of the unpaddleable Nelson River with the aid of a light tailwind, and made very good time, so good in fact that we decided to try to push for the Angling River. At 7:15, we made camp beside the Angling River.

Everyone is very tired, but very elated to have covered so much more distance than we had planned on. Day 30 looks like the ticket.

August 22, 1969

Pete got up at 5:45 to give the trout one last try, but we had Dave's eggs for breakfast. Broke camp at 8:30. We paddled for awhile, then tracked some clay banks until they became impassible. We finally crossed to the W shore where we paddled and tracked intermittently for several more miles until the current became so strong that we finally had to put the paddles away. After lunch, most of the afternoon was spent wading and tracking shallow rapid water around many small, rocky points, islands, and bays. It was touch, slow going, and each mile was sweated out foot by foot. About 3:30 we took a break beside Goose Creek, and inspected an old Manitoba Hydro camp. At 6:00, we made camp a couple miles east of lower Limestone Rapids. Supper was chicken and cheese supreme, cornbread biscuits, chocolate pie, and a 1/2 gal of OJ. In bed at 9:00.

Hard day tomorrow, but it looks like it should be the last day and no one really knows just what to think.

August 23, 1969

Hell must have frozen over this morning, because Pheas, uncontested King of the rack, was up and dressed, wet boots and all, at 5:00. This was such an inspiration that by 5:15 we were all out and going. Broke camp at 6:55. We tracked the N shore for about 15 minutes, then decided to cross back to the S. This we did without losing too much ground, arriving at the E end of a long island. There was a narrow waterway

between this island and the S shore that we decided to try rather than track the N shore against the strong current. We paddled and portaged and waded the stream to the W end of the island where we began tracking the N shores of a series of islands (paddling between them) until we hit lower Limestone Rapids. We tracked the beginning part of the rapids and then portaged 1/4 mile across the tip of an island to get past the last part. A W wind which started around 8:30 has increased until lunch we had gusts of about 30 MPH. We pushed on until 3:30, at which time tracking became impossible because water was so whipped up that the boatman couldn't keep the canoes off the shore, and every time a canoe did get pushed up to the shore, the waves would fill it before the boatman could get the bow back into the waves. At 5:00 we got tired of sitting, so we decided to give it another try. We tracked about another 1/4 mile to a point, and then decided it was still too whipped up to cross, so we sat for another hour. At 6:00, the wind was still pretty strong, and when added to the Nelson's current, we weren't sure we could make it. The gusts had died a bit, so we decided it was time to give it a try. At 6:30 we made the N shore, and day 30 looked like it might again be the ticket. It'll take some fast tracking to get past the Upper Limestone Rapids before dark, but we can smell it now. At 8:00 we made Upper Limestone Rapids.

At 9:30 we touched down at Mile 352 of the Canadian National Railroad. It was getting pretty dark, but now we've made it so no one cares. We reshuffled gear for the train ride. At 12:00 we flagged down the train - no trouble, conductor not only let us on, he even told us the CNR could take the loss between our 1/2 fare white day tickets for the 20th, and the blue day tickets we should have had for today.

August 24, 1969

At 12:40 AM we met some friendly fellows from Winnipeg who were fishing along the CNR line between the Pas and Churchill. We grabbed a quick meal in Gillam while the train refueled. Dave called the RCMP detachment and reported us safely in. The head constable thanked us and said he was glad we had such a fun trip. He had been checking our names just the other day and had been expecting us within the next few days. At 7:30, everyone awake - bought coffee and mixed up a cube of OJ. Had a very enjoyable conversation with fellows from Winnipeg.