INTO THE BARRENS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tyrrell, 1893</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Moffatt, 1955</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 29–August 2</td>
<td>Carey Lake</td>
<td>August 7–8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skip | AUGUST 5, DUBAWNT RIVER

Spent the day in camp and although the weather was poor for filming, the caribou offered plenty of opportunity for excitement. After breakfast, Bruce and Joe climbed a nearby ridge, picked out a young, spike horn and shot it. None of us had ever had any experience in skinning and butchering such a large animal (squirrels being just about the limit of our experience), but with much blood and gore, George and I managed, primarily by trial and error, to produce a good quantity of serviceable meat. The prospect of firm, chewable meat for the next few days is very welcome.

It is interesting to note the different standards of “game morality” which I seem to possess. At home, in the absence of real need, I am critical of the urban hunter who annually participates in what I think of as a contrived tradition of “sportsmanship” and manliness. But here an entire change of attitude prevails. Fish, caribou, grouse, ptarmigan, ducks . . . all are hunted with determination and ruthlessness. The only morality exists in terms of non-waste and need. As long as the herds are with us, we will kill individual animals as needed; eat as much meat as possible immediately and carry whatever we can. This sudden presence of wildlife not only provides good protein and some fat, it also makes the hope of adequate provisions more realistic.

Peter | AUGUST 5, DUBAWNT RIVER

Slept for more than twelve hours last night. No one got up ’til noon. We had all the grayling we could eat for breakfast, then Bruce and Joe went off with their rifles to get a caribou, followed by Art and his camera. I took off for a long walk. I headed inland for a couple of miles and then struck a long lake and walked up the shore several miles toward a hill of
gray rock. The shore parallels the river closely and is only about a mile from it. When I first struck this lake, I found a quartzite scraper on top of a hill, then walking along the shore, I found a perfect, beautifully worked arrowhead in the middle of a caribou trail. Only the tip was broken off; the rest was in perfect shape. The land between the river and the lake is covered with bare sandy spots with lots of quartzite chips.

In the lake there was a low island about in the middle, and caribou use this to help them cross the lake, swimming from one shore to the island and from the island to the other shore. I watched a large herd swim across this way. Caribou are abundant everywhere. They warn themselves chiefly by smell, so by standing downwind of a small group and remaining quite still, I found that they would graze very close without noticing me.

Before I climbed the rock hill, I found a few big white spruce, the trunks about 1.5 ft. through at the base. The view I got from this hilltop was the best yet. I could see Barlow Lake to the northeast. The country looks flatter in that direction with not much rock exposed and fairly green. It reminded me of some of the high Sierras very far above timberline. All gray rock and every so often a lake without a bit of grass or growing stuff anywhere. A moon world! I got a feeling of loneliness and desolation and was glad to get down and back on my way back to camp. The water below is full of grayling, all good sized and eager for the fly.

Back in camp, I found that Bruce and Joe had shot a young female. They did a very poor job, riddled the meat with bullets, but at least we have all the meat we want.

Everyone sits up at night broiling it and eating ’til they can hold no more. The best pieces are the long roasts from the back. They are very tender and delicious. No gamey flavor at all, except for the bloody taste of fresh meat.

*Skip* | August 6, Barlow Lake

Spent the entire day on the river, battling the wind which swept across the valley, building large, confused waves as it blew against the current. Rapids were very difficult to negotiate as sudden gusts of wind upset the
balance and heading of the canoe and drove the waves in an unpredictable cross chop. Also came very close to hitting a few big rocks, but fortunately they were far enough below the surface.

Pan-fried steaks replaced yesterday’s delicious dinner stew and for the second evening in a row, we enjoy fresh meat.

The abundance of caribou has already ceased to be cause for comment as we pass herd after herd along the river.

In the evening after the meal, a leisurely stroll over the open, rocky ridges reveals hundreds of caribou peacefully grazing and only moving when we are within 20–30 ft. or so. The antlers are still in velvet; the broad branching U of the male with one or two shovels over the forehead contrasts sharply with the smaller U of the female. Body size is not such a distinguishing feature as it is with deer or elk. They vary in color from dark brown to grey-white and have a slight hump on the shoulder. They stride with a bouncing step; generally beginning with a slight hop or leap; then throwing back their head and moving off with a deceptively rapid gait. As they run, the ankle bones produce a rattling click with each step and often during the night, we can hear the eerie echo of these rattling hooves as the caribou wander by our tents.

I am sitting on a high, exposed ridge just above our riverbank camp. The wind has died and the sun is still quite high. As I write, Peter and Bruce have stirred up a few caribou just north of me and in their haste the animals run within 15 ft of the rock on which I am sitting . . . the young docilely following the females, with the vigilant males in front and on the flank. They run for a while, stop, look back; graze a bit and then move on . . . always southward.

My view from here stretches for miles in every direction. Tiny lakes exposed between the ridges; still patches of dwarfed spruce, and always the lichen-covered rocks and stunted, inch-high ground cover stretching forever.

Although the day was quite clear, the atmosphere possesses a strange haze which seems to be common here. And, of course, to remind us of our position and direction, bright sunshine still means 3 layers of shirts, cold hands and tingling feet.
**Peter | August 6, Barlow Lake**

Started off at the usual early time, 6 AM. Art got some good pictures of us running the rapid and then we went down the river to Barlow Lake. The country is continuing to get more barren as we go on with less and less trees along the bank. The river is quite swift and we made pretty good time. The weather has certainly improved. A warm, sunny day, but lots of wind.

Before we got to Barlow, we went through a small, shallow lake. Coming from this into Barlow, the river is very shallow and rocky, but not too swift. I am having lots of trouble with George. He just won’t do as I tell him and in one bad spot, he refused to do anything and just sat down his paddle. Fortunately, we got through this shallow part okay and after paddling a few miles on Barlow, we camped on a point with a high hill and a beautiful view of the lake.

I found a rose quartzite scraper in fine shape, well made. Art got some movies of me finding it and holding it to the camera for a close-up.

We had caribou steaks cut from the meat along the back and they were as tender as the finest filet mignon. Another good piece is any of the largest muscles on the hind legs.

**Skip | August 7, Carey Lake**

Enjoyed a full day of clear, sunny weather while traversing the entire length of Barlow Lake and five miles of river into Carey Lake; pushed along by a rare, gentle south wind.

We have become used to the stepped-up tempo of 6 AM breakfasts so that by 9 AM pictures have been taken, canoes loaded and we are off.

At dinner tonight, Art by very illogical reasoning insisted that the dinner cook should be entitled to extra sugar rations. He seems to be suffering more than the rest of us from the short rations due mainly to large amounts of coffee and tea that he relishes, but I certainly thought he would be the last to hedge. After I refused him in an ashamed and disappointed way, he dropped the subject and has not mentioned it since.
Perhaps the incident was just a momentary weakness to which we all are entitled, but he above all should set an example of steady discipline. Caribou meat continues to dominate our meals; tongue and heart are top delicacies.

Shipped about 3" of water while shooting rapids today; late in the afternoon, tired, mistake in judgment. None of the supplies got wet.

**Peter | August 7, Carey Lake**

A good, clear warm day; no wind to speak of. We finished the rest of Barlow Lake. There is one swift rapid with bad waves out of Barlow. Skip ran this first, going on the outside of some white water close to the shore in the mid-portion, but the current carried him off course through some of the biggest waves and he nearly swamped. Then I went down, going close to the left shore inside this part of white water, then swinging out from the shore to avoid some heavy waves at the tail. We made it with no water at all. Art took the same course, but shipped a lot of water and had to bail. He is heavier loaded now, though we were the heaviest at the beginning of the trip.

After this rapid, there are two more easy ones and then just swift water in to Carey Lake. Carey looks really barren after you pass a few spruce at the inlet, but so did most of Barlow. The trees don’t seem to follow a definite pattern, but by now they are all confined to small patches that occur apparently at random.

We camped here at the inlet; still eating on our caribou. We tried smoking some and eating it for lunch and it turned out delicious. I think the meat gets better as it ages a little. Caribou have been getting scarcer since we saw a big herd on the river before Barlow. Since then, we have only been seeing the odd one or two, all fairly far away.

**Skip | August 8, Dubawnt River**

Was awakened this morning by a nearby wolf howl. We were camped on the w shore of a ¼-mile-wide bay, and as I crawled out of the tent,
I saw two large white wolves wandering on the opposite shore among the rocks. Through the glasses the long, low-slung bodies with beautiful white fur and drooping tails were pretty big, much larger than a German Shepherd, and built for agility and power. By the time Art was up and ready to film they were gone. Hope to get good shots of them another time.

The threatening skies of early morning soon cleared and we spent a sunny, calm day traversing the entire length of Carey Lake.

Stopped at the site of Tyrrell’s cairn for lunch, but were disappointed to find only a note from a survey party this Spring . . . they cheat with airplanes.

Got a very rare shot of a long-tailed Jaeger on a rocky island in mid-lake.

Latest fad finds us all preparing half-smoked, half-cooked meat after
the evening meal to supplement the lunch ration . . . caribou of course.
First animal is running out; will be looking for a new kill soon.

Saw first ptarmigan today, but these were much too shy to get for the pot . . . more to come.

With the favorable change in the weather, we have been making good progress, 50 mi. in 3 days and the prospects of early arrival at Baker Lake seem good.

**Peter | August 8, Dubawnt River**

Again, a pretty clear day. Art saw a pair of white Arctic wolves across the river this morning, but so far away they were just little specks. We got up at the usual time, 6 AM and were moving by 9:30. The lake was calm and we made good time to Cairn Point. Actually there is no big cairn, just a large boulder like the other erratics. This one happens to be on the way.

We climbed to the top of the hill, found the site of Tyrrell’s cairn and a note in a glass jar that a survey crew of May ’55 had left. We signed our names on the back of this; all but mine. I was wandering around looking at the view.

Carey from here is a picture of loneliness, almost as complete as what I saw to the west from the hills I climbed by Barlow. The hills around are low and grassy, but completely barren. To the east, the country is flatter and swampy with hills in the far distance. The panorama is so immense that it is impossible to really take it in. You keep looking for something that isn’t there. It makes me want to go off on a long trip across country, but what I see there will be no different from this part. These barrens make me want to spread myself too thin.

We ate lunch at this point, then headed out for the gap at the left side of the lake. When we got through this, we headed for the large point of land on the right shore that shows up as a big hill in the distance. While passing through the little rocky islands along the way, Art got some pictures of jaeger, supposedly a very rare bird and hard to photograph.

When we got past the point, we headed for the little rocky islands off it, going through shallow, rocky water with current. Then we came out into the last section of the lake and paddled down to the first rapids. We
camped at the head of the rapids on the right, which we would have to portage the next day. An easier way, if possible, is to shoot the first rapids on the left side of the island and go around that way. I know the first is not too hard, but the other around the left side might have to be portaged. We had to wade the canoes through boulders to get to the right shore.

We had our last meal from the caribou tonight, but the chuck is still left and is good, except for tough membrane on the outside of the meat. Once the meat is broiled or fried, this membrane becomes soft enough so it doesn’t interfere much.

_SKIP_ | _AUGUST 9, DUBAWNT RIVER_

After portaging around the rapids at which we camped last night and having completed a very cold, wet-foot loading job, we continued down the river for a mile or so, only to be stopped by north winds and threatening sky; total mileage not more than a few miles.

Sugar again became an issue this morning with Art “borrowing” from the cooking ration. Later he apologized for the infraction and all seems smooth again.

Berry picking led me to within a few feet of a caribou this afternoon. As I crouched among the rocks, she sauntered over toward me and lay down quite contentedly to chew; reminded me of Rigo* arranging a place to settle down. Other than the big bucks, the individual caribou are rather bedraggled and seem quite forlorn among the vastness of the Barrens.

_PETER_ | _AUGUST 9, DUBAWNT RIVER_

We made the portage around the first rapid, about ¹⁄₃ mi. over quite open country. I flushed five ptarmigan in one trip over. Right around this rapid is the first that we have seen of them, but they are certainly in abundance here. I didn’t try hunting them, but I should think it might be difficult to get a clear shot.

The loading was bad again here. The rocks are all sharp and rough and

*The family dog.
shallow close into shore. Today is very windy with a few thunderstorms galloping about.

Due to Art getting pictures of portaging and ptarmigan, we didn’t start loading until 11:30. Then it was so windy that we decided not to shoot the next few rapids, though they were fairly easy. While looking over the rapids, we left our canoes tied in the lee of a point and they scraped against some of the sharp rocks. Result, Skip’s canoe had several bad scrapes down to bare canvas and one hole right through to the wood. Mine had one big scrape to canvas about 4" long. I never would have thought a little gentle rubbing and scraping could be so hard on that tough paint and canvas, but these rocks were sharp and cut right through. Skip patched the hole with tar. I used a liquid cement to keep the canvas from rotting.

We holed up for the rest of the day and I slept most of the afternoon. Caribou are getting quite scarce with only an occasional one showing up.

_Skip_ | _August 10, Dubawnt River_

Made good progress this morning, running four rapids . . . the first decision to run or not is still with me; so far so good.

Storm-bound in an abandoned trapper’s cabin just south of Markham Lake.

This cabin is quite an amazing thing to see so far from other signs of civilization. The floor plan must be about 8’ x 8’ with one genuine glass window approx. 18” x 18” and a small overhanging porch. A crude, square tin stove is in one corner, a single bunk in the opposite corner. The door clears about 6” off the rough planked floor. A small shelf is built on the wall next to the window and opposite this, the entire wall is covered with nets and traps hung from hand-whittled pegs. The walls are made of 8”–12” white spruce squared on all sides; must have hauled them from a small stand of stunted trees in a valley to the south. Wall chinking is moss. The roof is made of small split logs, chinked with moss and then covered with gravel, bottles and old canoe canvas. Dog stakes and hand-made wooden implements are scattered around outside. These implements and the interior of the cabin especially emphasize the builder’s ingenuity.
and ability to fashion necessities out of things on hand; must be a tough, challenging experience to spend a winter in such a place.

The six of us sit here, brewing tea, listening to the rain and speculate on what manner of man the owner was . . . Art measures the cabin and speculates; George holds forth on the hypocrisy of hermits; Joe rolls cigarettes; Pete reads a dime novel found in a wooden box; Bruce agrees and marks the map.

I don't understand why the cabin was built on such an exposed ridge for, although the door opens to the south, the cabin is completely exposed to 3–4 barren miles of north wind; perhaps to see game from a comfortable vantage point, and there are lots of caribou here today.

Left this mysterious place after the weather cleared and we paddled under a beautiful sunny sky in anticipation of reaching Markham Lake. This region has a lot of exposed bedrock in the form of steep cliffs along the river and somewhat higher distant hills. In the brilliant sunlight of this afternoon, our view of the dark water meeting the multicolored rocks under a light blue sky with white, fluffy clouds was a beautiful sight and inspired a feeling of comfort and compatibility with the country. At times like this, it seems that nothing can go wrong, everything is perfect; and yet we know the unpredictability of this land and the elements.

Peter | AUGUST 10, DUBAWNT RIVER

Calm, but thunderheads are still rolling around on the horizon. We made a good early start and shot a few easy rapids before coming to one big one. The maps are very inaccurate in placing the rapids for the most part. This one was long, easy at the top, but with one stretch at the bottom which is rocky and has big waves. We took the left side to the end, then went through the middle, just skimming the right side of a large exposed rock at the very end. It looked bad, but was actually not too hard.

After this big rapid, the river is calm and wide for a ways. We saw more caribou today, but still only singles and pairs.

The country all around the river is hilly and rough with big chunks of rock thrusting through the surface till here and there. After coming into a wide, calm stretch, we found a cabin perched on a low hill next to
the water. A small affair, 9' x 9', built out of square hewn logs notched to fit. The logs were pretty big and must have come from a good-sized spruce grove up the river. No supplies, but a small stove and a bare bunk. The roof was of smaller logs covered with sod and stones. I would like to bring a mountain of supplies and spend a winter in a cabin like this or the one back at Hinde Lake on the esker.

Right now, my thoughts are constantly preoccupied with food to an alarming extent. What I miss is not fresh meat, because we have plenty of that. I crave fats, sugar and starch. I would like big slabs of cornbread with lots of butter, fat meat like bacon or pork, and chocolate. If I ever go on a trip like this again, I would bring my reflector and a lot of unmade starch, such as flour and cornmeal, along with more bacon and some canned butter. Baking for two men is easy; though for six, it really is a chore.

After we had lunch, we stayed in the cabin and sat out a thunderstorm, then moved on down the river. At this time, the clouds cleared away and we found ourselves in a narrow section of river with hills close in on either side. We stopped to look over a rapid and the country was really beautiful. From the hills, you could see the river rushing along into a wide lake-like place. The light was golden and the water dark blue. The rapid was easy running it on the left. I came down first, while Art and Skip took pictures. I kept going and came out on the wide stretch and just sat baking in the sun. We camped half way along the wide area on the right. When Art arrived, he had found the nest of a duck hawk along the way in a cliff along the left shore. We turned in early tonight, as Art has plans to go back and get movies early in the morning.

Skip | August 11, Pond Above Markham Lake

Got up at 4:30 AM, planning to photograph duck hawks on a nearby cliff at dawn, but a low, mist-like cloud discouraged us from moving until almost 10 AM. Day of rest was declared and while Art and I took pictures, Bruce bagged a caribou and with the help of Pete and George, butchered the beauty. Once again we are well stocked with meat.

The duck hawk which was the objective of most of our morning filming is a very powerful and ferocious bird. It is the bird used by many falconers
Art Moffatt overlooking a duck hawk nest on a bedrock cliff along the Dubawnt River, south of Markham Lake. Courtesy Creigh Moffatt.
and kills by striking its prey with closed claws during flight, breaking the backbone and then catching the falling body before it strikes the ground. The bird has a general gray appearance with faintly striped breast, bluish neck, black cap, yellow legs and dark wings. The pair defended their nest with fierce cries and determined dive bombing, always pulling up just before striking, fortunately; should make a good film sequence.

Blueberries are super and with the meat and fish provide a very substantial part of our diet. This is my first experience with “living off the land,” substantially backed up by a can or two as needed. So far so good; shower lessens and glop is served.

Peter | AUGUST 11, POND ABOVE MARKHAM LAKE

Very heavy fog this morning. We had breakfast around 4:30. The fog gradually cleared, but I went back to bed and slept ’til 10:00. By this time, Art and Skip had taken the canoe to get pictures of the hawk. I sat around washing clothes, a beautiful sunny day. Skip came back. We had lunch and he left to go back to Art again.

Then about 2:00 Bruce came in. He had been hunting caribou all morning and finally got a young cow about noon. He had lunch, then he, I and George went back to the kill. Since I wanted the hide to keep me dry in the next bad rain, I did the skinning. It came pretty easy; just a cut down the middle and around the neck and along the inside of the legs. Once you get a hold of the right layer, the skin peels off easily. This time we tried leaving the meat along the back, right on the bone, and taking the ribs back too. There was hardly any of that caribou left when we walked off. The meat is no good for a day after it has been killed, so we hung it and had glop that night, a welcome change from the usual meat. The hide was pretty shabby. The skin along the back was full of botfly holes and the new hair had not completely come in. The old white winter hair kept falling out at a touch, but it is good enough to keep the rain off my legs when I am in the canoe, so it will serve. I am a bloody mess and so is George, but I guess we will get used to the smell after a bit.
Skip | AUGUST 12, POND ABOVE MARKHAM LAKE

Shortly after breakfast, rain closed in and pushed us to our tents where we dozed, read and wrote until a break in the showers permitted a humid lunch and then back to the tents for more rain-induced sleep. Rain let up in early evening, but too late for travel, so energies were spent preparing a beautiful blueberry johnny cake which was combined with two enormous slabs of “roast beef” to produce a fine banquet. The quantities of meat which we consume at one sitting are enormous; the local A&P would have a hell of a time keeping up with this group.

We sat around the fire until quite late this evening nursing a boiling pot of soup stock made of caribou backbone chopped in chunks, reinforced by the usual pot of tea, hoping to see a predicted meteor shower. But

Johnny Cake

Mix well with enough water to make a fairly heavy batter:

- 2 cups yellow corn meal
- 1 cup all purpose flour
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ cup butter or Crisco
- 1½ tsp baking powder (double action)
- 2 tbs powdered milk

Bake in well-greased reflector pan, 15–20 minutes in medium heat (until batter rises and is clean to a knife)

Brown top by tilting pan in front of fire

Adding berries, raisins or any other fruit to the batter offers change

And if grub is plentiful, brown sugar, honey, or jam furnish fine topping for this luxurious dish.
occasional clouds and the general twilight prevented it from being more than a very few traveling sparks. Later on, when the evening tea invited me out into the chilly night, I was treated with a brilliant picture of an almost-full moon of intense brilliance shining down from a cloud-swept sky on to the black, rippled waters of this widening in the Dubawnt. No meteors, but wisps of rising steam created an eerie, Hamletesque tone . . . “witches and ghosts” were lurking everywhere. Bright stars peered down through momentary openings in the clouds and seemed to be strange eyes from another world looking in on this fascinating scene.

Peter | August 12, Pond Above Markham Lake

Rainy all day. We stayed put and I slept and read in the morning and early afternoon. I read Thomas Wolfe’s “The Hills Beyond” and looked through George’s book of art. Some of the paintings impressed me very much. There is so much you can convey in a painting that would be impossible to express another way. I like the landscapes best. They can convey more of a mood and an outlook on life to me than a portrait. A lot of “Hills Beyond” is in the form of episodes in Wolfe’s life; an account of his childhood that rambles along without any plot. I like his descriptions. They reminded me of my own memories of childhood and how freshly and strongly everything affected me. I like too, the obsession he has with the passage of time, because I have often liked to sit and feel time stream on and wonder what it is that we measure out our lives in.

We had a pretty gloomy lunch in the rain, then went back to our tents to wait it out. Around 4:00, the sky cleared and Art set about making a johnny cake. I almost went mad with hunger sitting around watching him, so I went off to pick blueberries. We picked quite a pot full to put in the johnny cake and they really improved the flavor, but the cake itself sits so heavy once you eat two big slabs of it that I almost wished I was hungry again.

Tonight we had a brief display of northern lights, but nothing like what I have seen before at Smooth Stone portage on the Albany.
The usual morning oats under what has become a characteristic gray, morning overcast were supplemented with vast quantities of fried caribou liver to the delight of most of the party. Art and Joe abstained, Art due to taste, Joe in fear of flukes.

By now we have become quite skilled in utilizing most of the kill. The hide is scraped, dried, then pounded and rubbed until soft enough to be worked; hood and lap robe are intended products. The head yields tongue and brain; former boiled and eaten cold, the latter used for softening the hide. Heart and liver are cooked as special delicacies, and then of course all the available meat is butchered and hung on a tripod. Flies, maggots, cists, tapeworms, flukes, etc. generally cease to be a concern.

After the initial “halfway” scare of time-distance regarding remaining food supplies which resulted in a revised, longer-day travel schedule, we are slowly drifting back into our previous lethargy. Tendency is to wait until near-perfect weather before moving and then only after whatever filming opportunities we create, and then to stop whenever rain or wind threaten. In this land of fish, caribou and berries all seems well and so we mosey along. Things will probably change again but for the present it is most enjoyable.

Left camp about 11 AM and paddled a short distance, shot one short rapids; enjoyed caribou soup for lunch, continued for a few miles into the lake until we were forced to seek shelter from a freshening headwind in a wooded bay; are camped again with the sizzle of cooking steaks.

The recent lag in the caribou migration seems to be over, for today we once again saw the animals grazing along the shore like cows, looking up from their munching as we paddled silently by, and then turning idly back to graze. Occasionally a spirited buck would snort and prance along the shore with us for a short distance, tossing his head and waving a magnificent set of antlers, but always with more curiosity than aggression and certainly very little fright.

Clouds close in as dinner is served.
Heavy mist again this morning, but it lifted about 9:00. Still it looked like rain, so we stuck around camp for a while. I scraped most of the remaining flesh off my hide and let it dry out. I am not going to bother doing anything else unless I have to. I think it will be soft enough to wear as it is now.

We pulled out at about 10:30 and went on down to where the 15-ft. falls is marked on the map. Actually this is an error. There was nothing there but a very easy rapid. We had a tremendous lunch of the usual hardtack and a soup made by boiling the backbone of the caribou. Delicious soup, and I had had a lot of caribou liver for breakfast, so I was quite full. This liver is excellent, but too rich and filling to eat for breakfast.

We had to wait around after lunch while Art tried to get some pictures. This is what I dislike most about this trip, having to wait around at odd times when you don’t have enough time to take a walk or get started on a project of your own. Also I have a pretty hard time with George. He
and I just can’t get along together and there is nothing to be done about it; “A fundamental conflict of incompatible natures.”

When Art got back, on we went another 3 mi. into Markham Lake. Here the headwind got so bad, we had to camp. We only made about 6 mi., but at least we moved.

I am beginning to get a little bit tired of caribou and long for a glop dinner for a change. These blueberries that grow everywhere are delicious, especially with milk and sugar. I notice that Art is getting awfully hoggish on the food. With oats, he fills his pannikin, which is larger than our bowls and gets more that way. He makes himself thick milk for his tea and hides it so we won’t use it. He certainly doesn’t try to set a high example for the rest of us, but that is like him. He is a completely natural person with no illusions. We all resent it, but it is acknowledged and out in the open, and not sneaky. If all could be known, I am by far the worst offender having stolen so much food on the sly. I don’t even try to stop myself now. If I think I can get away with it, I take something.

---

_Fairness is the cardinal virtue. Little things, which normally would pass unnoticed, too often become the basis for mounting resentment under the stress of cramped, limited living. Art, for example, enjoys the position of leader of this party and yet he is invariably involved in every food dispute. He is the target of much grumbling and the cause of dissatisfaction. This is generally brought upon himself by his failure to establish fairness between himself and the others. As cook, he misuses his job in very minor, but noticeable ways. He uses a special aluminum pannikin instead of the common bowl, thus causing suspicion of larger portions. When frying meat, he always fries his separately at the end, thus implying special pieces and extra preparation. He uses community sugar for personal use at times and tends to hedge on rations as part of compensation for cooking. All these things are minor, but in his position are compromising and disruptive._

We crossed both Markham and Nicholson Lakes today under beautiful, sunny, cool sky. The magic word “Dubawnt Lake” looms next.

It is difficult to know just how much of the general plan of a day’s
travel should be discussed by the group and how much dictated by the
leader, especially when depended upon such a variable as weather, but
it seems that in either case, majority or dictator, the group works much
better when immediate goals are known and understood. Even in cases of
change, revisions should be understood. When proposing two alternatives
with an obvious personal choice, it remains far better at least initially to
state the two choices fairly, rather than trying to phrase the choices in a
biased way. The issue simply rests upon consistency and open handedness.
Art is not very good at this.

Peter | August 14, Dubawnt River

We got up at the usual 6:00, but didn’t leave until 10:30. Art took pictures.
It looked like a bad day in the morning, but this cleared off by noon and
we had hot sun for the rest of the day. The odd clump of trees is getting
harder and harder to find. Caribou are getting more abundant for some
reason. We have been seeing lots of them since we entered Markham;
still not in big herds, but small groups of three or four are common.

We made it up Markham and into Nicholson by 5:00. When entering
Nicholson, take the entrance to the left. The one in the middle is too
shallow and rocky. The country is full of sweeping vistas of big, bare
hills, golden in the sun. We stuck to the left side going inside of the big
island on the left and made it to the mouth of the river by 7:30. Fishing
is probably good here. I saw quite a few rises.

The stretch of river coming up is about 30 mi., very narrow, rough and
fast. Then we are in Dubawnt Lake!

I have an alarming tendency to look forward to lunch and especially
a peanut butter and cheese hardtack as the high point of the day. I am
beginning to think that when the chips are down, I am nothing but a big
belly. I look forward to Baker Lake most because it means all I can eat.

Skip | August 15, North of Lake Nicholson

After spending much of the morning stalking and filming a very wily
flock of Canada Geese on the far shore of the river, we pushed off and
headed down the Dubawnt, toward the great lake. We soon stopped to
Barren Grounds

look over two rapids, both of which we decided to run. As I entered the first rapid it became evident that things were not entirely as they had looked from the shore. Instead of the normal waves breaking below the rocks and at right angles to the flow of the channel, these waves were breaking in a confused series of 3 or 4 directions. The rapid was quite short; we continued on to the second. Again, as we entered, the irregular waves seemed to break everywhere. The surprise of finding an unfamiliar situation in what had become a rather familiar challenge combined with the fear of a serious accident to create a sense of helplessness and a call to “Hang on!” The waves grew larger and soon the canoe was being tossed around uncontrollably. My only control was to keep the canoe more or less parallel with the current. She tossed and twisted, buffeted on the stem by one wave, then slapped by two on the stern. One wave came over at the bow and many lapped over amidships. By the time we reached the lower eddy, we crouched in a waterlogged, sluggish canoe and slowly made our way to shore.

Unloading; no supplies lost; and then Bruce and I helped the other two canoes portage. Afterward, we continued down the river much more
respective of the new power and deep strength of the river. We stopped for the night at the head of a heavy rapid flowing between steep rock cliffs.

**Peter | August 15, North of Lake Nicholson**

Up at 6:00; a fairly clear day with a light south wind. After breakfast Art went off with his camera, so I picked blueberries; very ripe now. I walked back to a hill about 1⁄3 mi. inland. The country reminds me of meadows very high above timberline in the Sierras. The hills are rolling and long with outcroppings of rock and no trees, except for an occasional stunted growth in a gully or by a pond.

Art went out with Skip in a canoe to get pictures of Canada geese, so I had plenty of time to roam around. With the sun out on days like this, the Barrens look friendly and familiar, like hills not far from home, but let the sun go behind a cloud and the wind come up, and they become ominous and a place to hurry through.

We didn’t get started ’til 11:30, but made good time in the river until we pulled over to look at the first rapid. There was about a quarter of a mile of swift water above it, but the main rapid is short, steep and narrow; no rocks, but full of bad waves. Skip ran it first, but almost swamped, so Art and I made a short portage around this swift chute. We didn’t leave here until about 4:00 and went down the next calm stretch of river about a mile until the river narrowed down and got very swift heading into a deep gorge. Here we pulled aside on the right and walked down a half mile or more to look. This one is very bad. The water is too swift to stop anywhere much lower than where we stopped, but it is all easily runnable until you get right in the gorge, then the waves are very big and break in all directions. A portage from where we are now might be too long to be practical. We decided to stay put for the night and take a closer look the next day.

This caribou seems to be going bad much faster than the other. It already smells high and some pieces are full of maggots.

Caribou seem to be increasing. We see them all the time now, right close to camp.
Art tried to get pictures of a pair of American rough-legged hawks in this gorge tonight before dinner, but couldn’t; not enough sun. After dinner, we saw two mink climbing through the rocks and looking at us not 10 yd. from camp.

Skip | August 16, Dubawnt River

We spent the entire morning scouting this very difficult rapid which involved rough walking through low brush and on steep cliffs for over two miles. We looked at the large breaking waves and sharp curves for hours, plotting and reploting possible courses. The wind and pulsating current seems to shift the waves continuously, making any decision tenuous at best. Returned to camp with two plans and finally decided on the alternative of shooting to the left bank into an eddy, lining the canoes down to another eddy, portaging behind the cliff and around difficult curves, and then shooting the last part of the main rapid. The protection of our supplies dictates our caution.

Decided to eat lunch before starting off at which time a sudden squall from the south inclined us to repitch the tents and wait out the rain. Cleared about 4:30; however, have decided to remain in camp until tomorrow. The tension between scouting and making a decision about a rapid, and our awareness of the approaching winter is a huge burden on days like this. Smooth lake travel is a luxury even though much slower and more laborious.

Milk became an issue yesterday; and again it seemed to be the four guys against Art; problem of rationing given to Skip.

After a touchy trial and error mushroom test in which I gulped down one raw specimen with some misgiving, but with no immediate after effects, mushrooms have become part of our “natural” diet. They are very plentiful in this area and when fried in bacon grease are a fine supplement with the caribou steaks.

Food from the land has become so important that everyone walks with head down and a sharp eye for berries, mushrooms and other edible plants. An unfortunate result of this is that thoughts of food seem to
dominate almost all other mental activity. Conversation, spare time and imagination concentrate on food. This is a sad state of affairs, considering generally how well we eat.

*Peter | August 16, Dubawnt River*

It looked like a pretty fair day. In the morning after breakfast, Skip and I walked all the way down and took a careful look at the rapid. Art, who had looked at it before breakfast, thought we couldn’t shoot the whole thing and the best thing to do would be to shoot the upper part and pull over in the small eddy on the left bank before the bad waves, portage this part, and set in another eddy further down, shooting the bottom part on the left side. Skip and I still thought we could shoot the whole thing. Besides, the eddy on the left was very rocky and hard to get into with the current going past at a terrific rate. While we were talking this over and eating lunch, a bad thunderstorm came up and we spent the rest of the afternoon in the tents.

Around 4:00 the rain stopped and Bruce and I got out and caught some fish. The rapid is full of grayling and lake trout; fine big fish, the fattest I have ever seen. We had a caribou stew and threw the rest away as it was too high to stand any longer.

After dinner, Art got out the maps and looked over our situation. It seems rather serious. We still have 300 mi. to Baker Lake, after we get to Dubawnt Lake and only about thirty days of food left. The weather will be getting worse all the time and there is no telling how long we will be held up on Dubawnt Lake from storms. I have given up all hope of getting to college on time. I am worried about getting out of the bush before winter starts closing in. The people back at Stony said this was an early summer. Perhaps that means it will end early too? Tyrrell had freezing weather by September 20th. Art thinks that the river may be lower now than when Tyrrell went through as Tyrrell didn’t have much trouble with any of these rapids. The ice at Spring breakup can change things a lot in seventy-five years too.

I feel unsettled and anxious mostly because I don’t have the clothes to
stand the cold, if it does come. I doubt that my boots will last another thirty days. I am going to try to save a little hardtack each day from now on so that I will have something to fall back on, if things do go badly.

_Skip_ | _AUGUST 17, DUBAWNT RIVER_

Stayed in bed as long as possible today while one of the rare driving rains made the tent a very cozy place. Breakfast of oats, lake trout, bacon, blueberries and tea was eaten in a heavy rain by the six of us huddled under the tarp, close around a smoky, sputtering fire.

Skies cleared in the afternoon, but storms continued to threaten so we remained at camp and spent most of the day getting food so as not to use much of our rapidly diminishing store-bought supply.

Lunch consisted of a fish chowder utilizing 5 grayling, 1 C rice and 1 pkg. dried soup; also 1 hardtack with jam. Dinner was really a woodsman’s triumph, although it took all afternoon to gather. Five medium lake trout which we catch at will are served as the main course. A large bucket of mushrooms was fried for our vegetable and blueberries furnished dessert along with the customary tea.

Later in the evening Pete came in with 3 ptarmigan which are hanging on a tent pole now and will serve as the beginning of another meal soon.

In addition to saving on supplies, these “land meals” are teaching me many things. Butchering the caribou, preparing birds, picking and cooking mushrooms and, of course, preparing the fish have all become ordinary chores and will always be useful. It is marvelous and quite fortunate how abundant food in the Barrens is at this season and how six quite inexperienced men are able to supply a substantial part of their diet with such ease.

The recent hot weather has ruined a lot of our meat so that even boiling the worst parts is no longer too effective. However, a change to fish for a while is welcome.

Mink play on the rocky shore within a few feet of our camp; energetic, sleek little animals.

The big rapid still remains a problem. Hope we can tackle it tomorrow. Clouds and coming winter have pretty well done away with the
pleasant, leisurely twilight camp hours. I am writing now by candle light in the tent and enjoy the meager warmth as well as the light.

Peter | August 17, Dubawnt River

Awoke to the sound of heavy rain on the tent, so I just went back to sleep again. We finally had breakfast in the rain about 10:00. Then I did the dishes and tried to dry out some of my stuff. The tent leaks quite a bit so that it is impossible to keep things from getting damp.

For lunch, we had a fish chowder made with five grayling; an excellent dish! About 2:00 the rain stopped, but the sky looked threatening, so we decided to stay put for the rest of the day. Everyone disappeared to get food. Joe gathered blueberries and mushrooms: a small white kind with smooth skins. They are quite good fried and took the place of starch at dinner. Bruce caught a lot of lake trout, and I shot three ptarmigan in a spruce grove back in the bush. They are hard to get a shot at because they fly up, land and then creep around and hide under bushes, so that you can’t see where they are unless you crawl in after them.

Caribou are all over the place. They are constantly looking at us from a ridge just across the river from camp. A party of two could live off the country without caribou, but by shooting caribou as you went, you could really supply any number.

No new decision has been reached on the rapid question, except that I proposed that we paddle across the river up here, line the canoes down the left shore to the eddy and portage from there, if the eddy is impossible to get to any other way. This is probably what we will do.

Skip | August 18, Dubawnt River

We have been camped here at this rapid for so long now that it has been affectionately dubbed “Son of a Bitch!”

Art and I spent the morning scouting the w shore after a tricky crossing and returned with the dilemma still unresolved. The eddies which would lead to a portage point seem extremely dangerous and rocky, and are bordered by very swift current; the rapid itself is unknown. However,
during lunch and motivated as much by exasperation and the desire to move “almost anywhere,” we decided to try shooting the rapid with a half-loaded canoe; sent the four others off with the remainder of the canoe load and prepared for our attempt. But in the meantime, heavy winds drove in a rain squall, preventing us from moving.

So we spent the rest of a cold, disappointing day huddled in the tent speaking in cautious terms of food vs. time, and comforting ourselves somewhat by recollections of other expeditions and the ability of men to prevail under many trying circumstances . . . we ignore the disasters.

Sunshine momentarily again and dinner is being prepared.

After a store-bought meal of glop and cocoa, Art and I will attempt to shoot the rapid; later entry will tell the story . . . rain continued intermittently after dinner and so we retired to the tents anticipating an early and exciting day tomorrow, weather permitting.

Grilled a ptarmigan on a green spit after dinner and was delighted with the taste, wild, almost salty.

Skip | August 19, Dubawnt River

AM. Well, we finally shot and the beauty and the pride and confidence of overcoming a difficult obstacle pervades us all. After breakfast, Art and I took the half-loaded canoe and pushed off ’midst “good lucks” and many personal butterflies. Once we got going everything went according to plan and three fleeting miles later we stopped in a small eddy, exhausted from both exertion and tension.

The first is always the worst and by the time I had gone back to take the second canoe through the rapid, it had already become old stuff. I am sitting on our red food box now below the rapid waiting for Pete to bring the last canoe down. Lunch will follow and then we will pack up and leave this most troublesome obstruction, moving on to the next.

PM. The rest of the afternoon was spent in an exhilarating ride down the swift, sharply defined river as it flowed thru beautiful bedrock canyons in long sweeping S turns. After the last few days of hesitation and inactivity, the sense of pushing rapidly and easily northward is wonderful. As we sped along, the caribou ranged the cliffs and ridges at the river’s bank,
and often, as a large buck stood motionless against the skyline, I had the feeling that this must have been the Indians plight years ago; to stand motionless and watch as strangers silently invaded the country. Today this country seems to belong to the caribou and we are the strangers.

We are camped at what Tyrrell named, “half-way hill” from which he is supposed to have seen Dubawnt Lake for the first time. After dinner we will re-enact this little episode in the hope that the lake is still there. (Wrong Hill!)

Peter | August 19, Dubawnt River

After breakfast, Art and Skip were ready to try again. I walked down to the cliff and watched. The current swept them a little wide around the first bend and the lightened canoe was bouncing all over the place as it hit some big waves, but they made it into the right shore all right, then shot the water going past the cliff on the right, just between the boulders and the big waves. They pulled over at the tail. Then Skip and I went back and I came down in the bow of his canoe. The waves look too much for a canoe with our present loads, but by taking out only two food packs, our canoe was light enough to get down without shipping water. Bruce went back with me and came down in the bow of my canoe, I in the stern.

We had lunch then, out from under the shadow of that obstacle at last, then started down the river again. This stretch is very beautiful, swift current going down between narrow banks with no serious rapids. We came through a small lake and a few wide places in the river. In one, the river spread out and shallowed considerably, so there was some danger of running into rocks. The country changes; the sides of the river are rocky cliffs now. This country is so varied that you can’t keep up with the changes, they come so fast.

We camped after making about 15 mi. on the south end of a fairly long lake. The hills are growing flatter as we approach Dubawnt Lake. All today we have been seeing scattered spruce groves and we are near one now. It is hard to believe that we will be running out of wood entirely so soon.
Wind and a serious need for meat dictate a day in camp. While Art and Bruce went hunting with camera and gun respectively, I took the .22 and spent the morning chasing ptarmigan . . . box score one dead bird . . . the Great White Hunter! Covered a lot of territory however and saw the characteristic rings of stone and crude rock statue which designate Eskimo territory for the first time. This region probably marks the limit of their sw wandering.

Butchering and hanging the meat took most of the afternoon, and then into early evening was devoted to initial scraping of a new hide. This is a difficult and tedious job, but although the hide has a few holes in it and some of the winter hair, it will be a welcome /smelly blanket in the cold weather to come. It hangs stretching to dry overnight and then the scraping continues.

Turned cold tonight, dropping to 38°F at sundown. A hot Detroit summer seems a long way off.

Very cold and windy this morning, so Art decided to declare a day of rest and kill a caribou. He and Bruce went out to kill one from the canoe. Skip took the .22 and went after ptarmigan. I took a long walk to pick blueberries and see how many ptarmigan I could flush. I saw quite a few easy shots that morning. Joe picked mushrooms and got a good pot full for dinner. The best kind are rounded and brown on top with a spongy underside.

After hunting all morning, Skip came back with only one ptarmigan. I thought this was ridiculous, so I went out and hunted all afternoon, and only killed one. I saw a great many, but not until they flew up. Then they wouldn't come down for quite a while and I couldn't get a shot at them.

When I got back to camp, I found the caribou already butchered and hung with Skip working on the hide. Bruce and Art had no trouble finding one close to the shore. Then they just loaded him in the canoe and headed back to camp.
We shall have to be living more and more off the country in the future. We have only eight meals of macaroni left and about twenty-five half-pound packages of potatoes. This is our entire supply of starch. It has been quite cold the last two days. The meat should keep much better than it did the last time.

**Skip | August 21, Dubawnt Lake**

The “great lake” day has finally arrived!

After paddling most of the day against a cold, gusty headwind, we reached the shore of this tremendous lake. And although we are still among the river islands, the occasional glimpse between the smaller islands affords an impressive view of this immense body of water. It resembles any of the Great Lakes in coastal view and certainly is awe-inspiring when we contemplate crossing it by canoe. The lake extends north for 60 miles and we expect to cover almost 100 in coastline travel. As yet there is no sign of ice and in spite of near freezing weather, I will be quite surprised to see any ice pack; the sun seems too prevalent.

Our main concern is fair weather for the next few days. The wind has been the most serious handicap and has almost become characteristic of a day in the North. Rain is not a serious threat although unpleasant enough at times.

The camp was bothered by wolves for the first time tonight. Four of
a larger pack (we could hear the howling) appeared on a ridge by camp and one was bold enough to come very close to a tent. We have a large quantity of meat hanging about which must be quite a tempting item for these powerful animals. As yet our curiosity and inexperience displaces any fear of attack.

The thermometer was broken today, so from now on temperatures will only be impressions, until the water freezes.

**Peter  |  AUGUST 21, DUBAWNT LAKE**

Fairly easy, though cold, trip down to Dubawnt Lake. The country has flattened out considerably and has grown quite barren of trees. Not a single stick of wood in sight from the top of a hill. There is still grass and caribou everywhere though. I won't feel completely exposed to the elements and naked in the wilderness until they are gone. Somehow, the caribou are a great blessing and a softening of the land. It is its one source of plenty. We still managed to pick up enough driftwood for a cook fire tonight.

**Skip  |  AUGUST 22, DUBAWNT LAKE**

Storm-bound on Dubawnt Lake.

We left camp this morning battling an increasing w wind and within 2 hr., the breeze had veered to the nw and built up such a sea that we were forced to pull in at the first favorable spot.

**Tyrrell**

Shortly after entering the lake we were delayed for three days by a heavy storm of wind and cold rain, which afterwards turned to snow; and . . . as we were leaving camp, there was a thin skin of ice on the tarpaulins.
Used the primus stove for the first time today. The trees have long since left us and we now seem to be on the northern fringe of the driftwood. Campsites must now be chosen primarily to afford shelter from the almost inevitable wind. Steep cliffs and abrupt hills with s or e exposure are now looked upon with the same gleeful eye that a small grove of spruce received a week or so ago.

One definite advantage of the “cold camp” is that we all will get more sleep. With no fire to warm us and that magnetic pot of tea, we retire to our tents soon after eating. We can only afford to use the stove quickly for a meal and then the sputtering flame is turned off by a reluctant hand.

The country has once again changed its appearance as we travel north. With the last of the trees nestled in the shallow valleys, we left the exposed bedrock ridges and higher hills. The land retains its ridge appearance on a smaller scale now and is covered with varying sized boulders, some tremendous size, all generally covered with gray-green lichens and laying among low ground cover and pebbles. Tall grasses still exist in the hollows, but the characteristic cover has become lichen, moss, bear berry and arctic birch.

Peter | AUGUST 22, DUBAWNT LAKE

Blowing hard today. We made 4 mi. in the morning, then had to hole up for protection from the north wind. We are still flushing lots of ptarmigan but they are still almost impossible to get a shot at.

I was not feeling too well today, probably from eating too much caribou yesterday, and sat around scraping my caribou hide all afternoon. At the rate we are going, I will have to have a complete winter outfit before long.

If we do get held up on Dubawnt Lake for very long, our situation certainly seems serious. We are out of danger as long as we can find caribou, but if they are gone, we have had it, unless we get a lot of good traveling weather, which doesn’t seem likely in this neck of the woods. The change in weather and in the whole atmosphere and mood of the country is so sudden it is like a blow. On the river we were much more protected. Here the country is exposed to all the effects of the weather.
Skip | August 23, Dubawnt Lake

There is a limit beyond which knowledge of grim circumstances need not be confided to the crew. This does not mean that the men should not be aware of a situation, but rather that a general statement of the condition is enough. The details and possibilities of future discomfort should be kept quiet and whenever possible any announcement of short rations or other additional hardship should be accompanied by some sort of positive plan of action to combat the discomfort.

This morning Art entertained us with the account of Tyrrell’s grim trip from here to Baker Lake and seemed obsessed with relating all sorts of futures for the group. This did nothing more than make people all the more conscious of our predicament with very little encouragement.

No action was taken until finally a slight squall chased us to our tents where we stayed until 3 PM. In the meantime, the wind veered directly out of the N, sending the temperature down abruptly and clearing the sky. We left camp at 4:30 PM in the face of this very cold N wind and after sneaking from one lee to another for a few miles we were again forced to make camp due to the mounting seas and wind.

Our feet and hands are continually cold and to get either wet has become a serious accident. Travel conditions have changed completely since the southern forest days when we were forever stepping in and out of the water without much thought.

Our total mileage for the last few days amounts to about six miles and so it seems that Dubawnt Lake with a helping hand from the weatherman is doing her best to keep us pinned against her southern shore. With about 25 days left, we have had to cut almost our entire food consumption in ½. We still have plenty of meat, but the lack of fat and starches make dinner rather unsatisfying. At home the cuts and quantities of meat we consume would be unbelievable in terms of price and availability. A good size caribou lasts about 4 days. One hind quarter per meal, both roast strips for one meal, and two front quarters for another meal. The miscellaneous cuts go for breakfast and lunch extras.

Am now in the midst of scraping down my caribou hide and find
the job rather laborious although it is fun to repeat the native process with stone scraper and brain. The hide is very useful now, serving as a sleeping pad at night to insulate the floor of the tent and as a lap robe while paddling during the day.

After dinner this evening, which has become a cold meal since the cold weather set in; the plates and food cooling off almost instantly, only hot item is the tea; we have once again decided on emergency scheduling and will get up at 4 AM if the wind is down, paddle until 8 or so, have breakfast and continue paddling until the wind stops us again. It is interesting to note that these measures initially come from one of the gang, seldom from Art. In any case, I am confident we will arrive at Baker in good time and with plenty of meat on our bones.

Skip | August 24, Dubawnt Lake

Heavy frost and a frozen milk pail greeted us this morning as we shivered out of the sack at 4 AM; hurriedly gulped down hardtack and jam, and set off in a frosted canoe hoping to make a few miles at least before the wind came up. As luck would have it, the day remained absolutely calm and we were able to continue paddling the entire day with a break around 9 AM for breakfast and another at 2 PM for lunch.

Now at 6 PM we have made camp and are very happy with the day’s run. Just before we stopped, Art threw out his line and soon hauled in a 12-lb. lake trout which is boiling now for a chowder dinner. Lake trout have been quite easy to catch ever since we hit the river. They are near the surface and readily take a Dare Devil so we have enjoyed fish for breakfast most every day and every 3 days or so a fish dinner. Meat certainly is no problem.

We are now better than ½ of the way through the lake and spirits rise . . . supplies at present consumption should see us through. Big worry now is the cold. We all are wearing 3 or 4 layers of clothing and only the occasional sun or vigorous exercise warms us . . . another few weeks may bring serious trouble. But for the present it merely serves to keep us damn busy.
George woke us at 4:30 this morning. The lake was quite calm at last, but cold. There was a thick coating of frost everywhere and it was impossible to keep warm unless you were very active. We bolted down a hardtack and loaded up in a hurry.

We made Teall Point in about three hours and cooked breakfast there on the end of the point. There is not a scrap of driftwood anywhere now, so we have to use the gas stove. Oats sure tasted good after a 6 mi. paddle in the cold.

After breakfast, we started paddling again and made it quite a ways, past Snow Island, a point on the northwest shore, where we had lunch. While we were resting before we got to the point, Art dragged the Dare Devil for about one minute and caught a 12-lb. lake trout. For such a barren looking lake, the Dubawnt must be swarming with fish.

After lunch, we kept going for another four hours, but an east wind sprang up, so we headed for the west side of a long island that had a deep narrow bay marked in it on the map. We made this about 6:00, feeling pretty tired, but pleased with ourselves after a long day. In a straight line from parallel to parallel, we made 23 mi., but we must have paddled closer to thirty.

Dubawnt Lake no longer seems so threatening and much more beautiful now. On the northwest shore, there are some beautiful mountains, not especially high, but mountains in this country. They are flat on top like big mesas out west. If I ever make this trip again, I would sure like to do some exploring in these hills. The country is all so open that you could walk anywhere. The only obstacles are streams and rivers that would have to be crossed.

This narrow bay is a beautiful camp site. I walked down north along the shore and caught an 8-lb. lake trout before dinner on Art’s casting rig. They don’t put up much of a fight for their size, but I had a few exciting moments before I landed him.

We have found that the low, green cover that looks like heath will burn. It makes a quick hot fire for boiling things, but leaves no embers for frying. Still it is easy to gather a large pile of the stuff and it is fine for
warming yourself or drying clothes. This discovery makes me feel a lot better and not so afraid of freezing with insufficient clothes. I can always go off and build my own heather fire to keep warm. A party of two could do all their cooking by this stuff, though it wouldn’t be very convenient.

**Skip | August 25, “Pitcairn” Island**

Today was certainly the most beautiful of the summer. We spent the day camped in a tiny landlocked inlet on this softly rolling, grassy, pebble-beached, rocky-cliffed retreat which reminds me of precisely what Nordoff & Hall must have had in mind as their haven for the mutineers. From the meadow above the wave-pounded cliffs the deep blue water of the lake stretches on for sparkling miles. The sun shimmers on the water like a summer full moon and wispy white clouds dance across the pale blue sky. I walked from our sheltered camp through soft moist meadows filled with brilliant patches of Arctic cotton to the steep shore at the N end of the island and sat atop a large rock looking out to “sea.”

Dreams, plans, awe contentedly flood my being and over it all, the strengthening conviction that to deny these moments of exhilaration and significance from my means of livelihood would wither too much of what has become my soul. Perhaps too yrs. too late; perhaps doomed to a mediocre life of impracticality; but in any case a whole, complete person. The service takes up the next two years. And then perhaps geology as a means to land in the West . . . this need not be Failure!

After dinner, another flare up; this time Art boyishly insisting that we have hot tea and finally, a complete breakfast before starting off at 4:30 AM mornings. At times we all seem to be too small for our jobs.

**Skip | August 26, Dubawnt Lake**

Left camp at 5 AM after breakfast and were met almost immediately by large, ocean-like rollers running the length of the lake and pounding against the weather shore of our tiny island. We were able to duck in behind another chain of islands for a few more miles. Midmorning brunch break was rather exciting; covey of four ptarmigan killed with a hunting
knife. And the grand booby prize of the trip to Pessl for swamping his canoe while standing up to put on a parka. Damn near tipped the whole works over. Cold hour spent drying slightly damp hardtack and very wet Skip after having to dive for dishes in about four feet of icy water. Warm sun soon took care of both and we were off again, stopping within an hour due to high winds and a nearby herd of caribou.

Made camp on a grassy slope of a large island sw of Outlet Bay; bagged a caribou and enjoyed ptarmigan stew for dinner.

Have generally adopted early morning departure, so early to bed.

**Peter | August 26, Dubawnt Lake**

While Skip was standing up taking a piss out of the canoe, he slipped and fell on the gunnel and the whole works almost went over. He got all wet and the canoe partly filled, but we soon got ashore and dried everything. We couldn't find any heather for a fire, but the dwarf birch works and that's everywhere.

While we were coasting in the lee of a large island, we spotted a caribou and Joe got out to kill it, but missed with his 30/30. We decided to camp here anyway, as the wind was too strong to travel. Bruce went out after lunch and killed a caribou conveniently close to the water where we could paddle right up and load him in the canoe.

I went for a walk that afternoon and just reveled in the beauty of these barren grounds with the sun on them. The golden grass and the deep blue of the lake make a lovely picture. Dubawnt Lake is becoming an idyllic place now.

**Skip | August 27, Dubawnt Lake**

Questionable winds and general early morning reluctance combined to form another beautiful day in camp.

Art was occupied with stretching his caribou skin and once again showed his rather annoying tendency to pass off personal preferences as group decisions; however, these things are minor, probably not even noticeable to one who had not built such an inspiration around one man.
By now I have placed myself beyond the group haggles and enjoy an easy feeling of “come what may,” which certainly eases most of my tensions but often leaves me with the role of arbitrator.

In the late afternoon Pete, Art and I paddled to the main land and spent about 3 hrs. roaming among the rather rare high ridges of this region. Game was abundant. Everywhere I looked caribou were moving about, birds were chattering and fluttering continually and I saw my first arctic fox with a shimmering blue-gray coat. Many sandhill cranes can be seen and overall the rich red & yellow of frost-nipped ground cover lent a beautiful reminder of the oncoming winter.

From the ridges, this immense country stretches on seemingly into the infinite. The grazing animals, endless plains and misty, unbroken horizon create an overwhelming surge of insignificance for this lone man wandering in strangeness and natural neutrality. Mankind seems to find its proper place again as merely one of the kingdom, and the false values of a hurried, blinded society easily fall away. The furious race for wealth and position seem ridiculous here and the contentment of simplicity certainly worth the sacrifice of an extra station wagon.

Peter | AUGUST 27, DUBAWNT LAKE

Another good day, but still a breeze from the south. We could have traveled, but Art declared a day of rest because he wanted to go over to the mainland and see what it is like; what animals he could get pictures of. Skip and I went with him.

I accepted the dictum of a day of rest with some reluctance. I am the only member of the party anxious to get to Baker Lake as soon as possible. The feeling is compounded of several causes; the biggest is that I would very much like to get to Harvard on time. I don't know why this should be. I don't like the place that much. Other factors are that I don't have enough warm clothes and no protection from the rain. Also, I want to get enough food as soon as I can. But the country is so beautiful now, it would be a shame to hurry through it.

Actually today turned out to be somewhat cloudy and not up to the high standards of the other days we have been having lately, but the
mainland was still fascinating. For some reason, it has been nipped by
the frost more than the island, so the autumn colors are much more
pronounced. The dwarf birch varies from a pale yellow to a deep russet
and the smaller ground cover plant is bright crimson. The grass is darker
yellow with a little orange in it, but on a dark day like this one, these
colors play a minor part and the dominant theme is a brownish-gray of
rolling hills stretching off into the distance.

We saw a lot of caribou. After lunch, we split up and I, after walking
off for quite a ways, sat down behind some rocks to rest. After a bit, I
looked up and saw a small calf not ten feet from me. Peeking over the
rocks, I saw two does and a fine buck join it. I could have killed any one
of them with a .22 or even a spear. The wind was blowing toward me and
they couldn't get my scent and slowly grazed right past.

Later that afternoon, I saw an Arctic fox at about twenty feet. We stood
and stared at each other for quite a while. Then he gave a little snort and
bounded off, looking at me over his shoulder. Arctic ground squirrels
were thick everywhere. They are just like prairie dogs. They sit up by their
holes and stare at you and then dive down with a little cry of warning.

When we got back to camp, we found Bruce with two big fish, 6 and
8 lb.

This afternoon on the mainland, I saw my first wolf. The open country
gives one a peculiar feeling when you see so much going on. It is like the
ants nest with glass sides. We could see the wolf stalking the caribou and
the caribou nervously keeping its distance. I am used to having things
hidden by the woods. It seems strange to stand on a hill and watch it all.

This caribou had more fat on him than the others and we could peel
enough off the neck and shoulders to fry the meat without bacon. I never
seem to grow tired of caribou as I think I would of beef. It has certainly improved our diet and saved us from feeling awfully hungry on a lot of nights.

**Skip | August 28, Outlet Bay**

AM. The last few days have been a delightful succession of sun, blue sky and warmth. The gentle rumble of rolling waves breaking on sandy beaches and rocky cliffs has constantly been in the air as background music to this leisurely time of hiking, hunting and extremely peaceful living.

A fine breakfast of oats, caribou liver, lake trout roe and tea sent us on an open water journey across two big bays of the lake. The waves were rolling large, but soft, in the gentle breeze, and the clear sky and bright sun created a brilliant setting of deep water and shimmering waves.

The wind freshened at noon and we pulled in to the lee of a large grassy island, where we will have lunch and wait for the wind to lessen.

As the water for fish chowder heats on the beach, off on a rocky point, the .22 cracks frequently as George does his best to provide us another ptarmigan dinner.

During the leisurely paddle this morning, I thought about the prospects of a career in forestry. It seems that there would be many aspects of the industry to survey and it might hold the key to my quest for a means of livelihood without the sacrifice of a way of life in nature and wilderness.

PM. We paddled continuously until 9 PM and reached the middle portion of Outlet Bay. Our camp is at the foot of a sizeable hill, which should provide a fine view if the morning is clear, and if the present darkness has not exaggerated too much.

We have now spent a week on this lake and have experienced north and south winds, both with w & e variations and have seen no sign of ice whatsoever. Ever since passing Tyrrell’s cairn at the south lake entrance, we have been expecting some sort of ice pack to appear on the horizon. But the conditions have been to the contrary; warm, sunny days defy any iceberg. I think this is indicative of more than a seasonal variation. Throughout Tyrrell’s journal he speaks of seeing patches of snow well to the south and he suffered his first snow storm on August 10. We are
fortunate to enjoy the warm change, even if it diminishes a bit of the romantic challenge of the trip.

**Peter | August 28, Outlet Bay**

We got off to a pretty late start today. Art was scraping his hide long after the rest of us were packed up and ready to go. It is a clear, fine day, still with the due south breeze. The waves on the open lake were big rollers again as we set off away from the land, heading east out toward a large island. We paddled for two hours without stopping and made it to this large island for lunch. There I climbed to the top and looked around for landmarks as we still didn’t know where we were. I got a beautiful view from here. I could see Outlet Bay far off in the distance and could pretty well tell where we were.

The deep blue of the water contrasting with the tawny hills made one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. While I was walking up the hill, I saw a few sitting ptarmigan, easy shots. When I walked closer, a flock of nine got up. By the time that I got to the bottom of the hill, George had killed seven. Apparently, the whole island is full of them.

We had a fish chowder for lunch using 15 lb. of fish Bruce had caught the day before and were so full we could hardly move. We have been living like kings off the land here. There is surely no danger of starvation as long as we can fish and hunt.

After an hour’s rest, we shoved off again, going east so as to get a favorable wind down the second island to the bay, the one on the east side. Art delayed for more pictures and then wasn’t sure about the way, but we made it 10 mi. further to a deep narrow bay behind a high hill, quite conspicuous from the water on the left side. By the time that we finally camped, it was dark. We tried the ptarmigan in the glop, just boiled, and they were delicious; better than broiled.

**Skip | August 29, Outlet Bay**

The leisurely breakfast of another “day off” saw us on our way to the top of the prominent hill overlooking our camp. And although it can only be
100–200 ft. high, it does afford a fine view and gives us some idea of the country to the north through which we will pass in a day or so.

The topography has changed once again from the ruddy conglomerate of a few miles south, to heavily bouldered granite gneiss piled high and sloping helter-skelter to the shore. Most of the boulders are covered with green, black and orange lichen, forming a desolate, but colorful, landscape. In the distance the land looks uniformly brown and forms a striking contrast with the rich blue water, which seems forever intent on gobbling up the entire landmass in its endless arms and bays.

We built a pretty big cairn atop the hill. Left a note inside and then spent the rest of the day wandering along the shore and nearby ridges.

Caught a few “lakers” for tomorrow’s breakfast and enjoyed a good portion of fried roe for lunch. We are able to cook small portions of food over very smoky, smoldering fires by using dried grasses for tinder, piling on dead bits of heather, and then stoking continually with green dwarf-birch twigs. The process is troublesome, but certainly worth a hot noonday meal.

The sun dips low in the West now as I sit on a sunny rock point and look south into the vastness through which we have traveled. Home is somewhere in that vastness, and memories, expectations of my future linger in my mind. Yet it is with much reluctance that I realize within 15–20 days this most fascinating experience will be a distant, lasting memory. As time goes on, these next few weeks become more and more precious and are filled with ever increasing activity so as to glean as much as possible from this land of wonder and fascination.

**Peter | August 29, Outlet Bay**

Windy this morning, so we stayed put. We made about 25 mi. the day before and are within 15 mi. of the mouth of the river, so everyone is feeling pretty pleased with themselves and the panic is off for a few days.

We all, except George, climbed a hill and built a cairn on top with a note inside. Then I took my lunch and set out for a walk cross country. It is a lovely country to walk on. Dry, hard clay underfoot with dwarf birch scarce enough so that they don’t get in one’s way. I had just gotten beyond
the next range of hills when I saw a heavy thunder shower was bearing down in the distance, so I turned back. I found a line of stone men, quite obviously man made. They must have been raised by the Eskimos, but I can’t imagine for what purpose. They couldn’t have been used for driving caribou because they were in a valley and too close together.

I got back to camp about 4:00 and was so hungry I succumbed to the temptation to eat my entire supply of extra food I had saved up. They were only a drop in the bucket.

Bruce and I had a long chat. It seems he is not anxious to get back to college because he has lost his knack for creative writing, which is his best subject, so he wants to take the year off and travel through Europe or maybe join the Army. I haven’t written a thing since the poem and story I wrote in sixth form year at St. Paul’s; just haven’t felt urge or have been too lazy when it came.

Bruce and I cut up the caribou meat and cooked dinner for Art as he was still out with his camera. I did the butchering, pulling the muscles of the hind legs as they came instead of cutting them off. It is quite a trick, but you get much better cuts that way.

A very pleasant, warm sunny day, but I would still like to see us do more traveling. I don’t want to be any later to college than I have to.

Skip | AUGUST 30, DUBAWNT RIVER

Heavy winds and rain squalls chased us back into the tents this morning just as we were finishing our second cup of coffee, and a good thing it was, for I had prepared such a huge breakfast that none of us could have moved much farther than the tents anyway. I felt as if I would have crashed right through the bottom of the canoe and sunk like a stone if we would have been loading.

Inside the tent, half-way inside the sleeping bag, caribou hide around my shoulders, pipe lit, I listened in a contented stupor to the storm outside. Warm, full and delightfully secure, it was one of those rare times when the tiny tent seems as spacious and impenetrable as a stone castle.

After a brief snooze to regain at least some of my food-chased senses,
I finished reading Willis’ book, *Across the Top of the World*. Names such as Misstaka, Takla Makass, Baltit, Nanga Parbat, Karakorum, Kaskin, Haindaz all hold suggestions of the completely new; things wonderful, things horrible. To think that over half the people in the world and more than half the land are completely foreign to me, not only in terms of experience, but even in imagination. All told Willis spent one night and 2 days on foot crossing Misstaka Pass, and although his back injury and treatment throughout Sinkiang were painful and discomforting, the trip itself was made almost entirely by train, auto and horse, and his periods of deprivation were always offset by intervals of lavish hospitality . . . not too bad!

After lunch, skies cleared and we enjoyed one more rare “shirts off” day as we paddled the remaining 15 miles across the bay to the outlet of the lake; warm, slight breezes . . . exhilarating; and as we approached the narrowing, we gradually became conscious of the increasing current while in the distance the almost forgotten river sounds of rushing water and rumbling rapids gradually became audible.

We are back on the river now, floating on a current strengthened by the entire drainage of the huge lake and driving toward the long, treacherous 2½-mile outlet rapid flowing through a steep canyon and finally settling in Grant Lake.

*Peter | AUGUST 30, DUBAWNT RIVER*

Raining when I woke up, but we had breakfast just the same, a heavy one with lots of fish and roe. We are getting low on gas now. Skip thinks we have enough for less than a week at our present rate of consumption.

After breakfast, I borrowed Shaw’s “Man and Superman” from Skip and read through that in the tent all morning. I find him very entertaining and witty with his cynical Irish wit, but somehow rather meaningless with no depth to what he says.

By lunch, things had begun to clear up some and we finally got off about 4:00 in sunlight, heading for the mouth of the river. We took our time, catching fish on the way, and got to the mouth of the river in
lovely clear weather about 7:00. For the first time in many weeks, we were troubled with black flies when we landed, but these soon stopped when the sun went down.

I think part of the reason I am so anxious to get to Baker Lake is because I am tired of being in a group so long. I want to do things my own way, when and how I please, instead of having to wait or hurry up for everyone else. I have been thinking of my walking trips in the Sierras recently as a lot of fun. I was lonely, but I was my own master and I did my traveling and cooking on my own without feeling dependent upon someone else. I guess this desire to do things alone is a natural product of being in the same bunch for so long, but I would like to do some camping alone again soon, particularly the cooking.

**Skip | August 31, Dubawnt River**

Beautiful morning of sun and successful rapid shooting gave us high hopes that we would be camped this evening at the beginning of the long portage to Grant Lake. Two long rapids before lunch and a long difficult one after were negotiated with little trouble and we then pulled up in a bay to scout the approach to the gorge.

I spent about 3 hours walking along the river, sketching routes through the remaining rapids and finally reached a high bluff where the portage follows the rim of the gorge. I was walking alone, sun was hot, a gentle breeze blowing, and I gazed down into the foaming pool below. Here I was, standing on a spot where few, if any, white men had ever been. How many would ever experience the cascading beauty of this scene; the rocky barrens as the background, with scattered caribou roaming slowly southward; dark shadows of large trout disturb the crystal clear reflections of the still waters, and the boiling surges of the roar beyond. Over my right shoulder the turquoise water of Grant Lake stretches as an enticing reward for the coming strenuous portage. Cortez, Balboa, Nansen, Drake all seemed within my grasp. Finally I broke the spell, took off my woolen shirt and long underwear for the hot return to the canoe, left them under a rock, and hurried back to the others.

When I reached them, the wind had shifted slightly and a strengthening
wind was blowing. Try as I may, I couldn’t impress upon the rest the necessity to hurry; the mood of the early day was not to be broken so easily. And by the time we were on the river, the wind was very strong and gusty.

The first rapid was run under very difficult conditions due to the wind and its effect on the waves, and we were forced to make camp on the opposite (w) bank of the river in the lee of the approaching nw storm, just a few miles from my beauty spot and, incidentally, from my shirt and underwear. We were lucky to find some dry birch twigs on this bank however, and with 5 stoking and one cooking, were able to cook a meal without the use of our precious fuel supply.

It seems that we are continually faced with some shortage problem. Now that we have rationed our food supply sufficiently for the remainder of the trip, we are running out of gas. Estimate about 3 days supply left. Woe is me . . . raw meat is not too bad, but raw oats and macaroni may be too much!

The birch grows very twisted and low to the ground and generally has a few dead branches in each cluster. These are about the size of a pencil at the thickest. We collect them in bundles; break them into 6” sections and pile them under and around the sides of the pot . . . then the chore begins, to keep ahead of the flame and not run out of sticks. Oh for a good solid pine log!

Peter | August 31, Dubawnt River

Still warm and sunny today. We got going down the river fairly early. I looked over the first rapid and then went ahead, while Skip stayed behind to wait for Art. I just got through the first rapid when I remembered I had forgotten my hide. It was too late, I thought, to go back and I was sure Art would see it anyway, so I kept on going through the next two. Then I stopped to look one over that went around a bend to the right. It looked easy to shoot on the right side, so I walked down to look at the next. I didn’t really take a careful look, but what I did see looked easy, so I walked back to where I had left the canoe. By this time, Art and Skip had caught up. They got out to look at the first one, but took my word that
the next was easy, so I jumped in the canoe and shot down first. Either I got too far to the left or I had underestimated the power of the rapid, or both. Anyway, we hit some awfully big waves and took in more than an inch of water. I pulled over to dump and Skip pulled over to look at the next one I had said was easy. It turned out that the waves were much bigger and more powerful than I had thought. We decided to wait for Art and then run it close to the right shore, just missing a big wave on the right coming out from the shore.

While we were walking back from looking at the rapids, Skip saw a gray wolf on the far side of the river, running upstream. Apparently, Art saw it too because he stayed put and took pictures. By this time, I was getting rather worried about my hide as Art said he hadn’t seen it. I was on the point of walking back 4 mi. when Art came around the bend and finally produced it, saying, “Let this be a lesson, etc.” Feeling much relieved, I enjoyed lunch.

Then Skip shot through the first rapid with Art taking pictures by the big wave. Skip got through with a little water by going outside the wave with plenty of clearance. I thought I could do better than this, so I started out close to the shore, thinking the current would carry me out around the wave. Unfortunately, it did nothing of the kind and I hit the outside of the white breaker. A big sheet of water crashed down into the canoe. We took about two inches of water right there. I kept on going, but the canoe was awfully sluggish and there were a lot more waves ahead. I just hung on and tried to avoid the worst. Once we almost tipped over and more water kept sloping in. We finally made calm water and pulled up with about three inches of water in the bottom. Fortunately none of the supplies had gotten wet, only both our personal packs. George was a very surly boy when he pulled his stuff out and found his books soaking wet.

I left him to brood and climbed up on the bank to see if I could find the best spot to portage. I walked a long way and couldn’t find much. Black flies were very bad. Skip came in later and said the best plan would be to go down the river, shoot the next two rapids and start the portage just above the gorge where the river becomes impassable for 2.5 mi. We went on down a lovely wide stretch of the river, one of the most beautiful spots in it that I have seen yet. The banks are about thirty feet high on
both sides and drop steeply to the river, which flows swift and calm. It is like going through a great tunnel. Then the wind started to come up and was blowing hard in our faces when we got to the first rapid. We shot it all right on the left, but the wind made things very hard. The head of the portage was only a mile on past the second rapid, but we didn’t want to try shooting the second rapid in this high wind, so we pulled over to the left bank (portage was on the right) for protection and made camp.

Landing was poor, but the spot we picked turned out to be an old Eskimo campsite with quite conspicuous and well-made tent rings of rocks piled in a perfect circle.

It looks like we are in for some bad weather tonight; a strong wind from the west blowing in heavy clouds.

**Skip | September 1, Dubawnt River**

The twig marathon continued for breakfast, complicated somewhat by a driving rain joining the cold, windy day about one-half way through the preparations. It was a cold and miserable cook who crawled back into the tent after gulping a few spoonfuls of oats and quantities of hot tea. Stayed there until 3 PM when we had a bowl of soup for lunch.

Rain stopped and after running like crazy through the boulders and grass to get warm, I caught enough fish for a late dinner of chowder and tea. The caribou must think we are crazy, running like hell, arms waving and feet stomping with no particular direction in mind, just zig-zagging, to get the circulation going again. Times like this, I think they must be right in heading south.

As I look out the tent to windward, there seems to be a light streak far on the horizon; perhaps tomorrow will dawn clear and we will be able to reach the gorge at last, and maybe also a soggy shirt and underwear??

**Skip | September 2, Dubawnt River**

Another bitch of a day, worse than yesterday by a long shot. Wind, rain, cold from dawn to darkness with very few intervals of relative calm. During one of those elusive moments about noon, I crawled out and
began preparing our first meal of the day. Hot oats seemed appropriate. Building the tiny birch fire in a high wind with wet twigs just about ended the attempt, but finally got her going and the water heating when a terrific gale hit; driving rain and wind so hard that the canoes were lifted off the ground and sent tumbling down the rocky shore. At the very height of the storm, the pot somehow came to a boil and rather than give up, I sat there in the rain stirring a god damned pot of oats.

The rest were mustered out to secure the canoes and when that was finished, we all ate cold oats in the rain.

Back to the tents until a brief patch of sun drew us out like ground hogs late in the day. It remained clear until we were ready to eat our fish soup for dinner and then down it came again . . . “piss pot”!

September certainly is not very kind in its beginning; but the moon rose clear and full, so high expectations for tomorrow.

**Peter | September 2, Dubawnt River**

Raining again and blowing hard this morning. The clouds are high and moving fast, but there seems to be no end to them, still quite cold. I couldn’t keep warm sitting outside under the canoe, though my clothes are fairly dry. I am wearing everything I own now. I just put on my last sweater.

After lunch, things finally began to clear up and by 3:30 it was sunny and warm again, however there was still too much wind to move. Since we arrived at this spot, we have been using dwarf birch for firewood. It grows quite thick and tall here. It is a terrible nuisance to cook for six people on. You have to break off all the little twigs and just use the main stems and even then, you get a smoking fire that goes out unless it is tended constantly. However, it is better than nothing, so we are saving what little gas we have left for later on when we may not be able to find anything else to burn.

After it stopped raining, I did a little fishing and caught a nice trout in front of camp. We don’t know what kind of fish these are. They look somewhat like the lake trout we have been catching, but there is a definite difference. The lake trout have much bigger heads with larger mouths.
The markings on the sides are in the same pattern, but the lake trout has white sides while these trout are dark all the way down to the belly and reddish there. They look pale golden when they are still alive and fighting in the water. The lake trout is not as heavily built or as deep bellied as these. They are longer and skinnier. These new fish we are calling Arctic char, though they might well be something else.

After I caught this fish, I walked down along the river to where it really narrows down and the impassable heavy rapids begin. It is impossible to describe the tremendous force and beauty of this long rapid. The channel narrows to about 25 yd. and enormous waves, 10 ft. high, shoot up. The whole river is a mass of white water rushing between the steep rock cliffs. The huge waves, building up and crashing down, have a hypnotic effect. One loses all sense of time and just stands looking in a daze.

When I did finally tear myself away, it was dinner time and more big thunderstorms were massing up to the south and west. On the way back, I noticed lots of driftwood along the shore. It must be branches that have broken off the dwarf trees at flood time in the Spring and then left along the banks.

This morning before breakfast, the wind was so strong that it picked up my canoe and blew it, rolling over and over, and bouncing high in the air, up the bank away from the river about 50 yd. I was so amazed, I just stood there for a bit. Then Bruce came running out and helped me put it back down in a hollow. This evening we talked about what we might do if all three canoes were blown into the river some night and lost. We figured we were only about 100 mi. as the crow flies from Baker Lake, with no other big rivers than the Dubawnt to cross, so we could theoretically walk out easily in ten days; but following the river, we have 200 mi. left as we swing westward before we start back east. Also, we still have 70 mi. north in a straight line to go before we get through.

**Skip | September 3, Dubawnt River**

Another day of the same hellish weather, and after suffering through another breakfast, I crawled back into the tent and slept until 3 PM when soup was served for lunch.
Just couldn't go back to the tent, so bundled up, took an empty packsack and went on a long wood hunt. Felt like an old rag collector with my cotton-pickin' bag slung over my shoulder and eyes glued on the ground for any stray twig. Was quite successful with the twigs and, as is so often the case, found that once underway, a cold, rainy day is not nearly as bad as it looks from inside a tent.

Much to my surprise I saw my shirt and underwear on the other bank, so I hurried back to camp, got Bruce and we paddled to the other shore where I recovered my belongings.

While we were there, we walked down to the gorge and stood spellbound under the force of the mighty river fighting its way through the narrow rock passage. I have never experienced such an expression of power and unalterable force. Even in the gloom of this day, the white foam swirled in beautiful contrast to the dark rock and light green water.

Returned to camp as another shower dampened dinner. These last few days of forced inactivity were useful in as much as we were able to discover quite a few Eskimo camp remains in the near vicinity, marking this place as an ancient campsite. Numerous stone tent rings are situated in the lea of a cliff. The stones are arranged in a near perfect circle about 10' in diameter and served to anchor the outer edge of a tent. Close to the area, we also found a stone kayak rack made of stones placed in a series of twos, forming a bench on which a boat could be placed. Stone-lined holes, perhaps for storing meat, were nearby, and I picked up what seems to be the coaming of a large kayak.

*Peter | September 3, Dubawnt River*

Raining again this morning. It’s more a heavy mist than rain, blowing along close to the ground. Still a strong wind too and very cold. Art and I talked about making the portage on this side of the river, starting this afternoon, but I don't think anything will come of it. Art is full of talk about traveling rapidly now that the weather is cold, but I think he is one of the slowest and laziest among us. He always manages to rationalize us out of traveling when he doesn't feel like it.

After lunch Skip and I got empty pack sacks and walked down river
to gather driftwood. It is quite abundant in some spots and we had no
trouble filling our bags. It is quite easy to stay warm once you get out
and do something, but sitting around camp, the chill settles in again
quickly enough.

The fishing is fantastic when you hit a good spot. Just before dinner,
I made four casts and got three fine trout. They are in lovely shape with
lots of fat under the skin.

_Skip | September 4, Dubawnt River_

Snow greeted me this morning as I crawled out of the tent into a harsh
flurry. A tiny drift had accumulated on the leeward side of the tent and
the rocks and moss were all covered with fine flakes. Water bucket was
frozen solid and throughout the preparation of breakfast, I was working
in the face of flurries.

After breakfast, we loaded in the snow, shot one rapid in the midst of
a heavy flurry and then unloaded for the long portage.

By lunch the skies had cleared and the sun warmed things considerably.
Canoes were carried along the rim of the gorge in dazzling sunshine
. . . many photos; a sight I’ll never forget. The dark, unmovable stone walls
meeting with sudden violence the infinite power of the river, foaming
white against solid black rock; thrashing turquoise against swirling blue
and foaming ice-green water exploding into dancing bubbles, finally
disappearing in a misty rainbow. The river finally breaks its bonds and
flows gently into Grant Lake, stretching 8–10 miles to the north.

Weather permitting, we will complete the portage tomorrow and, after
a parting visit, leave this magnificent spot.

_Peter | September 4, Dubawnt River_

Very cold last night and this morning. There was thick ice on the water
bucket and lots of snow coming down in flurries all during breakfast. It
still melts when it hits the ground, but at the rate we are going, it probably
will be staying there by the time we arrive at Baker.

After a lot of fussing around with his camera, Art finally got ready
and we pulled over to the other side and stopped to look over the last rapid before the portage started. We ran it close to the right side, but by the time that we got through and over to the head of the portage, it was 2:00 and time for lunch.

It is still cold sitting around, but the clouds are breaking up some and a little sun is getting through. There was no wind, so we took over the canoes, getting one load each across this afternoon, except for Art who took pictures of the portage. It was really quite beautiful. The sky cleared up completely and the portage was almost all dry. A pleasant walk over open prairie with the rapids thundering along all white among the black rocks. At one point, about half way, there is a sandy plateau and from here you can look back and see the rapids for about a mile; a white narrow stream cutting through the rocks. Then about even with the plateau, it becomes slower with big beautiful green pools, a fall of a few feet, then another pool. Finally it spreads out and runs into Grant Lake over a shallows.

The most beautiful portage I have ever made and the most beautiful spot on the river so far. To the north, the hills behind Grant Lake are all red with dwarf birch, some of them quite steep and rugged for this country.

After the cold stormy weather we have been having, this break was delightful and everyone was in high spirits and full of good predictions about the weather for the rest of the trip. Even I am not in such a hurry to move now, though I know I am getting later and later for college every day. There is almost no chance that I will make it on time now.

It gets quite cold when the sun goes down, even though this is a relatively warm evening. Everyone goes to bed early.

---

*Skip | September 5, Grant Lake*

Breaking ice in the water bucket and melting milk from the night before has become regular morning chore now. The first one-half hour before the fire is really perking and the oats cooking is pretty grim business. I certainly will appreciate coming down the stairs into a warm room with breakfast right there in front of me.
We spent the better part of the day completing the portage and the late afternoon killing and butchering what will probably be our last caribou. The animals have very considerately kept right with us in spite of the cold weather. The berries and mushrooms have long since shriveled and disappeared, but the caribou remain for the pot.

We are now cooking all our meals on the green dwarf birch twigs and have pretty well worked into the laborious collecting and stoking routine.

Sugar ration has been cut again, while Art continues to snitch.

Memo for future trips: load up on starches and seasoning, and easy on the meat. We have plenty of meat but very little else and after an extended period even great quantities of meat are not very satisfying.

Wool sweater supplements long underwear and pajamas at night.

Peter | September 5, Grant Lake

Still sunny this morning, but cold. A heavy layer of ice on the water bucket as there has been for the last few days. I got underway right after
breakfast and got my two loads across long before lunch. Again, Art is the only one holding up the works with two more loads to go by lunch.

After lunch, it started to cloud over from the north, but it was still quite calm. Still Art was taking so long that we decided not to travel this afternoon, but to camp here at the end of the portage and kill a caribou; not a particularly wise thing in my mind as good traveling weather is becoming awfully scarce.

Still, I settled down to enjoy the afternoon by fishing. I had caught only three tiny trout and grayling in an hour and was about to give up, but tried one more pool and hooked an enormous Arctic char on my first cast. I played him for at least half an hour, and he went a shade under 15 lb. We had this fish for dinner and he was enough for the six of us. Bruce came in about the same time I landed the fish saying he had shot a caribou and he went back to butcher it.

Things have turned cold and cloudy with thunder showers again, so we are back in the Arctic autumn once more.

Skip | September 6, Grant Lake at Chamberlin River

Got a late start this morning due to our unconscious reluctance to head out amid cold, driving snow. But after an hour or so of vigorous paddling, we were warm enough to really enjoy a cold, brisk and remarkably refreshing day.

First off, Bruce and I shot a rocky rapid flowing into the lake. We struck a rock just after leaving shore and were able to stop in an eddy to check for damage; and when a brief check showed no water, we started out again, this time making it with no trouble.

Art and Pete watched from shore. Art chose to portage. Pete shot the rapid, hit a rock in the shoals below and splintered a plank.

A heavy wind out of the North kept us from making any real progress and after a lunch of hardtack, etc., and tea, we were pushed against the shore.

About 4 pm we spotted a large animal on a nearby ridge and after cautiously approaching the shore, we were all thrilled to see our first barren ground grizzly. This is a tremendous animal, especially at this season just
before hibernation. He must weigh at least as much as a horse, extremely thick throughout his forward body; a prominent hump just forward of his shoulder emphasizes his huge neck and powerful forequarters and a beautiful late-season coat, shimmering and rippling, even in the dull light of the snow laden sky. A light-colored area begins on each shoulder and extends forward down each foreleg to the gigantic paws. The total appearance is one of tremendous power coupled with amazing agility.

Art, of course, was wrapped around his telephoto lens and while the rest remained in the canoes, I followed behind Art with the Leica. Quite a comical pantomime, the bear grazing from bush to bush with the unconcern of complete confidence and two rather cautious, crouching forms approaching with noses glued to cameras. It was wonderful; we got very close before he saw us and then he merely looked, sat down, “thought it over,” ambled closer to satisfy his curiosity, and then making a tremendous picture silhouetted full length against the sky to examine these strange intruders. We played ring around each other for a while until the bear worked downwind of us and within 100’ or so. Then instead of running from the human scent, he continued right for us. Rather than be caught with the bear between us and the canoes, Art and I ran for the shore, and this sudden movement was enough to turn the bear and send him scampering over the rocks along the shore and out of sight.

Made camp at the mouth of the Chamberlin River and were happily surprised to find large quantities of driftwood. Have plenty for morning in addition to two full packsacks which we will carry with us and hoard as long as possible.

When we unloaded the canoe, I found that the morning rock had splintered the planking and cracked a rib pretty badly, so the few remaining hours of daylight were spent in makeshift repair. I certainly enjoy this crude carpentry. Hope my future has an old fence or something that will call for a little puttering.

*Peter* | *September 6, Grant Lake at Chamberlin River*

Cold and rainy; only a slight mist though. I took a walk after breakfast to warm up and noticed the wind was quite high and against us on Grant
Lake, but Art decided to travel just the same. He hung in his tent long after the rest of us were ready to go, so we didn’t leave until 11:00. Skip and I decided to shoot down through what was left of the rapid into Grant, while Art made a portage and started further down to warm up. Skip went first, but struck against a rock at the head of the rapid. He got the rest of the way down and started paddling up against the wind, so apparently no great damage was done. I shoved off and got further out in the middle, but I struck head on and bounced over a rock about half way down. It sounded awful, but when we looked later, we found that there was a little piece of the planking knocked in, but the ribs weren’t broken and the canvas wasn’t cut; no serious damage. The rest of the rapid was all dangerously shoal with barely enough water for the canoe, but we got through all right. Skip and I pulled up to wait for Art and had lunch when he joined us. Then we shoved off and started up the shore again. Progress was heartbreakingly slow as the wind was dead against us.

We had gone maybe 1.5 mi. when we saw a barren ground grizzly on the shore; an enormous bear with silvery fur around the shoulders. He had a thick layer of fat built up already and shimmered all over when he moved. We pulled over right away and Skip and Art got out to get pictures. Before he saw us, he was wandering around in a lazy way feeding on the hillside every now and then. He would sit down on his seat, just like a toy bear, and look around in a most comic way. When he did see Art and Skip, he got up right away and started walking over to see what we were. All of a sudden, he started running toward us and Art was so nervous, he could hardly work the camera. When he got fairly close, he stopped and stood up on his hind legs to have a better look at us. He certainly seemed enormous and he probably tried to get downwind of us. The wind was blowing right toward us off the land, because he walked down to the shore and on to a spit of land just below us, about 50 yd. away. Finally something scared him and he took off over the hills at a terrific pace. A man could never keep away from him by running, if he charged. He got out of sight in no time at all.

Then Art settled down close to a ptarmigan to wait for the sun, while George shot two others. When I got ready to clean them, I found my knife was gone, then remembered I had used it last at lunch and must
have left it there, so back I went at a half-run, half-walk and found it there. On my way back, I picked up a good bundle of driftwood.

After we left this spot, we fought the headwinds for another two or three miles and then decided to camp at the mouth of the Chamberlin River. Tyrrell said that there were willows on this river and sure enough, when I walked up wood gathering, I found them. Some were at least ten feet tall, but they were low down by the water and there was no dry, dead wood on them; all green. When I came back to the mouth of the river, Bruce had been gathering driftwood there and had quite a pile. I guess all of the dead wood gets washed down by the Spring floods and is left in the eddy at the mouth of the river. Working together, Bruce and I filled three pack sacks with good wood, in addition to what we needed for dinner and breakfast; enough for three days if we are careful. Still overcast and quite cold when we turned in, but not windy.

*Skip* | **September 7, Grant Lake**

This warm, sunny morning was replaced by a sudden squall just about the time we were ready to pull out, and we spent the next few hours until after lunch huddled under our canoes while the driving rain and damp cold slowly seeped into our bones. While sitting there, the question of traveling in the rain was kicked around in a variety of terms; most revolving around the uncomfortable, immediate situation, the vague possibility of freezing our feet if we remained in this country for very much longer, and the fuel supply. But the sun soon appeared before anything was decided and we moved on half-helped and half-hindered by a gusty West wind.

Five miles later, we spotted a cache of oil drums on the far shore which upon closer inspection turned out to be the remnants of Ray Moore’s last camp. Along with the gasoline, also found a large quantity of dehydrated vegetables. I was very disappointed in the general lack of respect for a cache which the guys showed here. No thought whatsoever was given to the possible purpose of the supplies, only the self-centered joy of finding more food. Turns out some vague mention of leftovers had passed between Art and Ray in Ottawa and so we took the whole shebang. Hope a wandering Eskimo doesn’t go hungry.
Saw three beautiful white wolves on a nearby ridge early in the day. They certainly look well-fed.

**Peter | September 7, Grant Lake**

Cloudy and a strong wind from the northwest. Cold as usual. Skip found that he had a broken rib when he hit a rock in the last rapid, and so he patched that up this morning. On top of a steep esker across the river from camp, we saw three white wolves right after breakfast. They stood there in silhouette against the skyline for quite some time. This hill is only about 200 or 300 yd. from camp and I could see them quite clearly. Art was going to go over and take pictures, but then it clouded in heavily, so we decided to pull out and travel instead. Unfortunately, just as George and I finished loading and shoved off, it started to rain and everyone else got under Skip’s canoe which was still on shore. We came back and piled under it before it really started and waited for something to happen. It just kept on, so after an hour, we started to debate about traveling in the rain. George, I and Art for; the rest against.

At last the rain stopped before we could reach any conclusion, so we had lunch and got going. When we reached the foot of the big esker at the mouth of the river, we saw some red gas drums on the beach and pulled over. Behind them, we found a cache of dried vegetables apparently left there by Ray Moore. We tried the gas cans and found a little, but all leaded, which would clog the stove, but George said that he used Coleman stoves with leaded gas in the Army and they worked for at least 10 hours before clogging, so we filled our five-gallon can and put the remaining white gas in jam cans.

It looked like rain, so we decided to camp at the end of a narrow bay cutting back into the esker. From the cache we had gotten twenty-four enormous cans of dried vegetables, more than we could possibly eat. We tried cooking one can for dinner and it filled two pots by the time we got all the meat and a handful of Catelli in. We started eating with relish, but the vegetables soon palled and only Joe could finish what was left. Even he nearly got sick that night. I don’t care if I never see another vegetable, except onions; I still crave them.
AM. Rainy breakfast and the prospect of clearing skies in the near future send us to the tents for a lazy, relatively calm wait. Bruce is curled up in his sleeping bag beside me; heavy breathing and a few irregular snorts indicate a contented post-breakfast snooze. I sit, half crouched against my rolled-up sleeping bag with the air mattress beneath me for protection against the cold ground and an occasional puddle of water which accumulated in the numerous depressions on the floor during a night of steady rain. Caribou hide draped over my legs and feet. Small droplets of water condense on the inside of the tent and run in tiny streams down to the floor while the smoke from my stoking pipe rises slowly into a bluish cloud along the ridge pole. Partially dry socks and shirts lay along the edges of the floor after spending another night in my sleeping bag during the long and not too successful process of drying. My boots have by this time become more like well-used sponges than any resemblance to leather, and as the days go on, the sole gradually separates from the disintegrating stitches. We are all pretty much in the same boat; no one boot standing the tough treatment any better than the others. Consequently our feet are always cold and the stinging ache of damp cold is as much a part of the routine as anything else; will certainly enjoy toasting dry feet in front of a roaring fire once again.

Our little candle “stove” is flickering between us now, sending long shadows darting across the white fluttering walls; it seems as if the wind is freshening and the rain has stopped. So we will pack up soon (I hope) and be on our way.

PM. Intermittent showers kept us in camp until 4 PM, but we were able to wander about somewhat between the rains and found quite an extensive archaeological site. None of us are experts by any means, but we have been picking up the most obvious specimens and by now can distinguish some distinctive characteristics. We’re also generally able to recognize fragments of implements from mere chippings. It is interesting to note how the quality of the tool changes as it becomes more recent. High up on an old wave-cut bank the work is near perfect while lower down on more recent beaches the pieces seem less complex, more crude.
Before we left the States, Art had arranged that Elmer Harp, Dartmouth Archaeology Faculty, would have a look at whatever we could collect, so we’ll learn more after he has finished with whatever we can bring back.

The highlight of our wanderings for me was a musk ox skull complete with horns, which I found in a grassy meadow high on the main esker of the region. Hope I will be able to pack it out during the rest of the trip.

We are camped above a rocky rapid on a very exposed boulder plain and as I write, the wind and driving snow-rain intensifies. The tent shudders and the nearby “tarp-cook house” flaps violently. Sleep tonight will be restless at best.

*Peter | September 8, Wharton Lake*

Cloudy and cold this morning. After breakfast, Art and I spent nearly the whole morning looking for artifacts on the esker. At beach level, Art found traces of an old oven or a cooking hole, along with a few points. Then we looked over the high part of the esker and on the very summit, I found a few points, one fine small arrowhead and a blade, along with quite a few fragments of other arrowheads.