

1975

LAKE ALBANEL TO JAMES BAY AT EASTMAIN

*via Wabassinon River, Shigami River, Eastmain River, Kawatstakau River,
Lac Daru, Lac Quentin, "Riviere du Loup", Riviere Sakami, Sakami Lake,
Opinaca River, Eastmain River*

Corrections and Additions to 1973 Trip Report

PRELIMINARIES -- North Bay (June 20-23)

Campground and outfitting in North Bay as in 1973. We checked with Central Truck and found that if we sent our food, it would again take 2-4 days extra because of St. Jean Baptiste day in Quebec. We settled on renting a U-Haul trailer in North Bay which had to be returned to Val d'Or. There are no longer any rental stations in Chibougamau. Cost was about \$40.00 including a \$10 deposit which was returned in Val d'Or.

North Bay to Lac Albanel (June 24-25)

We left North Bay on Tuesday morning, June 24. Transportation for our party of 6 was provided by Win's International Crew Cab truck which has seating for 6 and a 1.5 ton capacity. We loaded personal gear and two canoes on the truck and food and one canoe on the trailer. We had breakfast in Temagami and made it to Val d'Or the first day. We camped on the beach of a lake about six miles outside of Val d'Or at no charge and ate in town, though we could have cooked at the campsite if we had wanted. Not a particularly great area, but good for our purpose.

We checked in at the U-Haul station, where M. Puissey, the garage owner, proved to be of great service. We ended up engaging his son-in-law, complete with wife and baggage, to drive us to Lac Albanel and return the whole rig to Val d'Or for \$40.00. He also stored Win's truck on his lot for two months at no charge. The next morning we set out for Lac Albanel, making Chibougamau by mid-afternoon, where we obtained fishing licenses, dinner, and purchased last minute supplies. We arrived at Lake Albanel several hours before sunset, unloaded, sent the rig on its way back, paid the usual \$3.00 for the night, and set up our tents. One of the fishermen gave us five extra lake trout for our breakfast.

Day 1

Lac Albanel to Albanel Rapids (1/2 day)

At first long portage out of Albanel, trail from campsite by rapids is completely covered with deadfalls. Used trail from bay -- 35 chains -- and still had to clear five or six.

Day 2

Albanel Rapids to Island in Middle of Mistissini

Second long portage is 45 chains. Pond is half way. Some Indians saw the three girls at the end of the portage and came back to half way to help them carry their loads. Two of the older Indians carried two wannigans each, a minimum of 250 pounds, lifting the second over their heads to put it on top of the first. One of the "officials" from Vieux Poste came over to offer us the hospitality of the Post and store (which we declined) but he never asked us about permits or charged us for travel. We had to hold up at the point on the east shore of Mistissini and made dinner while waiting for the wind. After dinner we crossed and made camp on the northeast side of the small island in the middle of the lake.

Day 3

Island in Middle of Mistissini to First Portage on Wabassinon

We waited until mid-afternoon for the wind to go down, then made the crossing. Two hours to campsite at end of portage.

Day 4

First Portage on Wabassinon to Third Portage on Wabassinon

At lift over above campsite, left side of island is fastest, but if there are many canoes, some can portage on right shore.

Good looking Indian site on left shore opposite creek at "b" of Wabassinon.

Day 5

Third Portage on Wabassinon to 12 chain Portage in Baudeau Water

Two pull ups *before* pond -- river takes out on right of pond, not far end as map shows. Then one paddle up before split. Good Indian campsite on right bank fifty yards before portage. Fair one at start of portage, poor one at end.

Day 6

12 Chain Portage in Baudeau Water to End of Fifty Chain Portage (1/2 day)

At ledge after four chain carry, canoes were run through ledge about 1/3 way out from right shore. Long portage is fifty chains.

Day 7

Fifty Chain Portage to North End of Baudeau

Rocky chute and rock dodger below passed by eight chain portage in shallow bay on left 50 yards before start of rapids. Bad shallow unloading, winding rocky trail.

Lac Baudeau -- Indian campsite 1/4 mile from point on high bank about two miles down ... looked good.

Day 8

North End of Lac Baudeau to First Marked Rapids on Shigami

Decent Indian campsite on right across from creek mouth about one mile before portage around first marked rapid.

Day 9

First Marked Rapid on Shigami to Indian Campsite three Miles Before Eastmain Cutoff

Campsite area still OK but deteriorating -- apparently not used in last two years.

Day 10

Indian Campsite To Pond Below Second Double Marked Rapids

[NOTE -- Shigami River route to Eastmain is probably preferable to portage route in all but extra high water. Our water was high, but a foot below the banks. If water were over banks, it would be very hard to let down or get in to portages in some places. This is an Indian route. We did find portages in key places.]

First rapid of first double marked R -- top section: Two V's on left shot down center, then into bay on left. The first pitch was easy -- then moved a bit to right of tail for line on second larger pitch -- good swells, no problem. Then from bay followed fast water around corner on left as close to shore as possible -- no obstruction. Then scouted last part -- ran down by left shore outside swells at bottom as much as possible. Rapid would be rough in very high water, but otherwise probably OK in any water.

Second rapid of first double marked R let down on right to ledge, then lifted over. Runoff a little out toward center to avoid rock bar on right at bottom.

Could portage each of the above rapids by getting into burn on left. Someone else has done it. Not at all good, but probably necessary in very high water.

About two miles below at southernmost part of bend creek comes in on left in pretty double falls. Rock for lunch site.

Turning west just beyond, there are three rapids before the next double marked R. FIRST rapid at small islands -- left channel is easy. Others are steeper and rockier. SECOND rapid at narrows just below -- follow current down S of black water in center -- no obstruction. Can scout from right shore first. THIRD rapid, just before double marked R -- shot toward right going out near end. Can be scouted from round rock hill on right.

Large double marked rapid follows immediately. Pull in on right. This is a large gorge-type rapid portaged on right thirty chains on faint trail in burn. We cut a trail up hill at start. Aiming point from top of hill is large rock with small birches on top about 2/3 way across. Route often bends unexpectedly to keep to good walking, and comes out on small flat rock in bay below. Probably best to take canoes last and perhaps scout route before carrying.

Big river horse races and fast current below for 1.5 miles until river widens. Bur ends.

Campsite on exposed rock on left just into wide part. Room for four to five tents squeezed. Good swimming.

Day 11

Below Second Double Marked Rapid to Junction with Eastmain

Next double marked rapid -- FIRST rapid is just a smooth V taken just around tip of rock point (or island?).

SECOND rapid has 12 chain portage on right running from bay at start to below on faint old trail. We let down to edge of drop off, portage one chain over rock and then through edge of alder, and then let down and shot remainder on right shore. Runoff at bottom in center. Could probably camp at top of one of these rapids.

At large island, we took right (north) channel. Rapids begin where first island shows on map. We went left around a rock point and then stopped on small island in center below with rapid running around both sides. Left side of island too large. Right side easy run just off rocks on left. Smooth run to left of all white water. In longer rapid below we followed left shore, then walked canoes down left shore, then four of us lifted them through rocks at bottom. Next time try left (?)

Next large island -- take left channel. Fast current leads to rapid as marked. Take out on rock point on left shore -- good swimming and lunch site. Large untouchable rapid curving around point passed by good 20 chain portage up and over hill cutting corner. Some clearing needed at start and end -- otherwise on well established trail through labrador.

After passing bay and small rapid where right channel comes back in, next marked rapid begins at rock on left. We shot slowly around rock and down to next rock ledge drop off. We then carried one chain over rock and let down remainder. We could have shot except for current pushing up on rock bar at bottom.

Clear to last (unmarked) rapid around island at Eastmain junction. Right side of island too large. We let down on left side of left channel and then ran bottom. Could shoot top in V to left of center, but it was late in day, and we did not take time to scout first.

Campsite on rock point to left of Shigami River exit into Eastmain. Exposed, but nice view and good water for swimming. Poor tent sites in reindeer moss and labrador behind.

Day 12

Eastmain Junction to Kawatstakau River Mouth (1/2 day)

[High Water] Coming up river from the Shigami, just above Shigami River entrance is a mild rapid passed by a lift over on rock point on left. Rest is paddled and pulled up on left shore.

Followed left shore to marked rapid. Lifted over rock island just out from left shore -- then followed left shore paddling swift water just above.

Swift rapid-like stretches in narrow spots about 1.5 miles above between two creeks on left and one on right. We paddled and pulled up various places where water was swift at slight corners. Otherwise held slack water and back eddies on left bank.

At turn to north rock point comes out on left. We had to cross to right shore as current around point was too swift to paddle or line. Then held right shore for two miles, crossing to left again before island and following to Kawatstakau River mouth -- no obstacles.

This stretch of Eastmain would probably be much easier if water were lower.

Kawatstakau River Notes -- High Water -- One Foot Below Banks

Day 13

Rest

Day 14

Kawatstakau River Mouth to Portage out of Marbois (1/2 day)

Portage above campsite -- this time we lifted -- this time we lifted over rock on right three yards and then poled up swift water on right shore.

Camped where portage out of Lake Marbois first comes to water.

Day 15

Above Lac Marbois to End of Lac Louvois

Leaving campsite, rocks on right shore were covered except at points. We pushed, paddled and lined up the right. Not too bad.

Day 16

End of Lac Louvois to Second Rapid above Catillon

Above Lac Louvois there are three swifts which start about one mile before portage around first marked rapid. The first two were paddled up, the third (harder) was pulled up on the right. Portage has bad unloading and loading.

Lift over at rock island above Catillon is tricky in high water. One canoe cut portage on left shore, but that was worse.

Portage (16 chains) on left starts before rapid and has a campsite at start, but a better one (at least in good weather) about half way across by falls. Flat rock for kitchen and two or three tents. Other tent sites scattered and not so good.

Day 17

Second Rapid above Catillon to Third Portage on Creek to de Jean

Next portage, two miles above, is 18 chains on right. We checked left, but there is no trail there. Beyond portage in higher water it is much easier to go to the left of the last island on the right side of the channel. In low water right of last island is better. Only one swift shortly after.

Good lunch site after U on high bank -- old sleds standing.

Creek to de Jean -- FIRST portage, 30 chains, as previously described. Going back from end of trail, there is a split about 50 yards along. Left branch is correct. Right branch probably goes to Indian site about 1/4 mile earlier on river.

SECOND portage -- some canoes could put in at end of straight trail below ledge and pole or paddle up to avoid congestion.

THIRD portage, 30 chains -- We camped on top at start. Very nice view and good tent sites. Swimming below and water no problem to bring up.

Day 18

THIRD Portage on Creek to Start of de Jean (1 hour)

FOURTH portage is only 15 chains. Trail makes sharp left at the campsite five chains in, crosses a spring hole, goes up hill to a good view on top, and then down to poor loading on rocks in the water.

We turned left from portage and went down two easy swifts to rock on right at top of spectacular falls. It was such a beautiful place that we held up there for the day, putting the kitchen on the rock point and three tents (might squeeze five) on rock above. If you climb the hill there is a fine view of the creek and rapids. We found ice in a crack in the rocks. Trout in the fast water, pike in the pool below. Wood is a bit scarce.

Day 19

Lac de Jean to Portage above Ayde

No campsite at top of falls entering Ayde

Day 20

Portage above Ayde to Portage around Cascade after Planat

Swifts and rapids above campsite: FIRST, left of island on left shore on right. SECOND, easier on right in high water. THIRD, pulled up on right before wide area. Then three swifts paddled up. The next rapid was pulled up on left before, but was too swift. Best portage is one chain back in bay on left rather than starting from point. Rest to Planat is as in 1973 report.

Leaving Planat, first rapid is *portaged* four chains on left on poor trail with poor unloading and loading. (1973 report says pulled up, but this was in error in report.)

Rapid following was pulled up on left in lower water but on right in high.

At campsite trail was extended to campsite area (four chains).

Day 21

Cascade after Planat to Lac Daru (a half day).

First nine chain portage has two trails. The better one (Heb's) starts sooner and heads back to good walking on reindeer moss. Ours starts at rapid and parallels river closely but is not as good.

Day 22

Lac Daru to Ten Foot Falls before Route to Quentin

Pull-ups after ten chain portage out of Daru easy in high water.

After second ten chain portage there is a shallow pull up before the beaver dam.

At U to left take the portage which starts on the right in open area well before the rocky area. Let downs are very poor and shallow even in high water.

The "runs" in next stretch much easier in high water.

Day 23

Ten Foot Falls to Start of Quentin

Day 24

Start of Quentin to Wolf River

Portage leaving Quentin has more deadfalls, but still OK.

Day 25

Wolf River to Rapids above Wolf Lake

First Portage on Wolf River only 20 chains and now in good shape.

We climbed the hill on the left before the set of three rapids. Good view. You can see as far as Wolf Lake.

High water on Wolf River running about one foot below the banks. In these water conditions rapids were run as follows: FIRST RAPID run down center. SECOND RAPID run close to right shore. THIRD RAPID -- we cut a portage of five chains on the left shore in rain showers and wind. In better conditions it might have been possible to shoot or let down on left, but it would have been tricky in high water.

In south channel, second rapid in curved channel was shot left of center through the edge of the swells and left of large rock part way down.

In set of rapids heading southwest we ran the first two V's as before, then camped on a rock ledge just below on the right. Good kitchen area. Poor tent sites. Good trout fishing.

Day 26

Rapids above Wolf Lake to Double Marked Rapid

Shortly below our campsite is a better area for tentsites. It is on higher rocks on right in still bay below.

Rapid before Wolf Lake harder in high water. We could not shoot as far down, did one lift over at a rock ledge, then let down, starting the portage a bit earlier than before. Good easy trail.

Heading for marked rapids around island, we checked right channel for variety, but no water goes through. Even in high water it ends in a rock bar and would require at least one portage. Little island was out lunch site and would have fair tent sites if desired. This time at marked rapid we shot the top on the right. Then let the canoes down the right channel from the rock island, then crossed to right shore, lined to the bottom and lifted over the last part.

At the gorge just below we again took pictures from the rocks on the right before portaging on the left. We camped on the ridge by the bay 1/3 way across. Good tent sites and kitchen area. Nice place. Since we camped there we cut a portage all the way across, going back along the ridge and down through a dip in the spruce, then back to connect to our previous route. The new middle stretch is the worst part. If not camping it is probably best to load up and paddle five yards across the bay than carry the extra 150 yards on bad ground.

Day 27

Double Marked Rapid to Falls on River from Rosée (half day)

Third rapid below at island -- a five chain portage from small bay on island diagonally into right channel clears all rapids on this side. Definitely the best route. Trail open but not very clear in burn.

Day 28

Falls on River from Rosée to seven chain Portage toward Gasparin

Portage just down river from falls could not be reached by letting down in high water. We cut a new trail from the top of the first large drop off. Trail is twelve chains going up side hill at start, then paralleling river well back from water, crossing rock ledges and joining old trail for last ten yards.

We made a campsite on first portage (seven chains) on right at island after long lake stretch. kitchen on left of trail with several tents. Tent area on right of trail also.

Day 29

Portage toward Gasparin to Bay below First Marked Rapid on Sakami

At the next island rapid we again let down the left in high water, needing more caution at two places where there were large swells. Then two chain over rocks as before.

Last rapid before Sakami was too heavy. We let down in water along left shore.

In high water first marked rapid was run as in Heb's report and without scouting. We camped on his site in bay on right just below.

Day 30

First Marked Rapid to five chain Portage after Bend to West

Rapid one mile below was too heavy to let down, so we lifted over the major drop off on the left.

At island rapid just below we again ran left side of right channel -- a fast rock dodger run blind.

Rapid three miles below was easier in high water. Run angling out from left shore to right of

center and down. In island choked bay below we stayed to the right for a shorter route. All clear.

Long rapid six miles beyond was quite fast, but was run without scouting. First and second sections down center, third on right (left also possible, but ledge in center.) Good lunch site on rock on right just before end.

Island rapid let down and lifted over on right as Heb did in 1972. Took run off on left side of small island also as Heb did in 1972, but we had plenty of water and no trouble. In high water all channels probably OK.

We camped on next (five chain) portage on left. Nothing special, but plenty of flat area for tent sites. Previously used by Indians. Old and new survey markers on point.

Day 31

Portage after Bend to Jackpine Dune

White stone rapid run on right.

Two rapids at V peninsular -- first easy, second a bit faster run on left.

Island cache had one canoe plus flour and supplies.

In high water there is a rapid around both sides of high rock island shortly before two chain portage. Can run either side. Fairly slick and fast, but watch eddies at bottom.

At the two chain portage the wide rock ledge was almost entirely covered, leaving only enough room for a small lunch site.

North channel rapid much more difficult in high water. We went down right shore cautiously as far as possible then passed first drop by five chain portage on right shore on rock ledge just back from river. Found a stove in Indian canoe, old wash tub and other items at this spot. Paddled a few yards across bay to second part of drop and lifted over rock point.

We camped on rock point on left at second rapid on right side of island. Kitchen on rock, tent sites on jackpine sand dune up and behind. Dune is rather unusual -- like the shore.

Day 32

Jackpine Dune to Two Chain Portage Before Frigate Lake

At turn to north we improved the one chain carry over the right hand side of the island on right. Definitely the best route. The gage above had been checked the previous day.

Day 33

Portage before Frigate to Falls below Frigate

We decided to try to bypass Frigate Lake. In the four miles beyond Frigate Lake cutoff there is good current and several minor swifts. Route to Little Sakami begins just after S of Sakami and is quite clear. There are several unmarked bays on the left before an obvious turn to the left where you can hear rapids running. Just before marked rapid in this channel is a rapid shot just off right shore in our water -- probably in larger V near center in lower water. Marked rapid just below is a small falls portaged three chains on left on old faint Indian trail. Joins Frigate route at right turn shortly below. Distances seem shorter than the map would say. This is definitely a faster and easier router than going through Frigate.

In high water, the small gorge was not shootable. We cut a good four chain portage around both parts on the right. It starts before the rapid on rock and goes over level ground, cutting corner. Loading would be shallow in low water. Much better than left side of portage.

Shortly below, small rapid goes around both sides of an island. We took right, but either side OK.

At marked rapid we shot left of center after a difficult scouting operation. Fine shoot through large swells. All canoes took water.

Day 34

Falls below Frigate to First Rapid after Split

Rocks near water at campsite *completely* covered. Had to put kitchen back in bush and cut trail to carry along creek bed at end. Water in creek bed -- wet, slippery, bad.

After long heavy horse race, we shot first falls through needle V in center. Main V on right also possible but larger drop and swell.

Falls below three channel rapid -- in high water we could not use rock on either side. We cut a trail two chains on the left.

Rapid -- cascade one half mile below was shot left of center taking water in large swells. Good shoot.

Rapid on west side of U. We used Heb's portage on right shore in high water. Difficult unloading and end hard to follow, but still best in high water.

At long rapid below we started on left running as far as we could and then crossing over to the right before biggest water. After scouting we shot the rest on the right -- again through big swells taking water.

Rapid at Heb's 1972 campsite run left of center at top and center at bottom. Large swells. We stopped for lunch on bank on left just below. Lots of level ground for tent sites if desired.

Rapid at narrows below run on right.

First rapid after split required lift over on left. Then after rapid we crossed over, came back along the other side, and made camp on the right beside the rapid. Hard to get to from the water, but a beautiful place. Spent most of the day there the next morning.

Day 35

Rapid after Split to Falls at Burn (Half Day)

Left in late afternoon. Rapid below next portage run pretty much down center avoiding large swells and clear of white water near end.

Day 36

Falls at Burn to Small Island Gorge

Rapid 1.5 miles below falls easy in high water. Rapid after junction portaged one chain on left.

At three channel rapid all channels good in high water.

Rapid below at Heb's campsite shot on right between rocks and swells -- pretty easy in high water.

In high water two rapids (horseraces in low water) follow. FIRST down center and SECOND toward right shore.

Next rapid portaged on rocks on left -- two chains. Rapid following portaged one chain on creek bed on left. This rapid possibly could be shot on right in high water, but too close to top of gorge for us.

We camped at the island gorge just below. Good kitchen area by water at end of portage and lots of big trout but really *no* tent sites. We made do for our three tents, however.

Day 37

Island Gorge to Portage four miles beyond (half day)

Rapid just below was quite large in high water, but we were able to shoot on left edge of V. Then a rapid (swift in low water) taken down center just below. After short calm last rapid of series run left of center and then into V on left shore.

Major drop in next series previously passed by thirty chain portage was more difficult to deal with in high water. First five chain through bush came out in four feet deep slot of water from which we could not really reach the rock. Adjacent land very poor for continuing trail. Instead we went *very carefully* around the corner on paddle, lifted over the first drop off, then shot slowly down to where trail takes off into bush. The portaged fifteen chains on the old trail, up hill and down.

Two rapids down, we again took the left channel but with the high water we shot left of swells, pulled into left shore, then lifted over ledge on left below.

The portage below where we cut trail on right in 1973 was also very hard to reach in high water. Rather than extend the trail over difficult ground, we cut out bushes along shore and then carefully let down to our old trail.

Day 38

Portage on River to End of Mile Portage

In high water last falls was lifted over one yard on right and then shot very close to right shore in very swift V. Must be careful not to hit right shore at curve or go too far left into large cellar.

At start of next series we did as Heb did in 1974, using his portage trail. We had to portage first island, however, as water was too high to shoot to second one. Then followed left shore to start of Heb's portage.

At next rapid in high water we would have had to cut a rather messy trail through the bush on the right, but instead found we could shoot starting on left shore, down to shallow V's, then move to right of main current as it banks on rock on left shore. Fairly easy.

Just below the next rapid had fast current and some pretty large swells. No trouble.

Where river turns north and splits at island high water again made us change the route. We took the right channel and let down to the next split. There was water running in the "dry creek". No good for portage or let down. We ended up cutting a five chain portage from start of "dry creek" back over to main channel. Then let down, lifted over rock ledge, and shot the rest. Messy, but probably the best high water route.

After bend to north, rapid above gorge was again run near left shore, but required more care.

After portage plenty of water for loading by campsite. Temperature on portage must have been pushing 100 degrees. Everyone near collapse from the heat.

Day 39

End of Mile Portage to Falls just on Sakami Map

Rapids before first falls had plenty of water. SECOND and FOURTH were largest, with some swells.

Rapids after falls (in high water). Water is deep enough to shoot easily on left leaving portage till bay on left. Then cross over to right above bay on right. Then we let down on right shore to get into bay, as the other possibility, shooting center and pulling in, appeared a bit rough. This put us just above Heb's five chain portage on the right. We had to start two chains earlier in high water, and our landing is probably easier than his in any water. Portage is still over rough ground. On coming to water we had to load up, let down 25 yards to next drop off at corner. Then we carried again on rocks and edge of water another five chains to bay below. Then shot the last part out from right shore.

Last set of rapids before falls was done in one run after scouting. Just left of rock at top, then left of large swells, then just left of pointy rock at bottom, then followed current around turn to largest V between rocks (right of center) below, and then in center to end. Long run, but good.

We cut wood shortly before the campsite, as there is not much in the immediate area.

Day 40

Falls on Sakami to Start of Sakami Lake

In high water the last set of rapids was as follows: The FIRST swift was just moving current. The SECOND, which we had to lift over in 1973 was just a swift. The portage had to be extended another two chains over the rocks by shore because of large swells and back eddies just below the falls. At the rock wall channel just below, the current was pushing hard with strong eddies at the bottom.

This time we found Heb's campsite and stayed there (on Sakami Lake.)

Day 41

Rest -- in the rain and strong northwest wind

Day 42

Head of Sakami Lake to Island 15 miles Down

We left before sunrise to get a jump on the wind. Made a six mile crossing and had breakfast in bay of large northeast pointing point on west side of lake. Large sand beach with rock beside would make a fine campsite if desired. Tall pines and flat tent sites.

Next possible camp site flat rock on right before narrows. Then old tipi site on right shortly before lake widens again. Neither have too much to recommend them. We stayed on the tipi site for lunch and dinner waiting for the wind. Finally moved on two miles on right shore to small island just before first channel. This made a particularly beautiful campsite. Sand walls with flat top covered with thick moss. Kitchen below by water. Tent sites on top. Room for lots of tents in several areas.

Day 43

Island to Six Miles Beyond

From here we made four miles between the islands before we again had to hold up for the wind on point just across the channel from an old fish camp. Again waited till after dinner and made another two miles to north side of point just across deep bay. Flat rock. Tent sites OK behind, but nothing great.

Day 44

Point to Fish Camp at End of Lake

We again left before breakfast and ended up doing 14 miles before we stopped. Saw no good sites on right shore the whole way down. First good site was on left on rock after heading a mile into southwest opening. In high water channels between three islands were open.

Camped at cabin on right at turn to east at bottom of lake. Not great, but we had gone far enough.

Day 45

End of Sakami Lake to Campsite on Creek to Boyd

Hydro gauge and bench mark below first rapid on creek to Boyd. First portage ten chains on left with plenty of water at end. Just above in high water are two stiff paddle ups. First one in center, second on left. Then seven chain on right around falls. Just above we had to pull up or lift over rocks on left.

This time we we could not pull up and had to take the five chain portage behind windfalls. After thin pond we found a different portage, a winding indistinct four chain to left of rapid and then pulled up next two rapids. Longer nine chain portage passing two rapids is better. We had lunch on the left on a point cleared by the hydro just above.

At the next set of three rapids, the FIRST was paddled on the left, the SECOND was very steep and we looked for a portage on the left, but the land was very poor, so we ended up with a very hard pull-up in waist deep water and swift current on left shore. The THIRD was paddled or pulled up on the right. We made camp beside the top of the third rapid on the right in the rain. Pretty fair kitchen area and tent sites scattered back from river.

Day 46

Campsite in Opinaca Water to Unmarked Rapid-Cascade (half day)

Leaving portage this time there was lots of water with only a few shallow hidden rocks here and there. We could float our canoes through narrow stream-like section on lines in both shallow places. Sod lodge near start of Opinaca still in pretty good shape, but entryway falling in. Several campsite areas possible where river narrows and bends southwest.

Just above first marked rapid we watched a hawk with young in nest get very excited as bear cub swam out from right shore to its island. We shot the first rapid and lifted over as before. Second rapid again in right channel which this time had lots of water. Easy with one pull in on the right part way down.

At the unmarked rapid-cascade, the portage had to be done differently in high water. We made a lift over at the top -- then portage along rocks to cut into bush on old creek bed, but had to continue the trail to the end of the drop off in the bush as we could not walk the rocks on shore at this end because they were under water. We camped here with a beautiful kitchen area on the last rock point and tents scattered back in the bush.

Day 48

Unmarked Rapid-Cascade to Second Rapid below Hydro Camp (half day)

Below campsite we shot the rest of the rapid as in 1973. Swells were bigger, current faster, but fewer rocks.

This year we shot all the rapids at the rock ledges. FIRST was easy right of center. SECOND in smaller V on left shore crashing several waves. THIRD and FOURTH in center.

Just above rapid at islands was a large drill rig on left, and cut line on both sides of river. Rapid was shot easily in smaller channel on left of island.

At the hydro camp in bay below next falls we found 23 men building a Headquarters for this area of the hydro project. Several very large two story buildings and a number of smaller ones. They are building several check dams on the Opinaca and Little Opinaca in the next few years.

Rapid below shot on right of large drop near right shore. Next rapid immediately following

portaged on rock and in water -- bad footing -- to within five yards of campsite. Then it was necessary to load up to get to campsite.

Day 49

Second Rapid below Hydro Camp to Start of Miler

Run off taken on left and then out toward center. Second rapid 7.5 miles below just before wide area was shot on right this time.

At the marked rapids, FIRST was portaged one chain over same rock island as before, but we had to cut through bush as we could not walk rock on either side. SECOND was again shot to right of island -- this time on right of V as far as possible without hitting rock. One canoe did not like it and lifted over. THIRD shot toward right with lunch on right at point at end. There is a sod lodge here back in the bush about 50 yards, and a possible campsite area if desired.

We camped at the start of the miler again. This time the water was right up to the bushes. so we put the kitchen to the left of the trail about 50 yards in. Good area except for distance from water. Trail as in previous description except Jon lost it a bit before burn and blazed a circuitous extension to the left starting out 135 degrees off straight course on left. Don't follow his blazes -- go approximately straight instead and Heb's blazes will take you to burn in about 100 yards. Jon's route to same place is about 350 yards. Again fantastic berries on portage.

Day 50

Eighty chain Portage to Portage below Bridge

More water running at end of portage. Cautiously shot left shore step by step, finally going to right of rocks at end.

Large camp on left before bridge -- Heavy equipment, earth movers, etc. Land across from first portage has been completely denuded and is now open sand pits, etc. Bridge now in use. Campsite on top of hill below bridge fine.

Day 51

Portage below Bridge to 20 chain Portage

Rapid eight miles below was shot on right in close V, then in close to shore, then off shore

between swells. Heavy water, good shoot. Nine chain portage on right if desired. In shallower water could take longer V at start or let down on left.

Twelve chain portage had new deadfalls and new detours.

Day 52

Twenty chain Portage to Cascade-Falls -- one hour below

Bear greeted us at start of portage. We camped at start again.

Day 53

Cascade-Falls to Rapid five miles Below

Next portages same as in 1973. We could not let down 100 yarder. Heb cleared this one and next (30 chains) portage and recut end to better loading spot. Rapid following run more carefully on left

At rapid one mile below, route was much more difficult in high water (and rain). We let down a very tricky drop off on left shore, then unloaded and lifted over to get to our previous campsite. Then lifted over about one chain just below. Then after scouting, which was difficult, we ran left as much as possible till we passed large rocks on our right. High water made this rapid very tricky.

We made a forced camp here because Jon was quite sick. We had to wait two days while he recovered. It rained while we were there, and the water, already very high, came up another 15 inches.

Day 54 -- Day 55 -- REST -- Jon sick

Day 56

Rapid before Last Falls to Top of Basil Gorge

At 15 foot falls we found a new portage on left about 20 chains cut by Heb. Starts below hydro clearing and comes out on rock at end. Kitchen area on rocks and tentsites above. Was not even

possible to get into portage on right in very high water, and very large stream could be seen gushing out half way across. Water now super high. Leaving end of portage was tricky. We loaded, pulled back up as far as possible, then blasted for center of river to avoid largest swells. Heavy water and fast current nevertheless.

In high water first rapid by islands just below was easy. Second rapid one mile below this was also easier than before -- mostly fast current and moderate swells. No rock dodging. Rapids at U much more difficult. We took left this time and lifted over rock point at start of bend. Then lifted over rock point 100 yards below at next bend, then ran down left shore weaving in channels until we portaged five chains along shore. Then shot remainder down and around last turn.

Where water splits at gravel bar, gravel bar was covered. We took left side all the way down and had no trouble

Day 57

Top of Basil to Bottom of Basil (half day)

Day 58

Bottom of Basil to Eastmain

Water was very high leaving Basil portage. We elected the left side route for the first time. At point we portaged two chains over rock past first drop off. Then shot remainder close to left shore. Drifted down a ways on left shore then went into bay on left and scouted next stretch along steep bank on left. Again shot very close to shore beside fairly large swells. One more swift run to left of small rock island, then two chain portage on rocks on left around "Surprise". After "Surprise" we crossed to right shore and ran the last rapid in one jump just off right shore a bit after scouting. Fast run, no problem.

Arrived at Eastmain at 4:30, collected out mail, made arrangements for shipping our canoes (now \$40 each) and caught a plane coming down from Fort George at 5:30 -- the day before Austin Airways rates went up.

Return

We camped in Moosonee to the right of the tracks and by the creek as usual, and took the 9:00 train to Cochrane in the morning. From Cochrane two members of the party took the bus to Val

d'Or to pick up the truck and the rest of us returned to our campsite in North Bay by train, arriving there about 1:30 AM.

(Typed by jbe on 6 NOV 2008)