

## Seniors

# Outdoor activities are life savers

By MAUREEN BROWNING  
I did not learn to canoe until I was 57 years old. I was laid off work and I found my days long and my future frightening. For me, it was a life saver. I had phoned a local seniors group only to find that they were unable to take new members for want of space.

Then I read in the Star about a Toronto group of seniors who were improving their health by hiking, cross country skiing and canoeing. In May 1988 I found myself at Heart Lake Conservation Area trying to learn to canoe. It was a windy day, a very small lake with lots and lots of tree stumps, quite a few canoes and several canoeists. One of the canoes tipped after being blown onto one of the stumps - luckily, the occupants were near shore and lots of help was at hand. So started my love affair with canoeing.

During that summer, I went on every available trip - camping out some of the time in various parks including Algonquin. Our club activities go from Tuesday to Friday leaving the parks when the waterways are less busy. On these overnight trips we would practice canoe over canoe rescues, getting back into the canoe while out of our depth. I remember one time in our novice days, when the lake was too foreboding to canoe across because of strong winds, how we practised going around a bend three and time again. The object was to keep the canoe near the shore, counteracting the wind, and away from the rocks at the

## Seniors for the Future

point. We kept at it until we mastered it with ease.

After the canoeing season, I felt satisfied with my progress in the canoe, and also in my stamina. I then accompanied the club on their weekly hikes, and after Christmas, when the snow arrived, I dusted off my cross country skis that I had not used for over 10 years, and gave them a try. What an exhilarating sport this is! I had always fallen at every slope - up or down. In fact, I used to go on the old disused railway tracks because it was nice and flat. I invited our club to Halton Hills and we walked to Terra Cotta along the tracks, and some of us skied it in winter. How sad it is that we were not allowed to keep this for posterity. What an absolute waste that this was allowed to be purchased by private property owners whose lands adjoined it. Over the years, we had established right of way privileges over it, but now fences will be erected to stop us from walking and skiing there. How can these things be allowed to happen at a time when we realize how important exercise is and in an area that needs more parkland. Nearly every week in the winter now, I travel north and cross country ski. I go up and down the hills with the best of our club members and enjoy every minute, but canoeing is my first love. I have progressed now to wilderness canoeing, and, last year, took my first lessons in white water canoeing at Palmer

Rapids. What fun that is! We did not learn because it was fun, but because we do come across rapids and need to canoe through them.

Both last year and this, we canoed a loop from Six Mile Lake into Gibson Lake, out onto Georgian Bay and back via Macrae and Macdonald Lakes - three days of sheer ecstasy, challenge, and fun, and many strenuous portages. We have also been down the French River into Georgian Bay and back through the Key. Another great trip was the Pickerel-Loring loop. This year trips will take us again to Killarney and Quetico Parks.

I just love to be in the wilderness - it is a joy that restores my soul. I also love to feel the canoe surging forward under our own prowess. I never imagined that I would see such places of beauty, with no power boats or cottages, just wonderful wilderness.

Although seniors, our club members have improved in health and stamina. We spend idealic days paddling canoes, swimming from sun-drenched rocks, star gazing around the campfire at night, sharing new experiences. No time in my life has been better than this.

If anyone is interested in senior canoeing in the wilderness, perhaps you would like to call me for more information. (877-3616).

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## Alzheimer's study

By LEAH WINTER  
Studies of the similarities between Alzheimer's disease and rheumatoid arthritis suggest that anti-inflammatory drug therapy may control, or even prevent the onset of, the erosive brain damage caused by Alzheimer's.

The University of British Columbia studies, led by neuroscientist Dr. Patrick McGeer, have found a surprisingly low incidence of Alzheimer's in patients receiving long-term anti-inflammatory drug therapy for rheumatoid arthritis.

The linking of inflammation and Alzheimer's occurred after large numbers of immune system cells, which the body uses in fighting diseases involving inflammation, were found in the brains of Alzheimer's patients.

Alzheimer's, sometimes called "death without a funeral," is "a malevolent disease which strikes the elderly, robbing them of mental faculties," says McGeer.

Though a person may be said to have Alzheimer's disease on the basis of deterioration of their ability to remember, it is only by looking at the characteristic pathology, or physical evidence,

that the diagnosis is certain, and that, says McGeer, "is usually done after death." Though there was a time when biopsies were done on living patients to confirm the diagnosis, this is seldom done now, because, McGeer says, "there isn't a purpose to justify it."

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