

a more sheltered spot. This was done and for an hour or more we searched, without success, along the beach for a better location.

By this time we both realized we were in a serious situation. Soaked to the skin, a gale force north wind which by this time had chilled our exposed hands so that they were stiff and numb. Both of us were aware of hypothermia, "The Silent Killer" and knew it was imperative we get out of the wind. We did the only thing left to us; the tent was laid flat on the beach, loaded down with rocks and we crawled inside, pulling the packs in after us. We were in that flattened, sopping wet tent for eighteen hours. A sheet of 6 mil plastic was spread out under us along with one of those thin lightweight emergency space blankets to help prevent body heat loss through the wet floor. Initially we huddled close together, again to conserve body heat, and after about thirty minutes I felt my fingers and hands slowly warm through and the odd body shivers which I had been experiencing, stopped.

Our packs gave us a little headroom and later in the day we were able to enjoy a snack of cheese, summer sausage and bannock. Towards evening, by improvising with sections of the broken "A" frame, it was possible to increase the headroom inside the tent to about 60 cm. This enabled us to change into our dry emergency clothing, get into our sleeping bags, and enjoy a good sleep.

The rain stopped sometime during the night and the wind diminished enough so that at 5:00 am we were able to get outside, repair the tent and generally improve our situation to near normal. The sky cleared, a weak sun appeared but the wind was still whipping up white caps on the lake so for a second day we had to stay put. We took advantage of the situation by drying our wet clothing and gear and replenishing the supply of bannock.

If there are any lessons to be learnt from this experience they are, first, most of our modern, free standing tents with their minimum number of guy ropes, are not designed for use on the open barren lands. For centuries the Inuit used round tents anchored every few centimetres with heavy rocks. Secondly if you are in your tent, warm and dry, and it looks like the wind is going to flatten it, let it down on yourself, but don't move it. There is virtually no shelter from the wind on the open tundra.

The wind died in the early evening and around 8:30 we were on the water and once more on our way paddling at a steady rate until about 1:15 am. This got us around the most eastern point of the north shore and off Aberdeen Lake which was our immediate objective. It took a day and a half to get from Aberdeen and into Shultz Lake. This section is marked as river on the map but in reality it is two small lakes with a short, narrow stretch of fast water between.

It was on this section that we met two geologists who overtook us in an inflatable rubber boat powered by an outboard motor. They were members of a government team making a geological survey of the area. Their base camp was on the south side of Aberdeen. They enquired about how we had survived the storm which had severely damaged one of their tents. They said the wind was a gale force of 100 km/h gusting to 130 km/h.

The rapids marked on the map at the west end of Schultz are nothing more than swifts and easily runnable. Immediately after we cleared the fast water we turned and headed for the north shore, about 1.5 km distant. As we approached the shore a big, brown, prospector tent was sighted so we landed to investigate.



We were halfway up the beach when a tall, lean, touselled haired man emerged from the tent, saw us, and with a look of puzzlement on his face, walked towards us. We introduced ourselves. "I'm Ernie Nutter", he said, "come in and meet my wife, she has just made a pot of tea." Ernie is chief geologist for a mining company prospecting for uranium. For the past two weeks they had been here enjoying a fishing holiday. His wife had flown in from Toronto to join him in Baker Lake. The company helicopter had flown in all their gear, tent, oil fired space heater, propane cooking stove etc. and they had come up river from Baker Lake in a rented, seven metre, freighter canoe with an outboard motor. We chatted with them for half an hour or so and graciously accepted the apples and oranges Mrs. Nutter offered us as we left.

Two hours later we saw another tent and floating just offshore a small, single engine aircraft and then way out on the lake we heard the "putt, putt" of an outboard motor. The noise was coming from a small black dot which was headed in our direction. We waited. It was an inflatable rubber dinghy with two men in it, both wearing large, wide brim, cowboy hats. They were from Buffalo, N.Y., both pilots, and owned the float plane. They too were on a fishing holiday.

Next day we started early, finished late, and paddled 60 km but were now clear of the lakes and about to enter the final section of river where we could expect to get considerable help from the current. A late start next morning, coupled with scouting two sets of rapids, (the first set we ran but the second set involved a 3 km portage) and waiting out two rain storms, kept our progress down to only 17 km for the day. There were now only 75 km left to Baker Lake, the end of trip. Tomorrow should be our last day on the river.

The sky was grey with a heavy overcast, it had rained most of the night, and a strong wind was blowing out of the north when we pulled away from the river bank into a good 8-10 km/h current. With the wind at our backs plus the current, we made tremendous progress with little effort. Just before lunch we met a group of Inuit, mostly youngsters. There were three families; they were from Baker Lake and had come upstream in their big freighter canoes to fish and also hunt caribou. They had caught some fish but the hunting was poor, they told us. We had only seen a few caribou ourselves and that had been back on Aberdeen and Schultz Lakes. We still had a two day supply of firewood so we left it with them.

Ten kilometres from Baker Lake the river widens to 3 km and turns due east. The wind, which had been our friend all day, once again became our enemy, hitting us broadside on and doing its utmost to blow us over to the wrong side of the river. Progress was slow. Five kilometres from the village the shore-line turned due north around a point and we could see buildings and houses in the distance. On our left we could see the airport. The wind hit us head on. We struggled and made slow progress for another 2.5 km but finally "The Demon" which is the name some northerners call the north wind, beat us to a standstill and we had to land.

We carried our gear and canoe to the airport where we were able to scrounge a lift into the village in the back of a truck. The trip, 830 km in 23 days, was over.

7 Come 11

The Demon calls the shots
On the treeless turf
Where life becomes his craggame
And the croupier's his serf.
He owns the dice and tables
And beckons all, "Come in"
To gamble here a little while
And take a chance to win.

Some people spend their entire lives
Sittin' on their asses,
Or, worse yet, lying down
They miss the Demon's passes.

So grab those bones when it's your turn
And shake 'em so they clatter,
Toss 'em hard against the wall
And read the dots they scatter.
The fate you threw just then, my friend,
Counts more than you've allotted
You took a fling at life
AND LIVED
The rest sat back and rotted.

Jim Abel July, 1981