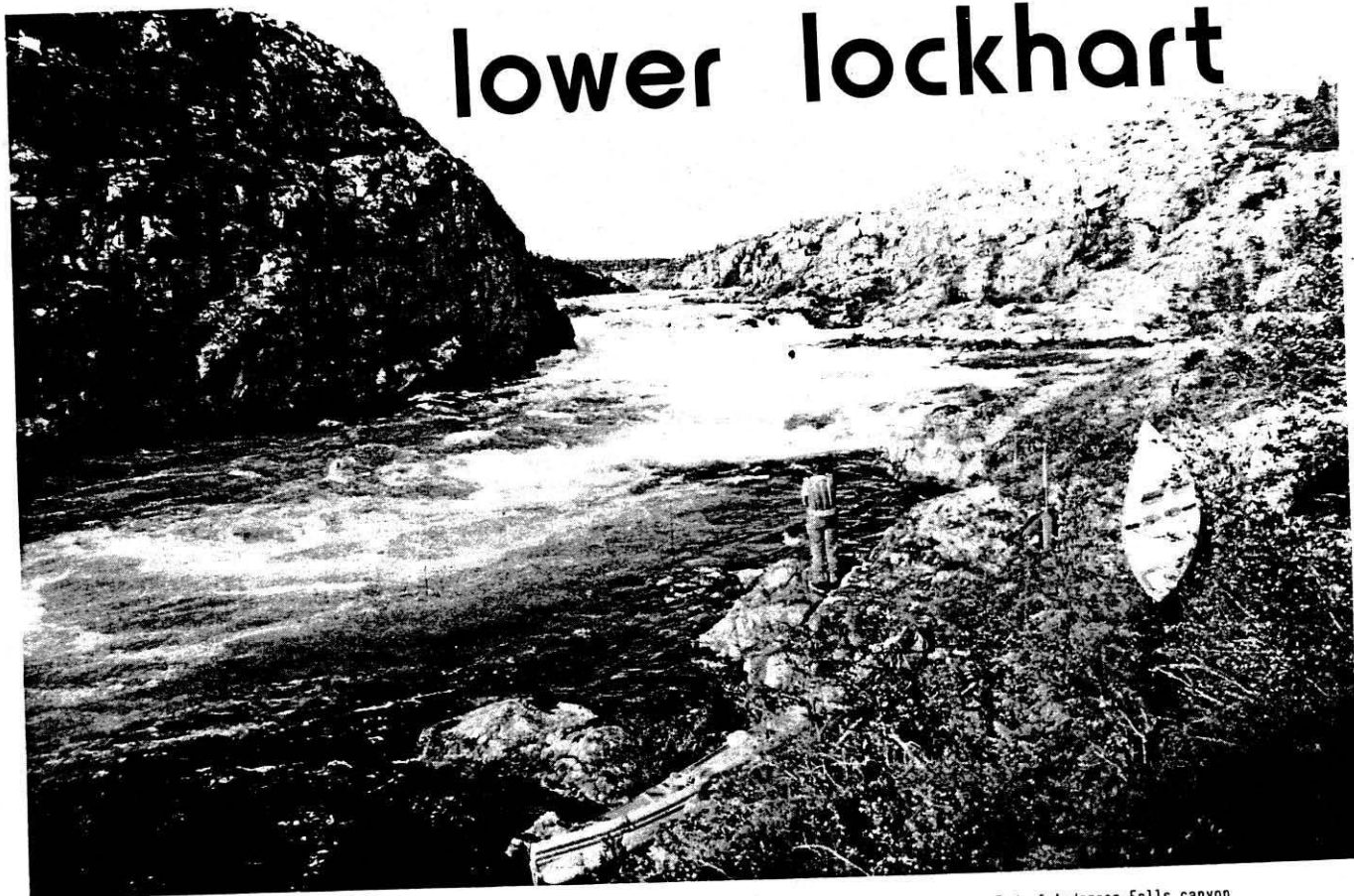




## lower lockhart



End of Anderson Falls canyon

George Luste

27 July 1986, on the Lockhart River, NWT.

The evening supper was unusual...there was an unspoken sense of anticipation and apprehension in the air.

This was day 29 of a 950-kilometre cross-country canoe trip from northern Saskatchewan to Great Slave Lake. The campsite, on a small rise in a bay on the Lockhart River, was within sight and hearing of the heavy exit rapid from Artillery Lake. Our apprehension was stirred by the unknowns we would have to deal with in the next 30 kilometres of river. Ahead of us, in this short distance, the Lockhart, through a series of canyons, rapids, and falls, tumbles 200 m in a wild downhill charge to Charlton Bay at the eastern tip of Great Slave Lake.

It had been a gorgeous day and now it was a warm, cloudless evening...albeit somewhat buggy. The dying sun bathed the dark-blue waters of the Lockhart and the thin spruce landscape around us in a rich, golden afterglow. We sat on the mossy ground, apart and individually facing west, capturing the dying warmth of the setting sun, deep in thought. We were eating supper and again there was too much to eat. There was a personal and historical reason for this; seventeen years ago, a long, hard trip on the Dubawnt river and slim rations had left me 11 kg lighter by the time we reached Baker Lake. Ever since, I have been overcompensating when planning the food. But there was a comforting, shameless satisfaction in forcing another heavy spoonful of thick fish chowder, with large globs of tender trout, dehydrated vegetables, potato flakes, well-mixed with spices and one half kilogram of bacon and fat, into my already stuffed and bloated body. I mused on recalling Gibran's memorable words: "But what is fear of need but

need itself." While being sympathetic to this lofty view, there was however the stronger practical need to fuel our bodies for the task ahead of us. I wondered if perhaps we could excuse our excessive gluttony to an ancestral urge to overeat, a primitive fear of tomorrow's uncertain supply and eventual hunger. In any case, this self-indulgent over-eating was reassuring and very effective in dulling our apprehension for the morrow.

We had come a long way, a total of 920 kilometres with 53 portages and numerous linings or walk-ups in the last 29 days from road's end at Wollaston Lake in Saskatchewan. In the process we had changed watersheds six times, initially paddling down the historic Fond du Lac River to Black Lake, but then north across the arduous Chipman Portage and upstream on the Chipman River to Selwyn Lake on our way to the Barrens.

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