



sufficient beans and stew could have been taken for at least one good meal, these were left behind. Unlike gorp and pemmican which can be eaten at any time or location, the beans and stew would have required additional cookware and a supply of firewood for their preparation. In winter, firewood is not readily available at all locations in the Gulf.

Shortly after departing the following morning, Tony and I met Herb at the river's outlet. He had found the tupek used for the fishing camp; however, it had been abandoned for many weeks and was half-collapsed with snow. The supposed snowmobile tracks on the hill turned out to be deep trenches made in the snow by a herd of caribou. There was little else at the river mouth, other than a caved-in igloo.

Tony and I faced unusually strong headwinds on our first day up the coast. But with a light load and motivated by our precarious circumstances, we maintained a travel rate fully double our best previous achievement. Tony is also a marathon runner and his snowshoeing pace was one of the fastest that I have ever encountered. To avoid the strong wind, lunch was eaten in the shelter of the last sizeable grove of trees south of Qurnguq Pass on the southwestern flank of Kaamachistaawaasaakaaw Mountain ("the evil one that can be seen from a great distance").

That afternoon, shortly after the ruins of a second igloo were passed, a snow layer gave way and Tony fell into a crack in the sea ice, breaking the front tip of his snowshoe. Fortunately the damage could be repaired quickly and easily with snare wire.

A mid-afternoon, we climbed a small hill adjacent Qurnguq Pass for a spectacular panoramic view of Richmond Gulf. The atmosphere that day had a clarity and invigorating freshness that could never be experienced in the south. Looking south, an almost endless row of escarpments could be viewed in sharp focus for as far as the curvature of the earth would permit. In the west, toward Pamiallugusup Lake, several of the disconnected escarpments appeared like huge



fortresses or fairy tale castles. To the north, the massive Quingaaluk Mountain was already casting a long shadow on the frozen sea below, providing an early warning of coming darkness.

The wild physiographic grandeur of the Gulf in winter also has an intimidating side for plodding snowshoers. Directly ahead in our line of travel lay an exposed 20-km traverse of sea ice. Despite our urgent need to find Umiujaq, an attempt to make the crossing at this hour was deemed foolish. Pressing onwards to gain a few hours of travel would have required a side trip of many kilometres eastward off the most direct route to find suitable trees near the shoreline for camping. We could not stay out on the sea ice and build an igloo, for our freshwater supply was almost exhausted. No gas stove or koodlick was carried to melt snow to supply the next day's water. Stripped to the minimum for speed, we were also travelling without tent, wood stove, or winter-weight sleeping bags, so our safety was largely dependant on our skill with the saw and tomahawk.

Camp was made in a small, protected pocket of trees on the northern flank of Qurnguq Point. This section of the Gulf is a barbaric, resource-poor land in winter. One is very close to the limit of what can be achieved with Indian-style camping methods, so the margin for error is small. Care was taken in site selection to ensure an adequate supply of dry, standing, dead wood. Appearances can be deceiving, for in the lee of high snow-corniced bluffs, the dead wood is dampened by an almost constant fall of tiny snow particles, making the wood difficult to burn. However, even in darkness an accurate determination of the moisture content of dead wood can always be made either by blazing it with the tomahawk or by cutting a chip with the saw and feeling the fresh inner wood with the back of the hand on one's cheek.

Not all groves have sufficient tree height or density to provide adequate shelter from the powerful winds that sweep across the Gulf and past the sides of trees with a tell-tale crust of snow. A quick visual inspection from a distance will locate those groves containing a snowless core of sheltered trees. The best-protected sites within the grove will possess the softest and most difficult snow for snowshoeing.

With the available resources, the traditional Indian winter buckwan was the best shelter for the occasion. At these low temperatures, this is a type of camping that I do not relish and only resort to through necessity. One must draw heavily on the forest resources for even a minimum level of comfort. Stopping earlier than usual and making camp at this site was, without doubt, one of the most prudent decisions of the entire trip. Lacking the economy of scale, the two of us worked till nightfall to complete our shelter. Strange as it may seem, the camp requirements for one or two persons in winter are almost the same as for six or eight.

Tony collected firewood with the bow saw, while I worked on the shelter using the tomahawk. A half chord of fuel wood was prepared in "turns" of 2.5 to 3.5 metres in length for the open fire, rather than in the usual stove-length "billet." By burning these long fuel wood poles in the centre first and then shoving the remaining ends in the fire, the amount of sawing was reduced by at least one third.