



The 'creator'

Photo by Paul Hietpas

## THE TERRIBLE TYRRELL'S CREATOR

Our exit from the bush the first year was hurried. Rains had delayed us, the 'Teacher' and a 1.3-km portage (the 'Wolf' to Nango Lake) had to be cut, leaving us seven working hours to carry 3.5 km from Nango Lake to the road, somehow. Vivid memories! Fortunately, much of the distance involved bushes and young trees, and in our haste we marked most of our route by bending twigs and breaking small tree tops. The uncut route was then followed as best the portager could in the humped footing through thick, foot-tripping low bushes and canoe-stopping high bushes and branches. The day was boiling hot with no water on the road end. Close to dehydration, our lives were saved by finding a little swamp water in a spruce grove about mid-portage, and the blessed spot became known fondly as "The Oasis." The portage received its name, too: "The Terrible Tyrrell's creator."

One half kilometre along the 'creator' on our second year I had the uneasy feeling that we were going in a slightly wrong direction. Furthermore, the blazes I was following were professional, surely not done by the boys. Again the 'Oasis' rescued us. When I spotted its trees from a weird angle I knew what was wrong. I had been following a prospector's trail that had intersected our hard-to-find bent-twig route. We corrected the situation by using some of the "pro's" trail and made some new trail of our own. I didn't find our original route to the 'Oasis.'

In the fall of 1983 I had cut a new portage ("New Wolf") directly westward from Wolf Lake to the road and had used that shorter, easier route with younger boys in 1985. The 1987 voyage was to be my last and the boys were older and more ambitious, so we planned to leave the bush via the

'creator,' the historic and challenging route. The morning we were to move from Wolf Lake to the 'creator' a rain began. Knowing what lay ahead, I began chickening and advised using the 'New Wolf.' Paul would have none of it. I gave in to his desires, knowing he had the right idea anyway.

The instant we finished crossing Nango Lake, all hell broke loose. A cold, rain-laden gale whipped the lake into a raging ocean. We gasped and pushed through the wet bush to erect the tent in near-record time. After hot drinks and finger-warming over the tiny stove, we slopped through the sop to find what we could of the way out. It was a repeat of our 1981 dilemma: fine for the first half kilometre and then again we couldn't find our route, but we did see some new professional blazes. That time they didn't trick me. I searched and searched for my own. The wind blew and the cold rain descended.

Then I found a very old bent twig. Fifteen minutes later, another. And so it went. While Paul was cooling very rapidly in temperature and enthusiasm, I was warming up (enthusiasm only). I was becoming convinced that we were following the old, straight, original (1980) route, and I was oblivious to the cold sog. Suddenly I spotted the 'Oasis' and knew exactly where I was. Joy and satisfaction were mine! We were on the route—and the newer one was coming in but a few metres away. Home again—my old routes, my "portage," my old, dreaded friend. Once back at our tent my enthusiasm drove us right into the stormy lake for a cleansing, bone-crunchingly cold, zesty bath—and hasty retreat.

The next day the refinding work beyond the 'Oasis' was slow but steady, and we eventually gained the top of the route's high hill with all our gear. Before the final descent to the road, we marked the occasion as the custom had developed. At the hilltop we used to pause and look back