

The last wave marked the bottom of the chute. We careened down the outrun and glided into the lake. The canoe slowed down, but adrenalin continued to hype my body. In contrast to the heavy fear-induced inaction at the top of the run, I felt ready to move. We had to bail a bit of water and in my excitement I just ripped the loads out of the canoe, got lunch, bailed the water, and walked about without any sense of fatigue.

For a short while, we enjoyed the sunny rocks, but the sun moved to the southwest and we packed up and headed downriver. My heart still pounded. We glided over the brightly lit late afternoon water. Soon the next rapid sounded from below. A short glance showed no run — wade or portage? Kit spotted the trail and the complicated unloading spot involved downed trees and muskeg. Nonetheless, we decided that a quick carry was better in the evening.

It took a while to get the loads and the children to the start of the firm trail. Michael and Erika, by now real portage veterans, set off with backpacks and instructions to wait above the water. Kit and I followed with the loads. I got the canoe into a good slot and we relayed loads and children over logs and boulders and swung them into the canoe.

Out on the river, we picked up the current and paddled to the next drop. We edged up close to the top and stopped to scout. We faced a steep short pitch. The river narrowed and ran out in a big tail of whitewater compressed in the narrow gut. I scouted and thought, darn, another brushy



portage. I did not want to take water and if we ran down the middle we probably would get a lapful. I expressed my disappointment to Kit, who took her own scout. She returned with a different story. "There is a route on the right if we hit the line." I took another look and agreed. This time, both Michael and Erika sat side by side in the stern compartment of our wide nineteen-foot canoe. Done up in lifejackets, the two midshipmen waited for the surge. This run lasted only a few seconds and we shot through on Kit's line with nary a drop over the gunwales.

By now the sun had moved further and the water, in places, had shadows instead of bright light. Time for a campsite, and a ledge showed across a lake below the last run. We approached with caution, but unlike the earlier rapids, this one was wider with less of a drop. We went in on the right. The rapid was in the shadow of the trees to the west. The lake below was brilliantly lit in golden light, as a westward opening bay allowed the sun to illuminate the shores. I stood in the stern and gauged the run. It turned out to be an easy S-turn and we glided to the bottom.

Across the lake, we landed on the open ledges and unloaded to make camp. All of us felt the excitement of the rapids. Even the children displayed more than their usual campsite energy, as they bounded over the trails, romped through the clearings and marked places to play baseball, cavort, and swim.

We had a fine campsite with a perfect combination of direct evening light, a cool breeze, flat open ledges, choice of good tent sites, and firewood close at hand. The evening promised a chill for sketching and swimming.

Embark upon a canoe trip with young children and all of your concerns change. The rhythm of travel is different as the children add their own beat and sound. It is hard to hear a bird call when Michael plays with his Game Boy and Erika plays her "Fox and the Hound" tape. Children's activities and needs replace the peacefulness of the solitary voyages. Yet, with the loss of the uninterrupted sounds of water and wind comes a sharing of experiences.

Now at home, there are two other people who like to

