

CAMPING EXPERIENCES IN NATIONAL FOREST

(Continued from page 18)

no keel to prevent skidding. Result we moved broadside on sometimes and sometimes skidded clear round. Never again for me without a non-skid. Finally, after a hundred miles or so, we decided they had pulled up the portage for winter storage, and we rounded up for camp. Then right where we had passed, loomed up the portage sign. Beached canoe and started into dense trail, breaking twigs to make return trip sure. About time we figured we were in next county or might but into the Red river of the North, we hit daylight and the lake. These map distances are deceiving. That's why we need a guide. After ten miles by leg or canoe, to cover a map mile I lose confidence. Then I lose myself and won't believe a compass. We followed our broken twig trail back and arrived at camp before the dinner bell rang.

Another night, and camp fire, and lies and lap of waves and stars, and we hit the balsam.

Anxious Wives

Morning, smell the alarm clock and, as usual, first with the pan, first with the spoon, first at the hearty breakfast table. And again dish washing, striking tents and off to Prairie Portage for motor boat tow across Basswood Lake to Upper Basswood Falls. Saves in three hours, a day's hard canoeing. Passed Jeff's again and left our mail. Wives anxious to know whether to probate our wills and lay wires for next.

At Upper Basswood found camp of U. S. Coast Survey laying the boundary line. They lay it every morning, they told us, and take it up at night, so that's where our taxes go. Why don't they lay a concrete boundary line and save the overhead?

We bought a beautiful hundred acre tract here for \$1,500 with enough shore line for Duluth, Indianapolis and Wilmette. Then the survey fellows proved by their contour map that we didn't contour right; our land was further down below the falls. We immediately cancelled the mental purchase, although we had improved the property by constructing a hotel at the sandy bay, built a beautiful trail to the falls, erected an old paddle wheel mill for electric light and telephone and had our private log cabins on the sloping shore. We blew out the picture and took a ten-mile hike on a map mile, log wagon road to find our land. Sure, there was the bay and there was the land all round it, with a sprinkling of Norway and jack pine and birch and poplar and roaring, foaming, tumbling rapids. Not so good. We had already built our camp. We went back and ate and camp fire and lied and star gazed and turned into our blankets.

Next day—usual preliminaries. Packed only for noon dinner, made five or six liftouts along the rapids in Basswood river, and arrived Lower Basswood Falls. U. S. Ranger camp here. Beautiful scenery. Falls, tumbling through great granite crevices into white foaming whirl pools,

wonderful Rocky Mountain scenery in miniature. This looked good to us, so we compromised on a sixteen-acre point up the river separated from a Canadian island by a tumbling brook. We are so close, when we get mad at John Bull, we can spit on his island. Well, the great object of our enterprise is accomplished. After sixteen years of caution and calculation, we have spent \$240 and own a camp site.

Wow, What a Wow

We turn homeward, reach camp, usual pre-bedtime activities, crawl in blankets, and presto, it is A. M. again. What a wonderful thing is morning! No chance to grow weary. Three changes of scenery a day: Morning, afternoon, night, 365 days in a year. Sun, clouds, rain, blue sky, green trees, and deep clear crystalline water. All for nothing. Drink the lake and no \$50,000,000 sanitary canal to keep it pure. No plumber's bills, no public service corporation with its penalty for nonpayment. No grocery bills. Blueberry pies growing on the hill-sides, raspberry jam in the bushes, fresh fish in the lake, partridge stew and venison steak in the woods waiting for you. This is the life; it is life.

Five hours from civilization by motor boat. One long, long day by canoe. We have two days yet to our credit. So we arrive at Pipestone Falls at noon and camp, and see who is here: Doris! "Wee Deoch an' Doris." Doris again. Sweet brown haired Doris and brother Bill. How good it is to see Doris again. But she is on her way and we tearfully cheer their parting boat.

Next morning we are off and at noon, land at Winton. Ely and a shower bath at the community house and change to clothes left with the Wilderness Outfitters. We must have a new old suit next year and new old shoes. What we wore is hardly worth packing. Then off on the D. & I. R. railroad for Duluth.

Dozing on the car, I awake with a feeling that some one is staring at me and I come to enough to see in the aisle that brown hair and those bright, laughing eyes, and there is Doris, who this time literally jumps into my arms and I hug her close, mother and father and Bill all aboard and Doris on way home to Des Moines to enter second grade. I love Doris and I know where their cabin is at Pipestone Falls, and I will see her again, you bet.

Both Kinds of Living

Well, after all, that is the life! It is two vacations in one, one to be there, and one when you get back to soft carpets and mattresses and hot water, running in a tub, and the newspaper each morning, and the telephone connecting you with friends and people who know you by your first name. Both kinds of living are the life.

And this is the end of a true story. All facts will be vouched for, under oath, by Lucien King and Omar S. Hunt of Indianapolis, George H. Ebert of Duluth, Paul Chaffee, somewhere in South Dakota, and Walter Plummer, somewhere on Gunflint Lake this winter, trapping beaver and mink and other fur-bearing animals for the Hudson Bay company.

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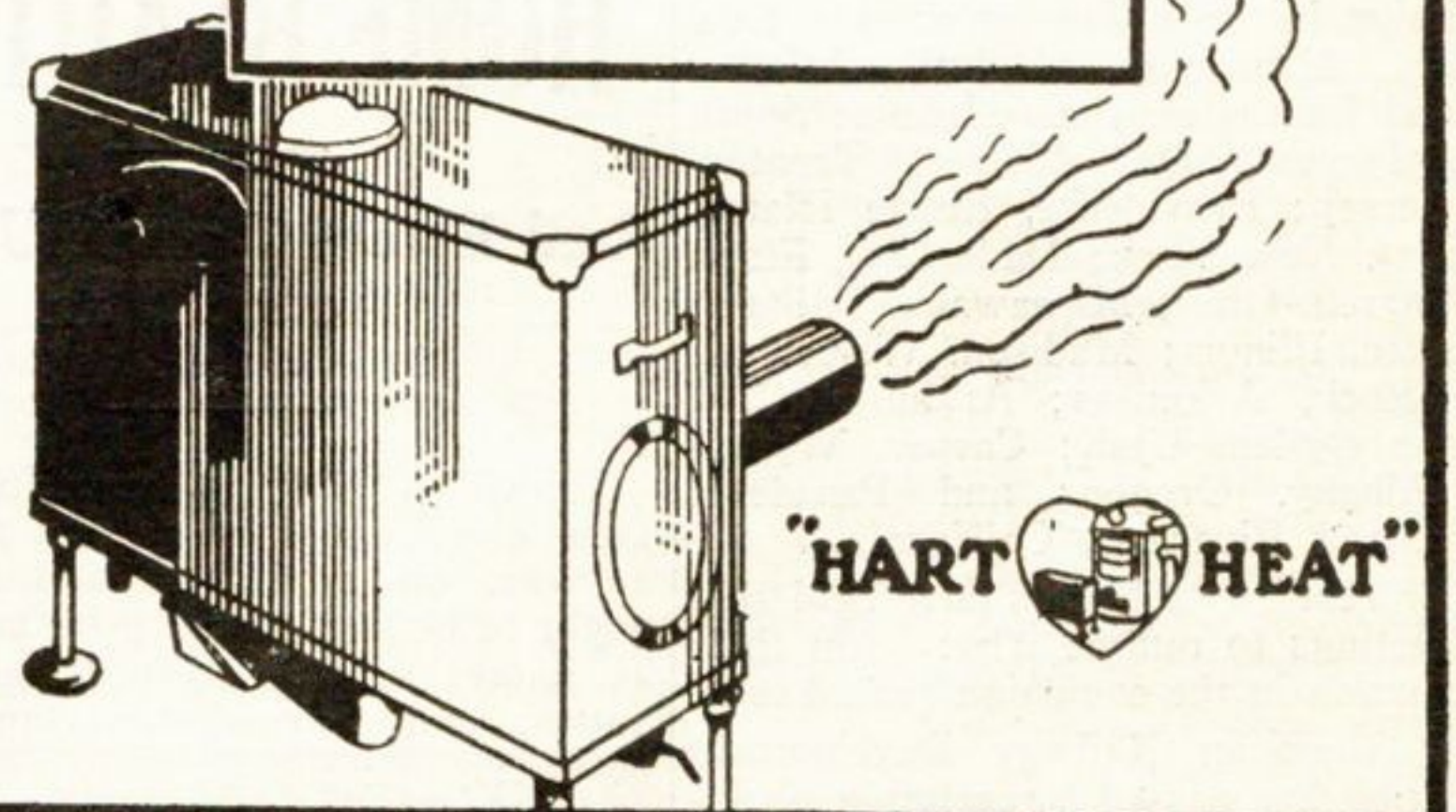
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