



# WATERLINES



Newsletter of Poudre Paddlers

September, 2011

Ed. Note: This is an extra, Go North Edition to the overdue newsletter. It's offered because these articles seemed unique and enjoyable. I hope you agree. Another, Club-oriented newsletter coming soon. First, Bill Whitaker's grandfather's diary from the Gold Rush provides an amazing contrast to our modern river adventures. Next time we think we've endured a tough trip, we can refer to this! Now, back to 1898...

## Diary Recounts Incredible Men and Journey

A Trip on the Dease and Liard Rivers, Summer of '98 from the journal of Wm. L. Whitaker© Edited by Bill Whitaker [and by Waterlines]

Jan 19 - Left home, Cedar Grove, 7:45 train.  
Jan 20 - At 2 P.M. arrived at Chicago.  
Dowdy, filthy. Jan 22 - North Dakota . . .  
Country very interesting. Cattle, cowboys  
roaming across the plains. Indians, Sioux  
doing likewise across Indian reservation.  
Jan 24 - At last Puget Sound, Seattle 2:30, 4  
hrs behind time. Feb 13 - Left for Vancouver,  
then north on the S.S. Pakshaw. All our gro-  
ceries aboard, horses and all. The vessel a  
tramp, berths plain and cheap, but all jolly.  
All a-jumble on the wharf—dogs howling,  
horses neighing, men swearing, but finally  
quiet tonight. We turned in and slept fairly  
well.

March 1st, with 14 men, 14 horses, 9 dogs,  
over 12,000 lbs of grub and outfit we started  
up Stikine River on the ice via Fort Wrang-  
ell, Alaska, on bobsleds and one-horse

sleds—over 500 miles of sledding, over 35  
days of toil on weak spring ice. Frequently

*(Continued on page 2)*



*(Continued from page 1)*

a horse would slip almost out of sight. We each kept a piece of rope, with which we hauled the horse out of the water. In other outfits many horses drowned and many men went through the ice and never returned, some in sight of us. Through almost super-human effort we arrived at Tahltan, (tall-tan) river, the second North Fork of the Stikine. Here we made pack saddles for our horses, caching the sleds. From Tahltan to Dease Lake, 73 miles, we had the old trail to follow, our horses being poor, feed almost gone, and we wasted much time simply waiting for the grass to grow.

May 6 - Six of us placed packs upon our backs and headed towards Dease lake. We hauled hardware, blankets, and a month's grub to the lake in 9-mile relays, averaging 100 lbs per carry, really covering the distance three times. Not much poetry about this sort of exercise, up the 3rd North Fork of the Tanzilla River, over fallen trees through mud, snow and water and over the divide to Dease Lake. Arrived May 13.

May 16 - Finished building saw pit and cut trail through alder swamp to the timber and saw mill. Cut 34-foot lengths of spruce, 6" at one end and 8" at the other, each log making six boards. Jun 3 - Englishmen launched yesterday an Acme folding canvas boat which is flat-bottomed and rides beautifully. June 8 - Launched our first boat, a 32 x 6 ft. lumberman bateau, this morning with great success—floats like a swan. Mr. Shanhope caught a 32-inch lake trout today. Second boat frame ready.

In due time we had built four large river bateaus, 32' X 6', sharp at both ends; a better boat for swift water can hardly be imagined. We had whipsawed over 1200 ft. of lumber,

and by this time our boys had the outfit packed over the trail on the horses. In the marsh and swamps at head of lake, we saw several beaver, were disturbed several times by timber wolves at night. Killed two moose at the head of Dease Lake.

June 23 - We straightened up camp and commenced carrying our outfit down to boat. We left head of lake 2:45 and arrived Dease Creek 11 P.M. and after supper we were all glad to turn in—18 miles of rowing about 3000 lbs was no mean undertaking. Unloaded boat and filled her with water to let her swell. We made ready for the swift water. In the first 4 miles one boat was wrecked on a snag bottom plank stove in. We camped, repaired boat and on again. Today I cannot reason why we passed through these waters safely, with projecting log jams, overhanging fallen trees and undercut mossy banks. I saw my first Arctic Trout [grayling or char?] here, a blue trout, elegant eating, firm, sweet meat. Fish up to 5 pounds, including Dolly Varden Trout—plenty to eat.

Killed a moose on our way down the river, hung him in the trees. Downstream came an Indian on a raft of 3 logs. We gave him a good dinner and he agreed to pilot us through the canyon and rapids. I might add that along here we saw many ducks, beaver, a few bald eagles, many camp robbers, and some beautiful cross-bills.

We camped the head of the rapids and scouted next morning. Our Indian guide traced with his finger the narrow but clear channel between the rocks and immense breakers of foam. With one boat crew unequal to the task, Mr. C., the Indian, and one man took a boat through, then returned for another, all 4 boats running the rapids suc-

*(Continued on page 3)*

*(Continued from page 2)*

cessfully, and on we went. but Mr. Indian led 3 boats over a waterfall about 3 ft. I had been told of this place by an old timer and saved my boat, shipping about 10 buckets of water, the other boats, 50. Our only other stirring adventures being several rapids in which the other boys had turned their boats keel up. But the meanest place I saw was to run around a large whirlpool.

My boat went through first and I didn't see Mr. Pool until we were right on top of it. I had time only to swing off and sail along the high comb on the outer edge. Soon as we were safely through I signaled the next boat and he followed my course, but an oarsman dipped his oar to find no water, and off the seat he went backwards, his oar having dropped into the mouth of the whirlpool.

After 30 miles of Dease Lake and 200 Miles of Dease River we joined the Liard River—quite a river at the end of June, at least 100 yds. wide by 4 ft. to 6 ft. deep and flowing 5 to 6 miles per hour. A quarter mile up is Liard Hudson's Bay Post. We roped and poled our boats up the opposite bank, to a quarter-mile above the Post then rowed across. All the Indians came to edge of bluff to see us, and the H.B.C. representative, Mr. Egnold, ran up the British flag in our honor. The flag having H.B.C. in large white letters across it, showing who really owned the country.

July 3 - All the imagination you can muster is not half enough to let you have the slightest appreciation of the method and amount of work required in going upstream against a very swift current, hauling 3000 lbs. We have loops on the end of the rope, into which you poke your head and one arm, the rope passing over one shoulder and under the other so down you get to work. Into the knee-deep water, now around this stump or projecting log up to your armpits, now hanging on to some steep, muddy bank or falling and stumbling over green mossy boulders. All the while the fellow in the boat seems to be hunting all the shallow spots and running the boat aground. Now over, under and around immense log jams, criss-crossing the river to avoid one difficulty possibly to encounter one much worse. Here we must pole along a bank. We pass under immense spruce trees that hang and sway to and fro by the action of the current, along the mossy bank filled with a network of long tender-looking but very strong roots, and we cut away trees and brush. And now we cross the head of a slough, it requiring all hands to man a single boat, the current being so swift that it requires the utmost effort to keep our equilibrium. Frequently I saw boulders 6 and 8 in. in diameter rolling over and down the riffles. This up-river work reads and sounds better and more pleasant than it is in reality. Working hard all day soaking wet, and at night and day tormented by millions of mosquitoes. Our favorite sleeping quarters were the sand bars, away from the brush, in which the mosquitoes sit and hold consultations, as to any new method that they might conjure, to enter our cheesecloth veils.

Further, by selecting a sand bar to sleep upon, you are always sure to get advantage of any air that might be stirring to drive away the mosquito pests. As an example of their numbers I killed at one slap on the back of my hand 27 of the pests and in a few minutes killed 100

*(Continued on page 4)*

*(Continued from page 3)*

just for fun on my knee cap. Frequently have I seen them bend their proboscis, while testing for color and they would sit upon their hind legs and with their front legs as pliers, straighten and repair the drilling and pumping apparatus. It would surprise you all very much to see in what a short length of time one of these birds will pump his tank full, yes until so heavy that he resembles a toy balloon in shape, and can hardly fly. I have watched them take short flights and rest on a good stout limb for safety sake. I have seen some of the boys tearing around shaking out their blankets at 3 a.m. "It being twilight all night" trying to free themselves of the pests.

Fifty miles from Liard Post we turn right, up the Francis River. Ninety mile up this and the Pelly, is Francis Lake, said to be its head, and almost head of boat navigation. The Francis flows through 4 canyons and empties its bluish black water into the Liard, whose clear pure water heads northwest for some 250 miles, coming from the hills near the Pelly Divide.

From the time we started from Dease Lake we tried our gold pan at every opportunity for colors, found many but all too light to pay, the best being \$5 to \$6 per day. We found the Liard very swift and full of sloughs, riffles, debris and immense log jams. After over a month of this sport, we arrived at our destination and prospected the district to the best of our ability. Not finding enough to warrant our wintering there, we decided August 29 to return and in two and one half days after leaving our up river camp we had covered 250 miles or that distance which had consumed over a month in going upstream. Arriving at Liard Post we sold our provisions, cached hardware and clothing, and stayed a couple days there.

Sep 3 - Three of us, left Liard Post after being very hospitably entertained by Mr. Egnold, who fed us new potatoes and cabbage, and red radishes. Quite a contrast to beans and bacon. We started from the Post with our outfit and grub on our back, for Glenora, 262 miles away. At the 15-mile point my two partners threw away half their pack, socks, moccasins, and blanket, hat etc. Fifty-five miles from the Post our trail came to the river again. Here we found hidden in the brush a spruce bark canoe. Collecting pitch from spruce trees, we partially stopped the leaks. Two of us stepped gently aboard and using a root and a small piece of old board for paddles we made the opposite shore safely, though we had only 2" free board in a fairly ugly current. I returned for each fellow after emptying out the water, that had oozed in during the two trips, shipping the last man we soon safely made our landing.

Sep 19 - Safely we pulled into Glenora after having tramped 262 miles (Indian miles at that) and of course no steamboat was at hand. The season was now drawing to an end, the cold at nights cutting the flow of the upper river, and all the mountain rivulets were dried up, lowering of the waters of the Stikine River. After 6 days' patient waiting, we boarded the Casca and headed south downstream on her last trip for the season. We made a few miles before dark and then tied up for the night. The following day we had some novel river navigation running rapids fairly bounding over riffles as the boat trembled from stem to stern

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

every time she would strike a small boulder. Twice the Casca got away from the pilot and crashed into log jams smashing and carrying away everything before us and part of our upper work and bow post included. Much credit is however due the pilot for his really wonderful skill displayed in handling such a large boat in the navigation of the swift and dangerous Stikine.

Sep 26 - Arrived at Fort Wrangell.

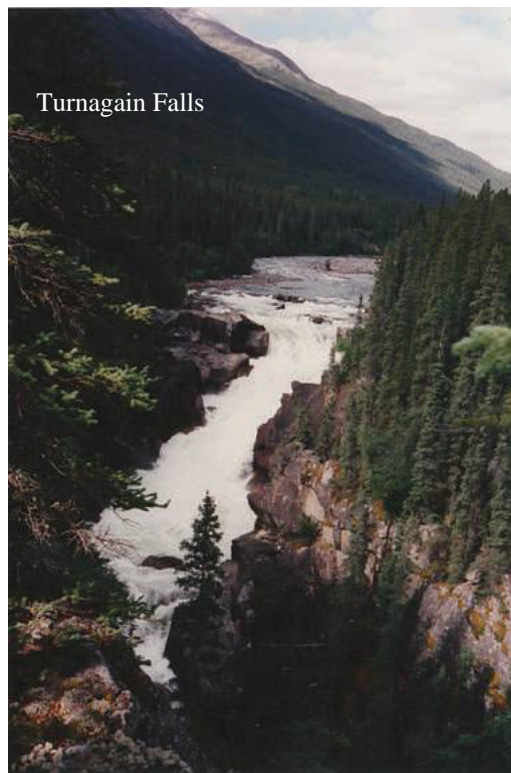
*The preceding story is extracted from the diary and letters of my grandfather, William L. Whitaker, 1867-1940, who made this trip in 1898. The Stikine and Dease Rivers are in B.C. and this section of the Laird River is in the Yukon. The material is copyrighted and may not be reproduced without my express permission.. Bill Whitaker*

## Two Generations and a Century Later

By Bill Whitaker

The summer of 1995 found me riding in one of two pickup trucks headed 1000 miles north from Calgary, Alberta, toward Dease Lake, BC, where my grandfather and his party had built the boats they used to reach the Laird River and the area they planned to prospect. Our party of six with three tandem canoes, after running a 500-mile shuttle, was planning to fly from Dease Lake into Boulder City Lake on the headwaters of the Turnagain River and then over ten days follow the Turnagain into the Kachika River and finally into the Laird to reach the small town of Fireside 180 miles down river on the Alaska Highway.

Unlike my grandfather's party, dressed in wool, canvas and leather using self made wooden boats, we were outfitted with ABS and Kevlar canoes, quick-drying nylon clothing, Gore-Tex rain gear, neoprene footwear and Deet insect repellent.



Turnagain Falls

A t

Dease Lake, within a half mile of where my grandfather's party built their boats, we loaded our gear and boats on a 1956 de Havilland Otter Float Plane and in two trips arrived on the headwaters of the Tur-

*(Continued on page 6)*

*(Continued from page 5)*

nagain River. The Turnagain is a series of half-mile-long boulder garden rapids with the only serious obstacle being a falls located below the only large island on the river.

We had been told we would have to portage the falls on river left. There was no information on the height of the falls, only that it was unrunnable and dropped into a Class IV rapids below—all requiring a mile-and-a-half portage. After passing the island, we soon spotted a horizon line at the end of yet another half-mile minor rapid with a gravel bar down the center and pulled into an eddy on river left. Fortunately, our trip leader decided to bushwhack down and take a look and came back to say that he couldn't see a good place to stop before the horizon line in the left channel, but that there was a school-bus-sized eddy at the end of the right channel. We decided to ferry over to the right channel and deal with getting to the

left side later if necessary. We all pulled into the eddy at the end of the right channel without incident and walked down about six or eight boat lengths to find ourselves looking



over the top of a falls well over a hundred feet high! There was no noise or spray from the falls. Our intended left channel ran clear to the drop against a high cut bank and with no place to stop.

The portage occupied all of the next day to move the boats and gear a mile and a half with virtually no trail—just blazes on the trees to show the route. In one place we had to cut down small trees to make room as we carried, pushed, shoved and dragged boats across the portage. Again afloat, we dropped a mile or so downstream to find a good camping spot and were visited by an inquisitive black bear after supper. The bear departed quickly after a bear-banger (rocket-propelled firecracker) went off next to him.

*(Continued on page 7)*

*(Continued from page 6)*

The rest of the trip was enjoyable but uneventful as we covered as much as 35 miles a day on the large, swift-flowing and glacial Kachika River, then a short stretch of the Laird to our takeout. We passed Lower Post on the Laird on our drive back to Dease Lake to pick up the other vehicle. Only some tumbled-down log cabins and a historical marker were left at that once-busy river junction.



Photos: Camp below Turnagain Falls and scenes from the Turnagain River.  
Bill is in the stern.



# I'm Not Lost. Just Confused

By James Work

[Ed. Note: Jim Work is a local author whose latest book is the humorous Don't Shoot the Gentile. It should be in bookstores soon.]

Let me say that I'm a fair hand with compass and map. When my friends call me "Magellan" and refer to my maps as "the funny papers" they are only kidding. At any given moment I can tell you which county we are in with an eighty percent rate of accuracy. Using only a wristwatch as a compass I can generally tell you not only that we are lost, but where we are lost at.

In my native Rocky Mountains the major peaks are identifiable at fifty miles distance and rivers run downhill. But in Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness the highest landmark is usually an eagle perched on a dead pine and rivers appear to flow in circles. To further complicate the navigation, sitting in a canoe gives you the same line of vision as lying on your stomach.

Given your knee-high line of sight and "terrain" that is largely flat bodies of water from which spring occasional wooded warts called "islands," reading a topo map becomes as challenging as translating Babylonian Cuneiform.

For the benefit of the uninitiated, I also need to point out that in the BWCA there is no such thing as a "sign" (unless you count



Sharon and Jim Work in Canada

the steaming brown piles marking where your food bag used to be). There are no trail markers, no portage posts, no "You Are Here" billboards at major trail intersections. Come to think of it, there aren't even any intersections. If you can't look at a map and tell where you are, you are in a condition technically known as LOST. Unless you have a GPS. Unless it's a GPS like mine, which only tells me that I'm actually floating in another lake altogether.

People who accompany me into the wilds of the BWCA never question my path-finding until we have circled the same wooded wart six times. Then the grumpy remarks begin, as if the bow paddler somehow has a God-given right to know where we're going.

Bow paddlers tend to be overly fixated on moving toward specific destinations, such as the put-in point we left four days ago. Or the campsite. So every few minutes I jab my finger at the map and mutter, or I hammer the

*(Continued on page 9)*



compass with the butt end of my paddle as if making a precision needle adjustment. They think I'm navigating. More than likely I'm trying to assassinate a mosquito before it can land on a major artery.

Three or four seasons ago we portaged into Horse Lake on our way to Basswood. I stood at the portage aiming my compass, examining the map, aiming the compass again. I did this a half dozen times, mostly to give the bow paddler time to hike back over the trail for the rest of our stuff. I would help her, but she always looks so darn proud and determined as she comes climbing over the rocks dragging two Duluth packs, three paddles and the food bag.

Just after launching into Horse Lake I noticed three boats following us. When we stopped at Wart Island for a gorp break they pulled alongside.

"Saw you shooting the azimuth," the leader



We hit the beach too fast...

said. "Figured you knew where to go. Me, I can't read a map for sour apples so we followed you."

Well, it frightened me out of a year's growth. I don't mind getting my own BP lost, but it scares me spitless to be responsible for leading three more boats into the Unknown.

"Yeah," I replied manfully. "We'll be at the next portage in a half hour or so."

I didn't have the heart to tell him that I had only been studying the map to avoid having to help the BP carry the equipment. The lesson here is that your apparent leader might be a big fat liar. Just because a person happens to own a map and compass does *not* mean that they know what to do with it. But that's what happens, just like when I pick up the remote control and BP automatically assumes I know how to program the DVR. Bear in mind, though, that this is the same BP who pointed out a muskrat and called it a beaver, took sixteen photos of a duck and labeled them "Canadian Loon" and who looked at a female moose and wondered what a mule was doing that far back in the woods.

That same BP can often spot a gravel beach and well-worn trail and leap to the conclusion that it's the portage I've just spent an hour searching for. And don't assume that all maps are accurate, either. The Fisher Map Co. Inc. seems to enjoy playing little jokes on me. Like showing an inlet that is actually a high cliff or a little narrow lake that turns out to be Lake Superior. The BP and I once did the J-

*(Continued on page 10)*

stroke through a two-mile bog of lily plants because Fisher said it was the way to another lake. And when we got to where the lake was, it was a hill.

Or the map gets the name of the lake wrong. We once paddled all the way around Triangle Lake trying to figure out why it was the wrong shape while the silly map kept insisting it was Ojibway Lake.

But I can't fault the mapmakers. I, too, have drawn erroneous maps, mostly for buddies who beg for directions to my favorite fishing hole. Two of them were arrested for trespassing on a U.S. Government missile site. Who would keep following a handmade map if it meant crawling under a chain like fence with a sign saying "Stay Alive by Staying Out"?

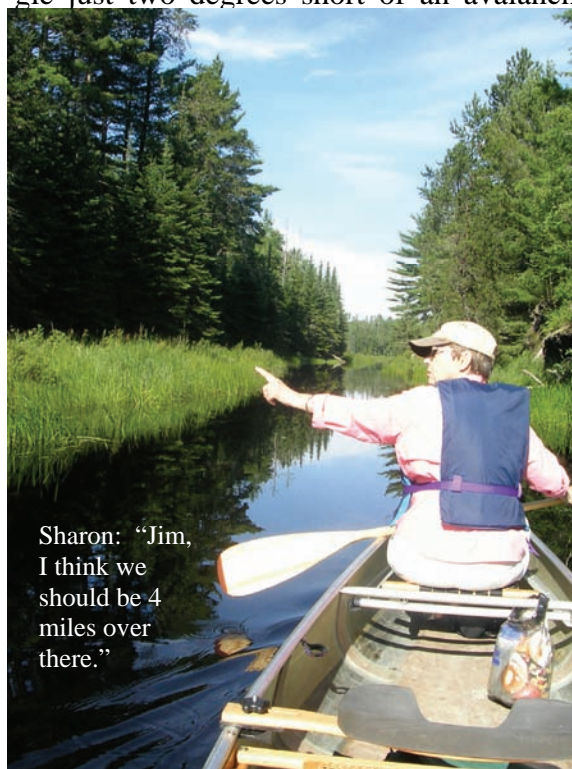
Despite all this, I am a neurotic sort of navigator. I keep my maps in a zippered plastic envelope tied to the thwart. I've sometimes told the BP that I would rather go without her than go without my maps. And she feels the same way. I keep a spare compass in my pack, another one in my lunch bag and a compass in a pocket of my PFD, attached by a string. Partly I'm paranoid about losing them. Partly it's because I have so many compasses that I feel obliged to bring them along. I'm not sure why, but everyone in my family and every person I've ever paddled with has given me a compass for Christmas.

Let's look at a few problems found in the BWCAW, starting with THE PROBLEM OF THE MYSTERIOUSLY MULTIPLYING PORTAGES. This happens when you are returning to base—or at least you hope you are—and you are trusting to you memory of the inbound route to take you back again to the land of soft beds and hard liquor. Let us say, hypo-

thetically, that you make a left or right turn (the reverse of the inbound turn) a little too soon, say by four or five miles.

But you find a portage anyway. Which leads to a lake. Which leads to two more portages that sort of look familiar. Which lead twenty miles into a dead end. Little known fact: BWCAW portages can multiply or diminish at will. A well-known portage from a familiar lake—let's say Lake Insula, as a fictitious example—splits, divides, and dumps me into a lake I have never seen in my life. Another phenomenon known as Geological Shift can cause a trail to run uphill one day and downhill two days later.

It is related to another phenomenon familiar to the fifty-something paddler: Quintannual Tectonic Uplift, which leaves the water flat but increases the height of all the hills. One year a portage crosses a slight wart of land, and five years later it has increased to an angle just two degrees short of an avalanche.



Sharon: "Jim, I think we should be 4 miles over there."

This can be accompanied by a marked increase in gravity, making it seem like you weigh ten pounds more than on the previous trip.

But back to the topic. What do you do when you have blithely ignored your compass, your heading, your azimuth and possibly your Bow Paddler and find yourself in the wrong lake? I generally find a good wart of an island, one large enough to appear on a map but small enough to walk around. I act nonchalant, saying to the BP “you look tired. Let’s take a break on this little ol’ island.” Or maybe I tell her I’d like to examine some riparian mineral specimens. Or that I need to pee, which at my age is usually the truth.

I tie up the ol’ Wenonah, fix myself a snack and walk around the verge of the island taking compass headings to every distinguishable feature I can see. Ninety-seven degrees to that cliff across the water. Forty degrees to a halfmoon bay. Twenty-one degrees to another lumpy rock island. Then I sit down with the map and look for where we are. It’s much like doing a jigsaw puzzle. I act nonchalant again so I won’t frighten the BP.

“Map? What map? Oh, this one! There was some water in the plastic envelope so I’m just drying it out. Can’t risk mosquito larvae hatching inside the plastic.”

I choose an island on the map. This one has another one right next to it. This one has a straight shoreline. I keep it up until I find one that has the same features at the same compass bearings. If that doesn’t work I put away the Fourtown Lake map and try the map of Mudro Lake. You never know . . . or at least I don’t.

Another BWCAW problem is what I call THE UNMAPPED CAMPSITE. Maps have

little red dots where campsites are supposed to be. Some navigators find these to be reliable landmarks.

Let’s say, however, that we are coming across Lake Two in search of the portage to Lake One. And Confusion Lake is just over the wart ahead. Hypothetically, let’s say it’s a bit windy. What the heck: let’s say it’s very windy. So windy that if you actually follow the azimuth from camp to portage you will end up somewhere in Ontario. In lieu of trustworthy compass headings you navigate by looking for shoreline features—several of which your mind will modify in its anxiety to be off the lake.

That thing over there looks like an island, for example, but since the map doesn’t show any island, it must be part of the shore. That hill is not as high as the map indicates, but it has to be the right one. (And wasn’t there an eagle perched on that dead pine three days ago?) You spot a place where a campsite should be—the map has a telltale red dot in a cove—but there is no campsite. Stupid map. Forest Service probably moved the site and forgot to tell the map company to erase the red dot.

Onward! Hut!

Now you round a bend where another camp site ought to be (but isn’t) and your binoculars pick out not one but TWO campsites in the distance. They cannot be there because there are no red dots on your map in that direction. So you decide to write off two blue tents, three aluminum canoes and laundry drying on a clothesline as a mirage.

*(Continued on page 12)*

“Aren’t those the campsites you said to watch for?” chirps the BP.

“No! *Those* camps don’t exist. If we are where I think we are, there are no campsites in that direction. Onward! Hut!”

Nevertheless, the dialogue continues.

“Is that bay supposed to be there?”

“Does your map show this island we just circled three times?”

“That fisherman over there, the one holding a can of Leinenkugel beer, is he on the map?”

“Mirages, all of them. Keep paddling. Hut!”

“Look over there! They’ve moved Kawishiwi Lodge to from Lake One to Lake Two!”

So you decide to approach the fisherman and ask him how to get to the landing. You can tell he’s a Minnesota native because points without getting up out of his lounge chair and has mastered the trick of pointing with his beer can while wiping foam off his mustache with his forearm.

“You betcha,” he says. “Just paddle around that little headland and turn left. You can’t miss it.”

*Can’t miss it?* You don’t know ME, Skippy.

Probably the most mysterious of all BWCAW phenomena is one I call THE FORKING WRONG PORTAGE.

There is a certain “river” in the BWCAW  
Page 12

which, unlike any river I ever knew, divides itself to flow in two different directions. It flows so slowly that you can only tell which way it’s going by looking at the underwater grass to see which way it is bent.

Let us imagine that you were paddling downstream along HypoRiverThetical for several miles and came to a portage. And that the portage has one of those unmarked forks in it. Let’s say that you carried the boat across, dropped it in the river, returned for your stuff, dropped it in the boat, unwrapped the BP’s arms from around the birch tree, suggested she stop yelling “you can’t make me go!” dropped her in the boat and resumed your voyage down the river.

But after a few miles a realization strikes you. Or rather, a question. If we are still



Doggie Duncan’s First Canoe Trip: Wasn’t there a cabin here?

going downstream, why is the grass bending towards us? Because, Sparky, you’re on the wrong crick. There were two routes that forked and you picked the wrong one. Gee, what are the odds of that happening to a man who carries four compasses?

(Continued on page 13)

Among possible causes for this navigational error is the aforementioned fact that this river can split and go in two directions. Secondly, all portage trails look alike. Especially when your head is stuck up inside a canoe hull. Third, the fork veered to the left while I tend to over-compensate toward the right. I do it deliberately, and I will explain why.

I am a powerful and efficient stern paddler and tend to favor my right side which is even stronger than my left. The wimpy BP on the other hand prefers to make little and often random dips in the water with her paddle on the left side. This activates what I call the Factor of Un-Compensated Kinetics, causing us to tangent off to the left without realizing it. Given water enough and time enough, F.U—well, those kinetics—eventually bring us in a full circle back to our starting point. Or somewhere in Ontario.

Another reason for taking the wrong trail is that the BP said to. I am too caring and considerate to contradict her when she says “should we go this way?” I’ve been married long enough to know that “should we go this way?” means “we *are* going this way” just as “would you rather have steak or stew tonight?” means “we’re having hash.” I never contradict her. And if she says I do, she’s lying.

Finally, I blame Colorado’s dry climate for occasionally being off course. I store the canoe on its side, supported by a variety of paint cans and beer coolers. Over the winter it becomes a storage shelf for boards, plumbing fixtures and car parts, and Colorado’s lack of humidity creates a warp that makes the boat go crooked while paddling toward portages in Minnesota.

In conclusion, my advice is to pay attention to landmarks and try to trust your map. Remember that the top part with the writing on it goes north. If you have two compasses pinned to

your PFD there IS a possibility that they are pointing at one another. And if you do get confused, pull over and stop while you figure out where you are. Or where you aren’t, which amounts to the same thing. If your BP is anything like mine she will enjoy these frequent navigational pauses because they give her a chance to do her nails, read a book or knit sweaters for the grandkids she hopes one day to see again.

Oh, and even if your eyesight is excellent, bring along a magnifier. Portage marks on maps are very tiny. A magnifier can help identify minute land features that you may overlook with the naked eye, such as a sixty-foot waterfall or the Kawishiwi Lodge. For some reason, family members and canoe companions also give me magnifiers for Christmas.

And I give them souvenirs we picked up in Ontario.

[Ed Note: Two years ago I spent two days telling my fellow Yampa River travelers that the river was going NE, contrary to any map we carried. I knew this because I keep a compass strapped to a thwart because, as you know, whoever has the compass knows where they are going! However, both nights, upon reaching camp, immediately after I unstrapped my steel beach chair from the compass thwart, the river suddenly veered SW! Go figure!]

## Flotilla: Poudre Paddler Officers

President	Mike Koliha	970 226 0426
Vice President	Greg Brigham	970 221 0896
Trip Coordinator	Richard Ferguson	303 499-2871
Newsletter	Eric Hermann	970 482-8339
Instruction	Eric Hermann	
Conservation	Steve Luttmann	970 691-4572
Librarian	Roger Faaborg	970 269-4182
Membership	Randy Knauff	970 667-7150
Treasurer	Mary Peck	970 484-6309
Webmaster	Will Golson	
Past President	Will Golson	970 207-0101

Poudre Paddlers Club  
P.O. Box 1565  
Ft. Collins, CO 80522