

EXCERPTS
PERSONAL DIARY OF GUY BLANCHET

Norman Wells to Sheldon Lake - 1942

October 13

Col. Wyman and J.G. Turnbull arrived. Discussed my trip to Sheldon Lake.
Cold and dull.

October 14

Col's party left. JGT assured me that there would be no failure to meet me
at Sheldon - - he himself would come, Dec. 1.

Moved party from Contractor's mess, reopened our own.

Reorganized camp and tried to give ^{J. R.} Wells assurance and sense of responsibility.

Sent Bill to Oil Well.

October 15

Winter coming slowly. Mild, a little snow, no frost in the ground.

October 16 to 24

Andrew
Slowly organizing. Fred and Paul arrived with dog team on 18th. Fred, L.
Edward and George left for their camp 10 miles upstream on 20th to get gear and
try to get another dog team. Snow and cold on the 21st and 23rd but light
strong wind on the 24th. Ice running. All boats put into winter quarters -
Distributor and Mackenzie River in lee of Bear Island. That evening the men
returned with Joe Saul and his dogs - 4 teams fully equipped.

October 25

This day (Sunday) we set out moving by cat and trailers, 7 miles to end of
road at Heart Lake where we camped. Cut trail ahead. Corp. Ted Bolstad of
R.C.M.P. arrived with his dogs. Party now 7 with 25 dogs --too big. We have
certain food for the trip but require meal and dogs depended on it in a few
days.

October 26

Moved camp across Flint Creek in the morning (4 miles) and 2 sleighs in after-
noon back for cache. Snow scarcely covers the ground and hauling heavy.
Located trail ahead across mixed ridge and muskeg. Country gets worse to south.

October 27

Moved 8 miles to Carcajou Ridge. Hard on men and dogs. The men getting dis-
couraged with heavy sledding. Could not get cache up. Say too hard on dogs
and sled.

Decide to move to Carcajou and wait there for snow if necessary next day to

move up with Joe and Ted. Told Fred he and George for cache trip. Fred sulky losing face with others. Stuck to my point.

Heard wolves at night.

October 28

Heavy wet snow at night. At least the cover problem easier. We all got soaked by wet snow. Moved to Carcajou. Good approach by Spearing Creek. The valley unexpectedly wide. Some 125 ft. deep. River divided about large island and sand-bars about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in extreme. Camped on island. Ice thru some parts, open main stream, still open channel.

October 29

The rest of the party moved up. Decide to raft the open water. Still mild.

October 30

Gathered raft logs with dogs. Quite exciting crossing - one sleigh and dogs and three men on a trip. Fred showed up well. Moved a couple of miles. Woods thick and snow-laden and wet.

We have talked over the entrance to mountains. The Indians follow the ice of Sheep's Nest River through the canyon. I do not like this. Paul and Joe say there is a pass south of Sheep's Nest Mountain and decide to try this.

October 31

Paul and I cut trail. This climbs the bench above the river and heads up the slopes at steep grades. Timber very thick making work slow. Lost and found barometer.

After lunch trail became mountainous passing east and south of Sheep's Nest which was lost in mist.

We camp at a clump of dwarf trees which Paul said were the last. Made open camp, clear bright night with the mountain rising behind us.

November 1

Mist heavy on upper slopes, but mild. We climbed to a saddle which Paul said was the summit. Saw sheep tracks. Made a fire while Joe and Paul looked for a way down to Sheep's Nest River. The mist thinned and thickened giving views of the mountain peaks about us and showed a wild rugged country. Snow very light and in places country strewn with shale and sandstone - very hard on tobaggons.

When the boys returned they report impossible to follow down the pass as creek open. Worked down mountain slopes to lake more than a mile long when over to the river. Camp on a rock bluff 50 ft. above it. The river bed is some 200 ft. wide and small streams and boulder bars, high rocky banks. Little ice.

November 2

The boys asked for a day to hunt sheep and dry harness. Paul and I went downstream to examine the canyon. Little Edward, Fred and Ted hunting upstream. Joe off to the south. George in Camp.

The river drops steadily and entered the canyon with almost vertical walls hundreds of feet high. The river is so small that a road can be built on its bed. Scenery wildly grand. A few miles down Paul saw a ram on a rock slide. Fired 6 shots and got it. Hand clumb, then packed the meat down.

I decided the unnecessary to go further and returned to camp. Paul and George packed the meat in. Other hunters straggled back; Ted (had seen nothing), Joe, who had killed 3 sheep, Fred and Edward nothing. Joe hauled his meat in. There was a fresh meat gorge.

The sheep relieved the dog food situation.

Dull mild. Light snow.

November 3

Away early. Bad crossing past open water. Went through upper gorge - The Devils Elbow - the river widened to what may have been a lake and then forked. We followed the small southern fork. The steady climb brought us to small trees. The river bed was full of stones which were hard on toboggans.

Had lunch near headwaters and then through sharp narrow valley to where it swings off to the south. Paul led the way by steep climb up a saddle.

The upper river and the climbs are bad but they say there is a better road by North Fork.

The saddle is bare but the west slope is well-timbered. We followed this down, picked up the head of a small stream and held it to camp.

From the saddle Paul pointed the road across an upland and to a distant pass with Falls Mountain to the south. The weather turned a little cooler and clear. We had to swing southward along our creek. Paul says they cross the ridge to the west but it is steep. We continue to a fork with a larger stream and climb these.

November 4

We followed the stream to where it runs into "Mountain Closing River" a fair size with strong water. Searched til we found an ice bridge and cross ed. Climbed out of the valley to an extensive plateau where lunch.

We continued across the plateau criss-crossed with caribou tracks, picked up a stream and followed up it. In the late afternoon reached its head behind which is another high saddle.

We climbed this but found the drop on the other side impossible. Very hard on dogs. Saw fresh grizzly track there. Backtracked to a fork in a stream. Paul said he had made a mistake.

November 5

Paul went ahead of North Fork and we followed. Saw a fresh caribou rill and tracks of 2 wolves.

Met Paul returning. He said this pass was good. This completed the road he had undertaken to show us and he wanted to return. He agreed to act as guide with Wells until Joe came back.

The pass proved fair on the other side, crossed Stony Creek and over sloping high bench reaching back from Carcajou River. Splendid location though covered with tundra and small spruce. Lunch at Deep Creek Valley. Continued to Carcajou. The river is open and we had to follow backwaters and boulder bars.

November 6

The lack of snow and open water are delaying us and making progress slow. Continued chiefly on bars. I drove Edward's dogs and sprained a foot between toboggan and a boulder.

Continued to the Castles - 2 conspicuous mountains where we had to cross to south side. Ice flooded and an open channel. Fred found an ice bridge. His sleigh got into deep water and his and my outfit wet. Ted's leader plunged into open river - hauled him out. Finally all got across -- then ice bridge went out.

I made a splint for my foot. Had to climb above a cliff then back to river, better going. Two fair streams from south. The river swings northward about a mountain. Passed an open "hot spring". Fred pointed to what he said was a better road by the Fox Plains which avoided some bad river and joined our road farther up. I left a note then.

Made camp at the upper canyon. We cut down to one tent -- very crowded. Set 2 stoves which made it comfortable.

Decidedly cold night.

I am beginning to worry about too many men and dogs to feed. We must cut down soon, which means Ted and Joe.

November 7

Mild and misty. We were away early. The ice was generally fair and we followed it. Above the restricted portion, the valley widens into what was a lake at one time and into this the two headwater streams flow. Bluefish (Bolstad) from the SW and a smaller stream from the north. While we were proceeding along this stretch, Ted shouted "sheep". A band of about 30 was feeding on a grassy plain bordering the river. They took off and we stopped. Joe went ahead with 2 dogs to stop them while we made a fire and the inevitable meal. After an hour or so Edward and I went on. George hunting and Ted waiting. I drove George's dogs. Trouble with flooded ice. Travelled to near the head of the old lake and made camp. At fair timber with much

old cutting. This stretch is wide, chiefly bolder pass. To the south a range of conical crumbling mountains lie between the river and Fox Plains. The norther mountains are more solid and to the west is a high white range. The hunters returned -- no luck. Joe's leader had chased the sheep across a rock slide & torn the nails from his paws. Painful and bleeding. They told me it took a year to grow in. Carcajou River comprises the long view past the Castles, the Reverse Curve, the Canyon and then past Glacial Lake.

November 8

There was a discussion last night. The usual story, sleighs and harness wet, dogs tired, not much meat. Reluctantly I agreed to stop a day to hunt, repair and dry. Fred off one way, Joe and George another, Ted and Edward drying and repairs.

Told Ted I was afraid we'd have to cut down the party.

In the afternoon saw Joe and George on a high saddle hauling sheep. They had two. Fred came in late. He had been far ahead and had killed a ram.

There was no cheerfulness in camp. Speaking to Fred of this he said Little Edward was complaining all the time.

Fred and Little Edward are dramatic story tellers, tales of the old days. They go on and on two or three hours. The story teller's voice rises and falls to a whisper. There are long pauses. The audience listen intently. Edward interjects at frequent intervals-- continues after the story is finished.

It is camp life of the Indians where a good story teller beguiled the long evening. Tales handed down and perhaps embellished better than books for it was entertainment for all. Fred says he heard these from his father and his two old uncles. They go back to magic of the medicine man.

November 9

There must have been talk of plans last night for before breakfast Fred opened by saying if ^{we}were splitting the party we might as well here. Actually we got no benefit from extra teams and they used dog and man food and gave Little Edward more work as cook. It was only on Ted's account that I had hesitated, so readily agreed that Joe and Ted turn back from here. We made hasty readjustment, said goodbye and set out. Fred, George and Little Edward with their dogs. I on ahead. Still mild.

After a couple of miles of narrow valley we broke from the hills to an extensive plateau (the one noted on our first flight). To the west is the high range. SW the river enters fairly high mountains with no indication of a pass, to the left are the Fox Plains, a continuation of the plateau.

The high land is stony and the bottom a bit swampy. Trees become small and scattered, 5 miles out we made tea at a clump of dwarfs and a few miles beyond picked up Fred's ^{van}run. The mountains closed in to a pass. As this narrowed, one branch from the south ended at a sweep of high mountains. We followed one that turned sharply right. We climbed to the head of our stream, followed a clean pass, narrow but long slopes to low mountains. A new stream

started and developed rapidly as we descended. There was a high ²²craggy mountain to the right and low crumbling slopes to left. The creek bed all rock, irregular, large fragments. Ice poor and broken. Stream had been high at freeze up and had fallen. Water on ice in places. This was the stretch Fred had warned me was bad. The creek must be followed. We travelled till almost dark and made an open camp on a small bench with good timber and much old cutting. Everything simpler with the small party. The accident to my foot makes travel difficult. Still wearing the splint.

Quite cheerful party.

November 10

Up at 4 and away with first dawn. We followed down Devil Creek a short distance when it turned S and SE, dropping sharply in a narrow rugged valley. We turned up a small branch from the west, followed the upper slopes and ultimately climbed above timber to a wide pass with no high peaks. A tepee-shaped one lay ahead. We made tea mountain Indian fashion from a beehive shaped pile of green and dry willow. It was raw and hard to keep warm. The misty sky settled to a light snowstorm as we proceeded. Fred pointed to a wide valley to the NW where he said Front Lake, the head of a branch of Mountain River, lay. As we approached Teepee Mountain he said he was uncertain of the road ahead. There was some confusion. A small stream started down the slope passing south of Teepee Mountain and there were two peaks to the south west. Finally he said he'd go ahead. He followed down a bit then up a small feeder. Everything was vague in the falling snow - very bleak and barren with dim outlines of mountains. We follow - I dropping behind. Our stream led to another high pass. We cross a fair lake at its head. Fairly good going with some rough tundra. Little Edward waited for me and rode across the lake. We heard howling ahead - wolves. Presently 5 appeared, 1 very large black. Edward got his rifle and fired for the black. They scattered up the mountain side and another pack ahead also appeared. We caught up to Fred who was standing by his upturned toboggan with an axe. He said 14 had closed in on him, 6 blacks and 8 yellow. The dogs had gone wild and the wolves howled, while he shouted. Asked why he didn't shoot, he said Bad Medicine. He was very much a wild Indian and seemed to have been concerned only with his dogs. They said a wolf could always kill a dog. I wondered what would have happened if they had closed in from behind when I was far in the rear. We found the picked bones of a moose nearby.

We crossed several small lakes and followed a stream draining from them. Fred said he didn't know this pass with the large lake but that we were now on a river he remembered. I called it Deka (Wolf) River.

This picked up rapidly - the usual stony bed and uncertain or flooded ice. A branch came in from the north and the river became more gorgelike but the valley is wide and the slopes moderate to fairly high mountains. We reached straggling trees as dusk settled, then a small wooded bench where we made camp.

I was rather low-spirited over today's travel.

November 11

Up early and away before dawn. Our river swings to SE (to Tooritchie) so we left it, climbed a low hill to a pass over a divide and down along another

stream - Ant Hill Mountain River.

This is similar to the others as it drops rapidly to the Tooritchie. The stony bed and bad ice made hard travel. We left it on its lower course and climbed over a shoulder of the mountain to the Valley of Tooritchie (Twitya). This river was open - a big disappointment. It is a good-sized river in a well defined valley between high mountain ranges. There are well timbered benches with spruce and black poplar.

One of the risks we had taken was that we should meet the caribou migration here. There had been some doubt when the season proved so mild. Our meat supply was low. So it was a great relief when we saw fresh tracks and presently a bull on the ice. Fred shot and hit him but he made off. We decided to camp while Little Edward hunted. Found a good old camp site in big spruce and so Edward returned. He had seen 3 and shot 1. George went for it with his dogs. Ammunition low so must be careful.

Fred says there is a better place to hunt about 7 miles upstream where we leave the river. These little caribou are the same as those of the Barren Grounds.

November 12

A very bad day, mild snowing, no visibility. The river mostly open and the banks bad. Spent a hard morning making little progress. Had to cross to south side and climb shoulders of the mountain.

Reached camp early. No caribou tracks; probably open water accounts for this.

The discussion not cheerful that night. Fred at his worst "I don't know". We decide to go and trust to sheep and moose.

Tooritchie River divides here into 3, Tooritchie with Caribou middle and Bluefish south. We follow the last.

Moose do not come down from upper slopes till snow deep.

November 13

We followed up Bluefish River; the first few miles were through narrow valley then this widens to 2 or 3 miles with moderate ranges. L.E. sighted sheep on the crest of a mountain Fred climbed after them, winged a young one which got away and brought down a ewe which tumbled off a cliff and rolled down slide almost to our fire. This relieved the dog food situation a little but sheep too costly in ammunition. L. Edward showed me a stump cut with a stone axe.

We passed a vertical gorge where the river cut through a ridge, beyond this is one of the post-glacial lake beds. This ends in gravel lake benches; high, but scattered trees.

November 14

Away at dawn over a series of benches and lakes which form the head of ^{Godlin} Godlin River. After our first fire, Fred and George went ahead to hunt. L. Edward and I driving 3 teams. Continually one or other in trouble. Hard work.

Caught the hunters up at second fire— no luck. This at Egouché River. (Good valley, Fred says, all the way down).

Had to cross river — open, built a bridge. Heavy going, so camped early.

Quarrel about dog rations. L. Edward said Fred was using more than his share. Fed almost the last of the meat. Foot giving me the devil. Very cheerless evening. Turning cold.

November 15 (very cold - 45 below)

L. Edward off right after breakfast to hunt. I drove his dogs. We followed up Egouché and where it forks, took the left branch. Crossed series of benches in wide valley with high ranges. Fred shot a fox. Trees thinned and camped early at the last wood. Fred went ahead to look at the road. He does not know this part and has information from a sketch by an old Indian.

L. Edward came in - no luck. Long after dark, Fred returned. He made no comment and the others asked no question. I had the bad manners to ask what he had seen - he said nothing. What had he killed? - "a moose", and after awhile, "I kill a caribou too". We had fed the dogs flour and rice. The total supply was not enough for ourselves, without game the situation was very bad. This successful hunt cleared everything. The natives had been confident that they would find moose on the higher land but I had been wondering if it hadn't been rash to risk everything as we were. To go back was equally risky. It is a difficult situation that often occurs when you must balance nerve and good judgment. If successful, it was the proper thing to do, if not it was unjustifiably foolhardy.

November 16

Before we left camp, we loaded wood to capacity. It was about 50 below. Cold even when running. A little above camp the river enters a canyon which it follows for several miles. There is probably a good location on the bench. After about 7 miles, the restricted valley widens into an amphitheatre surrounded by mountains joined by saddles. It was here Fred killed. He had seen 2 bull and cow moose. The bulls are no good at this season. He made a good shot in the semi-darkness. Then he saw 15 caribou.

We made a camp with willow floor. We needed our 2 stoves to heat the tent. It was bitterly cold cutting up the moose. Finally got the meat in. Went to bed at 6 and get up at 5. It is dark at 4 p.m. and dawn breaks about 6.

Fred's stories occupy the evening - in Slavey, so I am isolated. Forced to think my own thoughts, sometimes happy often not.

The willow floor is quite comfortable after the frost comes out, but that depends on the yardstick of comfort.

The natives give the best of the meat to the dogs - not through consideration but they like hard meat if there is fat. My teeth are unequal to the task of gnawing and grinding. I often envy the dogs their luxurious steaks and roasts. We have little beside meat, soup and tea. The odd bit of bannock and fodder ~~and~~ rice.

With meat, we have only cold and weariness to cope with--and my foot.

November 17

For some days the high mountains to the south have cut off the sun by day and the moon at night. They shine brightly on the upper parts of the northern mountains. Our trail and camps have been lost in these white mountains. Cold by night as the surface of the moon -- often very beautiful. Today we remained in camp except Fred, who went ahead to study the country. He made a long day and only returned after dark. Again I asked what he had found. There was some talk in Slayey and George said no Indian likes to talk when he first "home"; ^{Fred said country bad. After he had camp and related the story} later, "killum moose" and then that he had seen a mountain far to the west that he thought he knew. "If it is that," he said, "we are on the right road". He had tried to find the pass of the old msn, but it was no good. Our road continues up the Egouché. He has seen 17 moose. He said in the country of no trees, it is all the same level as the valleys, only the mountains high. He knows the country well, north and south of us but had only travelled this way when he was very young. His life had been spent between the Yukon and Mackenzie and these mountains and valleys are his roads and hunting ground. The route is dolled with places "where I killum sheep or moose or caribou" or "where I make skin boat." He stopped me once to point to where a stream came through the mountains and said "I nearly cry last time I camp there; my little boy (now dead) play on the beach". Another time when he made me a map he showed a little lake up the Husky Dog River and told me "my girl Jessie burned there". He is a queer mixture of Indian and White. Somewhere in his family tree a French voyageur introduced a strain of joie de vivre and somewhere an old Conjuror implanted the belief in the old gods and devils.

L. Edward is all Indian, George has been to the Mission School. He is a good boy, capable but uncouth with nothing spontaneous.

November 18

Not quite so cold and bright after the early morning frosty air. Away before dawn with the mountains dim and ghostly, we had not gone far when a caribou was sighted. George shot and the caribou made off. Fred loosens 2 of the dogs. They soon caught up to the wounded animal which turned at bay--but he had no chance. The dogs lept on him and brought him down. A good picture of wolves attacking their quarry.

Five miles on we picked up Fred's moose. Two valleys opened up, one SW and one SE. Through the former we saw Fred's mountain. Probably the farthest high one is Itsi with the Selwyns nearer.

We took the SW one, a fine clean straight pass 2 or 3 miles wide. Lunch at a willow fire on the Divide at the head of the Egouché, then down a stream which we took to be Stony or Intga River. Moose and caribou tracks were everywhere.

We made a good afternoon's travel down our river, which started west and turned SW. In places we could use the ice, in others open or flooded. Saw many moose (17), no wolf tracks. The moose always made up mountain sides. Sun days very bright and low - between one and a mountain.

We made a good mountain Indian camp in the twilight in a good clump of big willows. At last we were away from crowding mountains.

Today's travel good road location.

November 19

We continued down Intga R, which curved to the south with a moderate range to west.

Reached country Fred knows with odd single trees.

Left the river where it swings off to SE. We took one valley but Fred showed me the one beyond as best for the road. It was snowing a little and hazy. Slopes covered with scrub black birch, hard breaking trail.

Beyond the pass we entered country of wide valleys and only distant scattered mountains. This is the start of the plateau. We followed up a small branch of Intga River, then a long stretch of tundra. Gravel River is off to the south with a fair-sized lake. In the pale afternoon we reached the Gravel and could follow along the edge of the ice, though many open places. Hurt my foot again and dropped far behind. Caught up at dusk to the others making camp at the last woods. A small scattering of fair trees on a slope to the north. The mountain here is called Lost Mountain. They tell me the people always pass this way and camp here. Our camps are always quite comfortable with the 2 stoves which soon drive out the cold and take the frost out of the brush. L. Edward produces supper in remarkably quick time and one can really relax in comfort with his pipe-- the natives have their long stories which last to bedtime at 6. I have to entertain myself as best I may. Fred made me a new map with more detail ahead. For the first time, it is clear that we follow Gravel River up to ~~Macallen~~ Pass. The moon shone mistily through falling frost. (Macmillan?)

November 20

Camped on a small island in Gravel River covered with high willows. We can see our way ahead to the pass. A wide bay of the plateau stretching in to the mountains that form the continental divide (the Selwyn Range). These and the ranges enclosing the approach are massive. The average elevation of the plateau is about 5000 ft. and the peaks rise above this to 8000. The plateau itself is rolling country covered thickly with scrub black spruce (black) and odd clumps of willow. The surface is usually tundra, in places swampy. To the north is an extensive area with small ponds known as Goose Flats.

We followed up Gravel River, a small stream flowing over clean gravel bed. On the ice, travel was easy, but when we had to take to the scrub it was the devil. Tempers were edgy, but relaxed in the comfort of a good camp where the usual evening life repeated itself. The long stories seem to

to make the natives happy, bringing back the life of the old days.

Fred told me that Christie Pass is too swampy and Upper Ross River the same. He said that from the oldest time the people always travelled by Macmillan Pass. There are two. One to the southwest by the South Fork, north of Ice Mountain to Sheldon Lake and the other northwest to North Fork and Mayo.

We passed a beaver house, fox and wolverene tracks. Strange that there seem to be no wolves here, though they tell me wolves very bad on Macmillan. Once Fred said his uncle and 2 small boys were attacked by more than 100. The boys climbed trees and shot with 22's and his uncle drove the wolves off with his rifle.

Fred complained tired - "too much Go Go all the time." We had time to spare for Dec. 1st so I agreed to stop a day when we reached trees if he was sure we could get meat ahead. He said there was always moose about Ice Mountain.

This is our last camp on the plateau without trees - I hope. This is a perfect night. A full moon is shining on the mountains, lighting up our road to the pass. The little river - almost at its end - divides about our small island with its brave forest of little willows. The dogs are scattered about sleeping peacefully. One wonders if those behind ever give thought to us and our venture, but they are probably lost in their small affairs.

Probably 4 more camps.

November 21

We are camped across the Divide 4 miles down by a small stream flowing into South Branch Macmillan River.

The plateau conditions continued to the summit with little sign of the pass. The reason is that the valley to the west is comparatively narrow, enclosed by high mountains and it makes a slight curve, giving the effect of being closed.

Fred tells me that the wind always blows here and that a high mountain overlooking our camp is called "Wind's Nest Mountain." I called this stream Nitsi River - Wind River.

Gravel River dwindled to a tiny brook rising in a sharp valley to the north. A gentle roll deflected this last. On the west side of this a spring trickles westward and this is the Continental Divide. Trees appear at the summit in tiny clumps which immediately increase in size on the Yukon side. The trees here are strikingly different from the last woods. They are species of balsam though different from any I have ever seen before.

The snow was deep on the Pass, piled up in the scrub and trail breaking was work for 2 and sometimes 3 men.

We reached good trees before dark and made a fine camp. The view up the pass at sunset was particularly fine especially to see trees and to think that the long trail behind us led to a good pass.

George's pups are always in trouble. Whenever we stop they want to play and get tangled up in the harness. The other night one of the dogs kept me awake howling. In the morning I asked L. Edward what was the trouble. He said "Liddlepup want to play. He hear other liddle pups play and no can go. He cry". Another time one of the pups got loose and barked all night. George told me "He proud to be free." Just the same, it is no fun driving the pups, continually untangling them but they are safe to handle.

Tomorrow we stay here and have a rest. I hope they are right about moose ahead, for our supply is melting and they feed lavishly.

November 22

This day of rest is fittingly Sunday. George went ahead to break trail and hunt. The Wind's Nest is living up to its name. A strong east wind is driving a scud of snow through the pass making us appreciate our fine camp in the trees. We did little today. It is 2 months since I had a hair cut and a month since a shave. This morning, Fred looked over and said "You all the same brother (~~W~~assion)." That was too much, so I had a shave - quite an astonishing tinge of white to my beard. Fred also shaved. He said he had only 3 hairs and wherever he looked in the no-stick country he could see 3 trees. L. Edward, who had nothing visible, shaved because we had been teasing him about getting his snowshoes tangled in his beard when breaking trail.

One day's rest does wonders. It makes you realize how wearing this hard travel is.

The natives are essentially improvident. When they have meat they feast no matter what the prospect ahead. It is useless to try to check them and I find myself accepting their philosophy.

November 23

The wind moderated but the Wind's Nest lived up to its reputation and blew us out of the pass.

The valley widened rapidly and trees became bigger and thicker. Our river grew into a fair stream but we had the usual experience with flood ice and bad ice, but had more use of it than any river yet.

We traveled west to clear a mountain mass then south to Last Mountains with the Itsi (Ice) Mountains ahead.

Light snow fell with poor visibility and the air was raw though not very low temperature. There is fair timber on the river flats and this is good beaver country.

We are down to one day of dog feed and practically nothing but tea and meat. We plan to make a short move and hunt tomorrow.

November 24

Another day of light snow and no visibility and again raw.

This is a bad day. We got up at 3:30 and traveled in the dark over bad ice.

L. Edward had to go back five miles to get his snowshoes. Indians are like this. After our first fire, Fred and George went hunting while L. Edward and I took the dogs to Glacier Creek and made camp. Hard, irritating work one man ahead breaking trail and one driving 3 teams (including the pups).

After camp set up, L. Edward went ahead to look at the river. Ran into 3 wolves which made off. A moose had been killed and frozen in the ice. They had eaten as much as they could tear off but much of it was still there. The hunter returned with no luck - too many wolves. George had been to the foot of the glacier. We fed out last meat to the dogs. No chance to make Sheldon tomorrow.

November 25

We are camped on Ross River above the canyon. Today the cold bit deep - below 60 and it was a tough job making camp in the cold and dark, and I hate to think of the hungry tired dogs.

The day started badly. I had slept cold and was in no humor for it when Fred woke George at 2:30. I said we couldn't make through anyway and why make it harder for ourselves traveling in the dark. Rather tense atmosphere but we waited till a tinge of grey showed in the stove pipe hole. We had a look at the moose frozen in the river but too much work to cut it out. After a few miles of river we started on the portage to Ross River which passes west of Itsi Mountains. It was hard to keep from freezing except when breaking trail and that was hard work.

Beautifully clear and had the fine view of Itsi Mountains.

This is an easy pass, rising and falling in long slopes. We followed some open marsh and crossed 2 lakes, but there is good ground on either side.

No tracks of any kind.

November 26

Bitterly cold early and clear - then clouded over with falling frost. Became milder but raw and sharp wind.

We made a 7-mile portage past the Canyon, then followed the winding Ross River. Ice fair to bad. This continual bad ice makes one careless, but we have all broken through without serious consequences.

We ate our last scraps for breakfast and had to make Sheldon for our next meal. Mt. Sheldon seemed to take an interminable time to overhaul.

Reached Field Lake and finally could see Fred MacLennan's cabin with smoke rising from it. Arrived at 1. He had put up fish and I had sent supplies there by plane in Sept., so we and our dogs feasted.