

This is an excerpt from Jeanne Connolly Harbottle's unpublished 102 page (due to pagination errors, the actual count is 97) manuscript *Heels and Heroes* (Yukon Archives – Bud & Jeanne Harbottle fonds, Acc 82/171 MSS 012). This extract (p 16 to end) is an account of their trip from Macmillan River YT (~M262W) to Norman Wells NT via vehicle and then on foot for a total distance of 257mi/411km. The winter of 1947-8 Jeanne and her husband Tom ran a trapline in the Yukon based near Mile 252W overlooking the Itsi Mountains. After a couple of months spent in Whitehorse and Teslin they headed back to their trapline in August 1948. They, with four of their dogs, took lifts from workers employed by the company conducting salvage of the abandoned CANOL No. 1 project. At the beginning of this excerpt they were helping two men in an attempt to build a pontoon bridge over the Macmillan River #1 crossing.

Sitting under the fly and having our morning coffee, we were somewhat shook to see a jeep fly up to the bridge approach. Gawking, open mouthed we beheld three of the best dressed tourists in the Yukon. Dressed in Marine Khaki's, oxfords and battle jackets they looked like they had just stepped out of Esquire. Waiting for them to come up to the tent we were all wondering what in God's name they were doing in this neck of the woods, they must have taken off from the Alaska Hiway and gotten on the wrong road.

Being aware of our amazement they proceeded to shock us further with the news they were on their way to Norman Wells. Norman was only another 261 miles, over seven divides and numerous rivers.

Chan and Jim both represented different Company's interested in the heavy equipment on the Canol Road and hoped to itemize what was left so they could bid on it for Salvage. Les was the representative of Foster and Davidson, the original bidder's. Clay had told them they should be able to make it to Norman in the jeep and Les had told them he had flown over the road a few days prior to their arrival and the road was in fair shape. A few of the bridge approaches were missing and lots of wash outs, but nothing that would hinder the jeep and they should be ~~xxx~~ able to make the round trip in five days.

Bob Thorpe bellowed with rage, he would have to get them across as soon as possible, they had given him a letter from Clay. He told them in no uncertain terms they were crazy, the road had been abandoned for over 4 years and it was impassable. Bob had been as far as 222 himself and if they made Norman in a month they could consider themselves lucky. Tom and I fully agreed, and being female, I could just picture them in about two days. Their attire was for anything but a ride on the canol road.

Bob thought he could put the jeep on one of the pontoons and haul it over with a cable from the opposite bank. It would take some time, but he told them he would cross them in the morning if all went well.

Chan and Jim were a little annoyed at the delay, but unless they could do it faster they would have to wait. In the meantime it was two more mouths to feed and I had better plan on doing it now. To add to the hilarity it had started to rain again.

Lunch was a question and answer game with everyone getting in the act. What was I doing in this God forsaken country, where was I from, was I crazy? This last one stumped me, I assumed some of the time I was. Bob and Tom spent the time explaining the hazards of the trip and what happens to the roads in the north when they are not maintained. The effects of freeze-up, break-up, glaciers, frost heaves etc. It was interesting but fell on deaf ears, Bob grunted disgustedly and went back to the job at hand. The Deacon had said little and thought much, poor Chris was as lost as the tourists so held his peace. They were interested only in the thousands and thousands of dollars laying idle in the North and the profit to be had if they could salvage it.

After diner we sat long over coffee, and after hours of talking these fellows were doing a little thinking. None of them had any bush experience nor had they any idea of the country. It was late fall for the north and we could have a snow fall any day, especially in the higher terraine. They were poorly equiped both with supplies and clothing should they have any difficulties, and we were unanimous in thinking they would have their share of trouble. While the discussion was turning hot and heavy, Chan asked Tom if he would consider guiding them. I nearly choked and hoped they would continue talking all night so I could talk to Tom before he gave them his answer. I should have known that it would be useless, any challenge was exciting to Tom.

I could think of a thousand reasons why we should not go, but I could not come up with a logical reason as to my objections. I just sure we were making a mistake, Lord knows it wasn't the time it would take, we had nothing but time. The time flew by and I was like a flea on a griddle waiting to get objections off my chest.

I spent two hours being female and logical, but Tom had long before made up his mind and was going to be a hero. Chan had made the mistake of offering him a thousand dollars, plus Tom really felt a responsibility to them. He was as sure as God made little apples they were in for trouble and if he could help he would do so, with or without the money. I will never forget the consequences.

I spent a restless night and was glad when I heard the fire crackling in the stove and could keep myself busy ^{cooking} ~~feeding~~, cleaning and packing. It was a gloomy morning, but the sky was breaking up so we might have a nice day. The roar of the river was deafening today, it had been muffled by the weather but this morning it sounded ominous.

By the time breakfast was ready Bob had the jeep rigged to cross. He would cross the whole kit and kaboodle at once, dogs, people and gear. The jeep was on the pontoon and after breakfast we would pack and get aboard.

Chan was a likable, quiet fellow, tall and thin and somewhere in his thirties. Jim was jolly, short, plump and middle aged. Les was young, tall, important and obviously in charge. I doubt if he thought our ~~presence~~ being asked to guide them was at all necessary and somewhat of a nuisance. However, he was to keep Jim and Chan happy, and if they wanted to throw away a thousand dollars, who was he to complain.

Tom gathered up the mutts, who were so excited at being on the go again they literally dragged him to the river. I had most of our gear packed and put on a stew for Bob and his crew, they would be here for a few more days.

Getting into the pontoon, Bob wished us luck and thanked me for the good cooking and full coffee pot. The Deacon said, he would see us this fall when we got back and they were hauling from 222. Bob started up the cat and slowly pulled us across the river and the beginning of our trip to Norman Wells.

Les drove the jeep off the pontoon and with much wiggling and scrunching we managed to get all five of us and four dogs settled. We had two planks,

tied across the back of the jeep, I sat in the middle on my imagination and wore the gear shift on my knee for most of the trip. Then of course if Les needed four wheel drive, I don't know if my leg could have done as good a job, but it always seemed to be preferred. Chan sat along side me with one leg hanging out and Tom, Whammy and the mutts draped out and around the back seat. It was a sight for sore eyes, what with tails, feet, arms, heads and gear there was very little to be seen of the jeep.

We climbed steeply away from the river and everyone seemed to be holding their breath. Most of the hills on the Canol were straight up, and some of them so steep, that the truckers would go up them in reverse if they had a heavy load of long pipe. Two or three of the trucks had had to reverse down the hills when they powered out and because of inexperience or other reasons had driven the pipe thru the cab. So if in doubt, they would go up in reverse.

The roar of the river died away and spirits soaring we toddled up the Canol to our cabin ten miles away.

Tom had insisted on one thing if we were to go. We would stop at the cabin, outfit our new acquaintances in proper clothing and fill the larder with good old staples. The grub steak in the jeep was delicious, eggs, bacon, canned fruits, vegetables, bread and pound butter. If we ended up on shanks mare we would be burdend with heavy supplies and out of food shortly. With two more people to feed and 4 dogs the grub steak would be depleted in less than a week.

The road to the cabin was good and we pulled up on the side of the road shortly. I was anxious to see if our cache had been bothered. It wasn't likely as we had stored everything in 45 gallon drums before pulling out last spring. Even a bear would have a problem breaking into one of these, he may roll it around awhile but that is all. The cabin was nestled in the high spruce trees about a quater of a mile off the road. It looked cozy and friendly when we came in sight. I was secretly wishing this was as far as the Connolly's were going. The dogs went crazy sniffing their old houses and digging for old

precious bones. The roof of the cabin had been lifted off and moved a few inches on the top round, it must have been the same old bruin as this was the way we found the cabin last winter. I guess it was easier to lift up the roof than to tear down the door.

We had plenty of good heavy clothing on the cache, and doled out socks, mitts, insoles and moccasins. I'm sure all three of them thought we were mental and only took the things to be agreeable. It was hard to convince them that it may snow any day and they certainly were not prepared for a good old Yukon storm.

Tom got a couple of dog packs off the cache and then they really set up a houl. What in the world are those asked Les, and when he was told of the purpose, he said, we wouldn't need them. Tom ignored him and went about gathering some staples. He packed, rice, flour, tea, dry milk, sugar, canned butter, beef fat, cracked wheat for man and dog, baking powder, dried fruit. He got the 22 and ammunition for his rifle. I hauled out my long johns, heavy socks, mitts, sweater, boots and an extra pair of pants and shirt. I packed my pack sac, and got a queer look from Jim and Chan. Tom had his pack sack tied on the board and getting a grub box off the cache we headed back to the jeep. All Les could think of was where we would put all this extra junk.

Tom loaded the grub box and tied it on the hood. The men put their extra clothing in there suitcases. I wondered what would happen if they had to carry them very far. It was getting late in the afternoon and we hoped to get to 222 today. Our cabin was at 252 and thirty miles was a long day on a poor road.

Our spirits of adventure had returned and with a whoosh of dust and wagging tails we jilted up the Canol. The first mile just flew and then... operation plank, there were six wash outs in a 100 yards. Off with the planks, Tom and Chan on one and Jim and Les on the other, lay them out in front of the wheels, then Les would drive the jeep over, pick up the planks

place them on the jeep and drive to the next wash out. It took about two hours to cross the first bunch of wash outs. We only had another 250 miles to go and one of the five days was nearly gone.

A little ways further and more ~~wash~~ washouts, operation plank was put in effect. The sun was shining brightly and it was unusually warm. Everyone was puffing and the tourists were getting pooped. We got to 246 late in the evening, Chan and Jim scrounged around the dead line, trucks lined up in rows. They took a look at the cats and equipment then decided to try for 222.

Well we didn't quite make it, we were just coming over the hill to camp 230 and it was getting dark. A bunch of caribou came over the hill opposite us and stood looking at the contraption toodling down the road. The men were thrilled to death and quite excited, but because we had lots of food and no room we let them go. It was the first caribou they had ever seen and were surprised they were so tame. As a rule caribou are more curious than frightend. They really like to travel with a pack train or graze with the horses. Often wished I was packing caribou instead of horses when they got onery.

All the camps and shelters were well equiped with stoves and beds so the problem of cooking was cut to a minimum. I quickly got the dog pot on and started diner while the men reviewed the events of the day. If we had lifted the planks off and on the jeep we had done so 180 times. The heat and the bugs were getting us down and I listend with the interest to the comments of our party.

Jim had a million dollar sense of humor and he had it in high gear as he groaned and moaned trying to get his weary, ~~indifferently~~ polly figure comfortable. Chan groaned less but he was tired. I had the coffee brewed in short order and got a great cheer as I ~~passed~~ poured us all a cup. It was as delicious as nector of the gods.

They discussed the condition of the equipment they had seen and how little deterioration was in evidence. They were enthusiastic with what they had seen, how little it would take to repair the road and the fantastic profit they could make stateside.

We sat around talking after diner until our eyelids needed tooth-picks. Someone finally suggested we hit the hay and they didn't need to say it twice. Tom and I hunted up a bed, checked on the pot hounds, and before I could get my boots off, Chee Chee was curled up at the foot of my bedroll. She showed me the whites of her eyes as I stuggled into the soft down, trying hard not to disturb her to much.

Another beautiful day, clear and sunny, somebody had the pot on and the fresh aroma of coffee wafted thru the shelter. Tom whistled in with a hot cup in his hand and I blessed him.

The conversation at breakfast was mostly about sore muscles and blistered hands. None of the men were used to this kind of labor and they were paying for it. Jim was wishing for a bottle of linement and hoped we wouldn't have as many wash outs to plank today.

We whirled away from 230 before eight and hadn't gone a mile when it was operation plank. The wash out was deep and Tom and Les had to pile 45 gallon drums one on top of the other to strengthen the long planks. Les got in to drive across and my heart settled in my mouth, it would spend considerable time iether in my mouth or stopped. Every one let out a deep sigh when he got across. We were away aghin, but not for long. The washouts were coming thick and fast and small creeks were adding to the challenge. Most of them were narrow but deep and fast, the bridges across all of them were half washed away.

We had crossed miles of barren divide, not a tree, just miles and miles of budk brush and willow as far as the eye could see. The low rolling hills were a blaze of fall golds and reds. Sparkling blue creeks tumbled out of the ~~sho~~ draws turning to silver in the sunlight. A painting only mother nature knows how to make. It was beautiful and in spite of the planks we marveled at the sight.

We were on the divide between the Yukon and the Northwest Territorries. The area was famous for the abundance of moose, caribou and grizzly. Jim

wanted a grizzly hide so bad it was pitifull. Tom tried to convince him they were heavy and bulky we didn't have time to stop and dry it and not enough salt to keep it until we got to Norman. Jim still wouldn't take no for an answer. Tom finally gave in on the condition he was a good shot and he had to prove it. I knew Tom wasn't anxious to skin out and pack a bear and he must have known Jim couldn't hit one. However, to keep peace Jim started putting up ragged targets. He loaded his 30.06 and took aim at the farthest one, about 150 yards. He missed with three shots and continued missing until he was down to the 50 yard target. Tom said, Jim if you miss this target you wont get the opportunity to give a bear or anything else the double whammy and we'll leave the rifle right here, its too heavy to pack if we need too and you wont need it. Jim agreed, and with careful aim....fired....missed....fired..... missed....cussed.....then swore the barrel had a bend in it. I was inclined to agree, he was a terrible shot. We hung the rifle ~~in a corner~~ on a pole and would pick it up on the return trip, in the meantime Jim had gotten the name of "Whammy" and from that day on the name stuck. Les and Chan were not interested in shooting a bear and we were just as happy that Whammy wouldn't get the opportunity.

The black flies were out in force and chewed away happily and the hot weary men and panting dogs. We hoped we would get a breeze but the weather was just like summer and no relief in sight. Whammy and Les kiddled us about the winter gear as if to say I told you so. Tom took it kindly, but we had only been on the road two days and we had a few more to go, knowing the north 24 hours can make a difference from 70 above to zero with blowing snow.

Chan was not strong and I noticed Tom was trying to ease his load by doing more. Whammy being short winded and older was forgiven for not doing to much, but Chan just wasn't able physically, tho he never asked for help or complained about anything. Les was still running the show so to speak, but when Whammy asked him if this was a sample of a few wash outs, what would he consider to be a lot????????? the silence was deafening.

We made 222 by afternoon, eight miles in 5 hours. The camp was a big one and there was lots of equipment. Whammy and Chan spent the better part of two hours writting down particulars on equipment and starting up trucks, welding machines, light plants and anything else they could get going. They were having a ball and couldn't contain there enthusiasmn. Even the horror of the planks didn't bother them at the moment. Tom and I scrounged the bunk houses and found some real good books, being avid reader's this was as wonderfull as the equipment was to Jim and Whammy. Where ever we looked there were odd boots, dirty sox, old mitts and hats, it seemed everything had been soaked in diesel. Most of the mattress on the beds were filthy and even dirty dishes were in the sink, left from the crews leaving in haste.

Les honked the miserable little horn on the jeep and we were off again. It seemed unbelievable, but we must have made two miles before it was operation plank. The first two wash outs were a breeze, but the third was a dilly. There was a soft, wide river bottom, only a little water because of the dry weather, but none the less it looked impassible. Les stayed with the jeep and the rest of us walked to the other side to see if he could make it. About ten feet from the bank he sank out of sight and we all breathed again. Tom got out the dome-a-long, an ingenious invention of the devil. It is a never ending chain on a pulley and designed to play out the best of men. Les joined in the game and hour after hour we played, inch by inch the jeep moved.

Tea was not any of our favorite drinks, being coffee fiends, but I made numerous pots and all were drank with relish. The dogs were snuffling and snorting thra the bush, chasing anything that walked, crawled or flew. Chee Chee led the pack and even Jeep and Sam were getting along. They were living it up and enjoying their freedom.

It was getting dark when the jeep was finally out of the ooze. There wasn't a hope of reaching a camp tonight. We crawled back on the jeep and headed for the first shelter, there is one every five miles on the Canol. It shouldn't be too far to the next one.

Whammy as usual got us laughing, he was sitting there going click....clack.....
click.....clack.....he swore he would hear the sound of the come-a-long till
he went to the grave. Les whacked my knee again for the umpteenth time and
I prophesized water on the knee in my old age.

The shelter loomed in the headlights, it looked like a palace. We were
still on the divide and wood was scarce but Tom managed and soon the stove
was a snapping and popping. Les had shot a bunch of gophers during the ~~xxx~~
stop at 222 so I didn't have to cook for the dogs. Tom settled Jeep and Sam
for the night and Chee Chee waited patiently for my bedroll.

We all ate ravenously. Tom kept Chan and Whammy amused and interested
with some of his wonderful stories of the north. Les was inclined to take
everything cynically and his popularity was fading darn fast. Whammy just
fired questions steady, I sometimes wonder how he dreamt them up. He was
seldom quiet regardless of the circumstances. Chan was the exact oposite,
he was quiet and content to listen.

Because there was only four beds in the shelter and it was a lovely
night, Tom and I put our bedrolls outside under the stars. It was nippy
and the northern lights were putting on a fantastic show. I called whammy
and Chan to come witness the glorious spectacle. They were entranced, neither
of them had seen the Northern lights before and they were going all out to
please the tourists.

The silence of the night was soothing, I lay watching the dance of
the rainbow my thoughts skipping from people and places. Sleep came
quickly, the end of the third day.

Again the sun was shining brightly and we were blessed with another
beautiful day.

Tom brought me a cup of coffee and Chee Chee crawled out to face the
day. She rushed over and said goodmorning to ^{Jeep}~~Sam~~ and Sam, then she and
Major rushed off to pester the ptarmigan.

I thought Whammy would strangle when I asked him at breakfast if he thought he could make it to Norman and back in two more days, counting today. Les was getting better and better at changing the subject, but he still maintained the road looked good from the air and we would make it without any more trouble than we had had.....

Black flies were swarming around us and we quickly loaded the jeep and jerked away, even driving slow the breeze was enough to give us relief. The dogs were running alongside and enjoying the chase. When it got warm we let them ride as the hot gravel wore the pads off their feet.

After planking a few wash outs we came to a bridge that was gone on one end. The river was too wide and too deep to ford and not a hope of rafting across. Tom and Les were studying the situation and came up with a brilliant idea. If they chopped down the far end it would just reach the bank and they could block the jeep down the steep ramp. The bank was fairly high and would have to be dug out to drive the jeep out, but that was just a minor problem.

There was little Whammy and Chan could do as we only had the two axes and they couldn't dig the bank away until they knew where they would be driving the jeep out. So we sat and gabbed and drank Tea. Whammy and I picked berries for a pie. The low and high bush cranberries were ripe and the hills were loaded with them. We tried to find enough blue berries, but they were scarce so we gave it up as a lost cause.

Chan was resting full out on the road when we got back and I was shocked at the palor of his face. He was thin anyway but he looked ill, I asked if he felt O.K. and he assured me he was fine, but I had my doubts.

Tom and Les kept up a steady rythm chopping down the piles, it would take half a day to do the job and if we make 208 that night we'd be lucky.

The mutts finally played out and came to lay down beside me, I looked at Sams feet and they were pretty tender, he would have to ride from now on. Jeep's feet were still O.K. Sam was a huge ugly mutt, he was part wolf and his only fault was laziness. If he got tired you could kill and he wouldn't work. The other dogs were afraid of him and gave him a wide berth, but he

was a good ^{140 77} dog and we loved him. He was the only dog we ever owned that would fight back. If you went for him with a stick you better be prepared to use it as Sam would come at you with all perly whites showing. Most dogs cowed at the threat of a whipping, but not this 120 lbs. of fighting ~~animal~~ fur and fangs. He could pack a terrific load and enjoyed it, but he never was ~~to~~ fond of pulling in harness. Sam was 15 years old when we had the old fellow put away, he was one of the family.

Suddenly there was a terrific whoosh and down went the bridge approach. It made a ~~fine~~ good ramp to drive down and fell in such a manner that a small amount of digging would suffice to drive the jeep back on the road. Tom and Les stopped for a cup of tea, and they also remarked on how tired and wan Chan looked.

Refreshed, T.O. and Les went back to the job of digging a road, they were in a hurry to get going and the dirt flew in clouds.

Whammy and Chan were discussing the possibility of an airplane coming to look for them if we didn't show in Norman soon. Both men had advised their families they would be home within ten days, and had left explicit orders with Clay Carmen that if they were not in Norman Wells in a week they were to come looking for them. Under the circumstances there seemed little to worry about, except getting to Norman soon.

We had a short snack after the fellows finished the road, and Les drove the remarkable little jeep across the precarious bridge, down the ramp and back on the Canol Road. Chan wearily lifted his carcass off the ground and slowly walked to the jeep.

The next few miles were almost like a boulevard and only had to plank four small washouts. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ For the first time in many miles we could ride along and enjoy the scenery. Since leaving 222 we were on the down hill grade. The rivers were all running north now, so we were in the Northwest Territories. Small bunches of balsam dotted the terrain and was great to see trees again, even if they are stunted and sparse.

The sun was setting as we pulled into the yard at Camp 208. We all sighed and sat looking blankly at nothing for a few minutes. Well, another day another blister.

Tom took the grub box into the kitchen and Whammy started the light plant. The camp lit up like a Christmas tree, yard lights were blazing, every bunkhouse winked out of the darkness and for all the world you'd think we were in the city.

As tired as Chan was he helped unload the gear and ~~help~~ as much as he could in getting things squared away. He and Whammy rushed around getting the big oil stove going, and you'd think I was going to cook for a regiment. ~~with~~ The blowers were all going and the stove itself was a good 20 feet long. I gathered everything into one corner and ignored the other 18 feet.

I was checking the grub supply and tomorrow would be the last day of bacon and eggs and store bread. It may be operation plank for the men, it would be operation banock for me. We still had some canned vegetables and fruit, but in a few days we would be on a trapper's diet. Needless to say the tourists now looked like trappers, but I had severe doubts if they would take kindly to a trappers larder. At least it was food and if they got as hungry as usual it would taste like caviar in a day or two.

Everyone smoked but Tom and the cigarette cache was getting pretty low. I think I would rather go hungry, not that I smoked any great amount, but when I did I enjoyed it. Tom had always maintained that I should give up cigarettes and I agreed that I would when I couldn't keep up to him in the bush. That day never came to pass so I still enjoy my cigarettes.

Tom was not worried about the cigarettes, but when I showed him the grub supply he was concerned. At the rate we were going and the amount of food we had consumed he was sure we would run out of grub soon. He was all for rationing what was left.

The long hard days were beginning to take their toll and after the dishes were done, we all sat in the warm cook house and yaked. Whammy was sure that a plane would be along anyday now, and I was hoping he was right. Chan was getting weaker but none of had any idea at the time what a sick man he really was. Les said the road would get better as we got closer to the McKenzie, that the altitude was nearly sea-level and the snow fall would be much less, and in consequence the road would be in better shape.

Chan quietly said, Les this road is bad, not that it couldn't be repaired easily with the proper equipment, but we haven't the time to build road if we could. I must be in Oregon in another week, and it is imperative that I get there. I watched Les, and bold faced he told Chan he would be that he didn't have a worry in the world. We still had 208 miles to go, and how we would make Norman in a week at this rate was beyond me.

Whammy suggested we call it a night, it would be another day tomorrow and maybe a better day.

Tom was concerned and said he was sure things would get worse as the miles passed. He said we still had 4 divides to cross and three major rivers. The Keele was a nasty fast river of white water, the Twityia was wide and deep, he said, the Carcajou just out of Norman was over half a mile wide and if the ~~bridges~~ bridges on any of these rivers was gone, we would be on ~~shank~~ shanks mare. He was afraid that Chan wouldn't make it on foot and although Whammy was in good health he certainly couldn't walk well. ~~He~~ Tom was above all else determined to get us all to Norman safely. He was convinced that Les was full of prunes, that he had no idea what the road was like, he had told a wild tale and we were getting the proof of that. T.O. said he didn't have any worries about Les, he was young and strong. He grinned, looked at me, and said, You gotta be tough Mrs T.O. It was a compliment from Tom, he wasn't worried about me either.

After the last of the eggs in the morning we all piled into the heap of a Jeep, tails, legs, butts and arms hanging out all over, and with a whirrrr

and a crack on the knee we were off.

Tootling along in fine style we suddenly stopped and looked at the road in front of us. There just wasn't some, as far as we could see in any direction except up were boulder's and rocks. A huge wash had come out of the mountain and for the last 1000 years had run over the valley.

There was nothing to do but start throwing rocks out of the way and just hope the axles and tires held up on the noble little jeep. The dogs took off for the nearest water and I was all for joining them. It had been hot ever since we left the cabin. The black flies were still hungry and I thought a swim would be heaven. Not that the water would be anything but comfy, I could care less. However, there was work to be done and it would take all hands to get us across this mess.

When I was sure our arms would come out of the sockets and we would be badly bent permanently, Tom called a halt for a cup of tea. Appreciation shown in all our eyes, he was human. Les had been doing all the driving so he wasn't very excited.

The water wouldn't boil fast enough, we just could hardly wait for the refreshing brew. We munched on raisins and patiently waited. It's boiling someone shouted and we all reached for the pot. Why we didn't dump it in the fire I will never know, I never saw so many eager hands. It was the best cup of tea I ever drank, in fact we made two more pots before we went back to the boulder throwing. I believe any of us would have made excellent Shot-Put candidates after this.

Many times I had wished I had a movie camera on this trip. I was sure it would have been priceless to the Willy's Co. The places this jeep had gone and the things we had done with it were unbelievable. I think it would have been wonderful in later years to have a record of this trip in movies. At the time it was the last thing in the world I would like to have.

The jeep had become a part of us all, it seemed almost human and we all had a soft spot in our hearts for it.

The hours passed and we were numb, I don't know how we kept going. When we thought we couldn't lift another rock or bend down once again, a new strenght would come and away we would go. The speedometer on the jeep had registered 10 miles when man and jeep finally made the dirt surface of the Canol Road again.

None of us could say a thing, we sat numb, stunned, bent, beat and defeated. I couldn't muster enough strength to pet Chee Chee who came to say hello and even on my lap, I wouldn't have to lift my arm more than 6 inches. If she had stepped on me I would have fallen apart. Tom put on another pot of tea, and one of the few times, I again noticed the compassion and concern on his face. Les got out of the jeep to join us and I felt a rising tide of fury pass over me. If this man had lied and we were in this because he had, I would never forgive him. Emotions ~~tax~~ run rampant when your tired and worried, but we had lived together as one in the last few days and you get to know a person pretty well. You could live in one house for ten years in the city with a person and never know them, but not so in the bush, every lousy little quirk in a person's make up comes out in a hurry, there isn't any place to hide it, your as naked as a babe. Even good freinds can come out of the bush hating one another.

The tea seemed to help a little and we all ~~widex~~ fell into position in he jeep once more. The Old Boy, must have known we would be incabable of doing anything further, even the lifting of planks, so for mile after mile and over one divide we cruised. Speechless and afraid to remark on our good fortune we relaxed and enjoyed the ride,

We crossed a couple of small bridges and everyones spirits raised. I may have been to quick to judge Les. We were in heavy timber and the road was lined with tall Jack-pine. The jeep purred along and all was peaceful.

Climbing away from the timber we were starting over another divide when we came to camp 171. It was huge and there was equipment lined up in rows. Whammy started to bubble and even Chan showed some enthusiasm. The biggest thrill for Tom, was in back of the camp was one of the most famous sheep ranges in the North. The territories were a federal game preserve and all game was protected. However, if you were hungry or a native you could shoot for food. Tom took out his glasses and spent a few minutes glassing the side of the mountain before we started the job of unloading the jeep.

It was still daylight and the sun was just setting. The colors of the hills around the camp were turning to a glorious red. Chan and I watched the sun set and then headed for the cook house. Whammy had the light plant going again and Chan started the oil stove. These stoves just amazed me, they could be for nothing less than cooking for an army. The cook houses were huge and the working table the cooks used must have been thirty feet long and eight feet wide. Enough dog-gone lumber to build a house.

The empty camps were eerie and the sight of dirty dishes in the sink and clothing strewn around made one feel as tho the people had just left.

There was never any worry about fuel for the stove or the jeep. Every where along the road and stacked in the camps were barrel after barrel of fuel oil and gasoline. Some of the camps even had 5000 gallon storage tanks and they were full. All that was missing in the camps was good and we never found any of that, however, there was boxes of medical supplies.

I made bisquits for diner, we had eaten the last of the bread and the change was welcome. How any of us had enough ambition left to eat is a miracle, but when the food was gone, so went the bodies to there bedrolls and oblivion.

Tom wakend me early to see the sheep, the whole side of the mountain was moving with them. They were as unconcerned as a dog, and we were sure there must have been over 200 of them. Sheep are the prettiest game

animal in the world, I think. They are one of the prized trophies of the big game hunter's. In later years when I was a guide I used to hate to see these ~~handsome~~ beautiful animals destroyed. Mind you, when you have crawled to the top of a mountain you could shoot the works, ~~and~~ The meat is the finest of all game meat, sweet and fine grain. I felt at the moment I could eat one by myself. Tom had no intentions of hunting nor of telling the others they were there, and we knew they wouldn't notice them unless they were pointed out.

Tom got the men together after breakfast and suggested that we start rationing the food. Les was sure he was jumping to conclusions, but Tom was determined and when he told Chan and Whammy what was left in the larder they agreed. I was to make the rest of the flour into bisquits and they would be rationed. We would cut down on the amount I cooked and in the event a moose or caribou crossed the road we would shoot it, but that we couldn't afford to stop and hunt now. The time was passing and we could get caught in the granddaddy of all snowstorms any day. T.O. could have gone after one of the rams, but it would have taken a good day to get one, and we may need one later. Neither Tom nor I believed in killing game unless it was for food. That is one of the reasons he didn't mention them, he knew Whammy and Les would want one, how they would get the head out of the country was another thing. They were not hunters, they didn't have licences and they were aliens, all good legitimate reasons to go sit in the hoosegow.

I was deep in thought doing the dishes, Whammy came up alongside and started quizing me again on why and what I was doing in the North. He just couldn't except the fact that anyone in his right mind would live a life of solitude by choice. Had I been a farm girl or from a small ~~town~~ town he could have accepted it easier, the fact that I was a city gal from California just shook him. He was beginning to convince me that he didn't believe me, it annoyed me a little, but then it was rather fantastic and I could understand his doubts. I felt a little like a fugitive.

I tried to tell Whammy that there was more to the Yukon than cold and bugs. However, the beauty of the country was never noticed by him. He wondered why a college boy like Tom with a prominent canadian family would burry himself in the wilds of the north. I'm sure Whammy thought he too was hiding from something, not just civilization which hid so many much better than the north.

Giving up in disgust he returned to the men and he and Chen went into the yard ^{take} ~~passed~~ to ~~take~~ a look at the equipment. Whammy started up a couple of welders and for a couple of hours they were busy. Tom was cleaning his rifle and Les was off in the bush shooting squirrels, I thought I might as well take a look at the country and Major, Chee Chee and I started off. Tom said he would fire two quick shots if I wasn't back when they were ready to go.

It was quiet in the bush and nice to get away from the men for a short while. Only the rustle of the leaves under our feet disturbed the silence. My thought wandered to home and I wished I could let my mother know all was well with us. She would be doing her house work now and I could almost hear the whirrr of the vacume and the drone of the washing machine. Mom would be spending most of her day in the kitchen, she was a fabulous cook and there wasn't anything she enjoyed more than preparing a wonderfull meal.

Chee Chee shattered my reverie with a sharp yip, she was dead on the tail of a porcupine. I wasn't worried about her getting any quills in her face, she was to smart to get near the tail of old porky, but I was almost sure Major would look like a seive. I made a lunge for the wiggly, furry, excited Major and Chee Chee put the porky up a tree. I put 22—22 long rifle shells into the cuss, before the weight of the lead dropped him out of the tree. They are the darndest animals to kill with a gun, they can pack more lead than I can carry, but he was just to high to kill with a stick. If Major hadn't been with us, I would have caught him on the ground and used a club. How many times have I pulled quills out of the dogs muzzles and the

roofs of their mouths, but they never learn and the first thing they do is take a big bite of the rear end of a porky. Only the bear dog never goes to the tail, but will circle and yip in their face, once in awhile Chee Chee would get one quill on the end of her nose and carried it as a banner of conquest.

Major had settled down to 40 wags a minute and I retrieved the porky it would be nice to have fresh meat again and porcupine are darn fine eating, much like Pork. The mutts would have a treat too, cooking for them in soup instead of water.

When we got back to the camp, Tom was loading the grub box and Les had a dozen or so squirrels for the pot-hounds, it was a feast day. Whammy and Chan were elated with the condition of the equipment. They told us they had been over to the islands after the war and looked at the equipment put up for bid. It was so rusted and corroded that when they put a wrench on a bolt it fell off. Everything was rotten and the cost of repair was prohibitive. The equipment in the north was in such good condition that all most of it needed was a battery. Some of the trucks on the dead-lines had been stripped to keep others mobile, but all of these had a tag on them stating what needed to be done to put them in running condition. Whammy was sure he could make a million and he made us feel like peasants, but I wouldn't trade places with any of them. I bet we would have more fun with the thousand than either of them with would have with their million.

What with the jeep loaded and the bodies hung all over we were gone. It was a glorious day, and although we were still weary and badly bent we felt better.

Within five miles and that was a long way, it was operation plank. I could just see Whammy and Chan wince as they picked up the planks and put them across the washout. It was just the beginning again. We ran into about 5 small plank operations in a row and then it was smooth sailing for another few miles.

We stopped for tea and the worst of all tragedy's occurred, Whammy was smoking his last cigarette, I had a couple of packs left, and it wouldn't be long before I was out so we shared them. If we thought we got on each other's nerves now, just wait;.....

I was beginning to think the good going was going to last the rest of the way to Norman Wells and my antagonism lessened toward Les. The breeze kept the bugs from eating us and we all joked along the way. Tom told wild stories of his days in the Navy and because the war was still fresh in all our memories, his tales of the invasion were interesting. Tom was with the combined operations in the Canadian Navy, known ~~at~~ better as a commando in the states. His article of D-Day was widely publicized in Canada.

We had to ford a couple of small creeks which took time but nothing hairraising. A few miles from 131 we ran into another run of washouts. It had been such a wonderful day and so few muscle bending operations that these little obstacles couldn't dampen out spirits.

We had crossed another divide and were again cruising along in the big timber. It was getting late in the afternoon and we thought we would have dinner at 131 and if the bridge was in and the road good we would go until late. The last two days made us all feel we could make Norman with luck in a couple of more days. Whammy was chattering like a mag-pie and Chan even had a little color in his cheeks, but he still looked darn tired and ill to me.

When we rounded the bend and pulled onto the straight stretch to 131 we were almost hilarious. Les was doing ~~at~~ terrible 40 mile an hour and we were darn near airborne. It didn't last long, as we pulled up to the bridge someone hit us with a club. The river was almost a mile wide and only this end of the bridge was standing. The other half had gone down stream a long time ago. We all looked at Les, not even a half-wit could have missed that much of a bridge gone looking from the air, and it was about 150 feet from our end to the span that was standing, this was some approach. Silence

is golden. The three of them turned away from the horrible spectacle and started walking up and down the river. The camp was in pretty bad shape and looked like it had been ~~just a~~ ^a ~~just a~~ truck stop. We figured it was built ~~just~~ to accomadate the ~~iron~~ bridge crew, we could see a large camp about a half mile up the road on the other side of the river.

The cook house was in fair shape, and so I decided full stomachs would cheer us up, what with fresh meat for man and beast nothing looks to bad. We didn't have the usual luxuries in this camp. There wasn't any light-plant or electic lights, so it was gas lamp and wood. The camp was in the timber so there was little wo-rry about feul. I cleaned the porky and the squirrels for the dogs. I spent anxious moments trying to keep Major and Chee Chee away from the quills, they were flying all over the place.

The fancy food was pretty well gone and we were out of cigarettes. Whammy came into the shack to get warm, it was cold on the river and he rolled us a cigarette out of tea. Lord but they tasted horrible, we tried tea and coffee mixed but that was worse. The tea kept falling out of the paper and smelled like nothing on earth when it burnt. We were using toilet tissue, the camps were well supplied and it burnt slower than newspaper. Whammy, the indians claim there is a good weed for smoking, I said, tomorrow lets you and I go investigate and see if we can find something better than tea. O.K. He was all for it, we would probably have to try everything growing, but it would be for a good cause.

Chan, Tom and Les strolled in, the kitchen was warm and they were starving. I fried the porky to a golden brown, it looked wonderfull. Even tho the three of them had never tried porky, they had to admit it looked good. When I had the table set and all served I waited to see what they would have to say. All of them had to agree with us it was delicious. They only hoped we could get a dozen more.

In a few years, the porcupine completely dissapeared from the north and nobody has been able to figure the reason. They used to be in abundance in

all parts of the north.

Thank goodness we had lots of coffee, ~~all~~ of us figured we could manage as long as the coffee held out. The terrible facimile's for cigarettes could even ~~make~~ be excepted, with faces of course.

Chan and Whammy were suddenly sobered by the the fact we were low on food and so far from anywhere.

Chan again mentioned a plane should be along. Les still maintained we could make it without any trouble and we all just stared at him. Nobody could believe he was serious, we had a river to cross that was formidable. Then what would we encounter, their was the Keele and Carcajou not counting such things as washouts.

Our spirits seemed to drop together and we all sat starring in his cup, each with his own thoughts. I was thinking of Whammy asking me so many times what was I doing in this godforsaken country? Lord knows I couldn't answer that question in the 17 years I lived there, but now at this ~~xxxx~~ moment I was inclined to agree with him, I was crazy, stark raving mad, addled, but looking around the table I couldn't feel to badly, I sure had lots of company.

The conversation burst into the topic of crossing the river. Tom was deeply concerned, he could read a river like a book and he didn't like the printing. Chan and Whammy couldn't swim, they knew nothing about rivers, nothing of the art of crossing them. Les was just determined to prove he was the man of the hour, he would find a place to ford the river. Well this was a great idea, except ~~for~~ getting a ~~xxxx~~ ^f ~~xxxx~~ ^{xxxx} a road built to the ford and the time it would take to go up stream and down stream and then back to the road on the other side, we knew nothing of the terrain and most of the north is ~~xxxx~~ muskeg.

I put in my two-bits and suggested we go back.....horrors..... I appealed to Chan whom I thought had something between his ears. I mentioned we were

overdue in Norman as of tomorrow, that we had 131 miles to go and we were 131 miles from the cabin. We knew what we had come over but we had no idea what was ahead of us even if we did get across the river. I hated rivers with a purple passion. I was jinxed on rivers, everytime I was on one something would go wrong. Chan could see the logic of my arguments, but he wanted to go on, he came to see the equipment along the Canal Road and both he and Whammy intended to do so. Tom was quiet, he would see ~~them~~ they got to Norman and this seemed to cinch the argument. It was 2:00 Am. The hows and wherefores to cross the river would be continued in the morning and we called it a day.

I was petrified, but I didn't mention this to Tom. If he could sense my feelings he also was silent. The river looked twice as wide in the bright morning sunlight. It shimmered and ~~it~~ glistend as it swished by laughing at me.

Whammy was jubilant at breakfast, he had had a dream last night. All we had to do was tie barrels around the jeep ~~incorporations~~ to keep us afloat. Les could then steer us across the river under power. If they greased the plugs ~~and~~ took off the fan belt and plugged the exhaust it would be simple. All same duck.

Tom patiently tried to explain that the barrels would hold us in the channel and it would be impossible to steer to the other shore. He told of how this was ~~never~~ excepted procedure on the Mackenzie River to hold the barges in the channel. However, they wouldn't believe him and excepted Whammy's idea as the most logical.

¶ If I thought I was scared before, I was numb now. I knew Tom had more experience than ten men on the rivers. I had all the faith in the world in his judgement about the bush. I may be petrified but I could trust him in any crisis. Now that they vetoed his judgement I just new we would be sorry.

I walked away from the men, it wouldn't help matters if they should see my tears. After all you have to be tough.

I could ~~hear~~ hear the hammering and cussing of the fellows as they went about building their jeep-boat. My fear was a living thing and Chee Chee crawled up in my lap to reassure me. Major put his lovely head on my knee and wagged so hard he wriggled all over. I petted them, telling ~~them~~ them what wonderful buddies they were and how much they meant to me.

Getting up some of my courage I went over to view the progress. The jeep was surrounded by six barrels, three on either side. These were wired to the planks and the planks cabled to the jeep. The ~~barrels~~ drums just cleared the ground so Les could drive into the river. There was a big eddy where they planned to ~~launch~~ launch the monstrosity and Whammy thought Les should take a trial run and if all went well we would be O.K. Les started the jeep and slowly drove into the river, he turned up stream and made a big circle, he was careful not to get into the channel but made his turn in the eddy. All went well and he drove out on the bank.

The launch

The bedrolls were lashed to the roof, the one grub box to the hood, the rest of the gear was put in the back seat with Sam, Jeep and Major. Whammy was on the right plank, Chan, Tom and I on the left plank. Les was in the drivers seat. Chee Chee would find a spot of her own, she never was in the way.

Les started the jeep again, Chan gave me a cheerfull smile, Tom patted me reassurriling on the back. I again held my heart in my teeth and quit breathing. About 50 feet from shore all seemed to be going according to plan so I breathed. However, it was a short one, the motor quit, the silence was deafening, like the silence when the motor quits in a single engine aircraft. Les worked like a mad man, but he couldn't get it started. Tom in a space of a second was ripping the planks with an axe, he wanted enough wood to use as paddles. We had a couple of wooden boxes in the back and we tore these apart, and I mean tore. In the meantime we were held in the channel by the drums as Tom prophesized. Had they only let him build his raft and put the jeep on it instead of this, we may have made it. Tom yelled at me

"For Christs sake paddle" I was doing my best, but I think it was more fo r my sake. Les jumped out to help, we couldn't do a thing but go down stream the jeep with the barrels was just to heavy to steer without power. I had the strenght of three and paddled till I had spots before my eyes, I couldn't even enjoy the boat ride.

My blood chilled and I nearly dove overboard, in the distance I could hear the most ominous noise on any river, ...rapids....the roar was getting lowder and from the din they were huge. Looking over my shoulder I saw a canyon wall loom to the right of us. The barrel took the shock and thru us away from the wall, the jolt knocked Whammy off balance and he fell off the plank, fortunatley he fell between the plank and the jeep, or we would have lost him. The dogs sat ~~xxxx~~ motionless, ~~xxxx~~ even Major was quiet. Why nothing washed away in our mad dash downstream I don't know, but although water was ~~xxxx~~ boiling around the floor of the jeep all else was high and dry. Chan and Whammy couldn't help paddle, they didn't know how for one thing and not being able to swim it was best they just cling for dear life and they did. We were banging off the canyon walls like a cork in a whirlpool. Chan was skinned on the back by the rocks and I wished it would all come to an end. Any kind of an end.

The roar of the rapids was a thundering roar now, I could picture us being pounded to bits on the rocks, I yelled at Tom to let the dogs jump. He just yelled wait. I thought the big dogs could make it if they got out now. It would be murder for Chee Chee, she was so light she would have gone down stream into the foaming white water.

We crashed again into the canyon wall, I could hear the crunch of the drums as they sczaped the sheer rock wall. If they ever came loose we were finished. We roared out of the canyon doing miles per and then we saw them. Great white bubbles of feam and huge boulder's. The river was a half mile wide at least and as far as we could see around a wide sweaping bend it was rapids. Greedy, boiling white water, just waiting to pound us to pieces.

Time stood still, seconds.....minutes.....hours.....the white foam reached for the jeep, in a sickening roll we pounded off the first boulder. Tom was still paddling frantically, he seemed to know just what to do, but if it was of any use none of us noticed. Whammy and Chan were chalk white and Les was transfixed starring at the river. When I thought the force of the water would roll us over we would drop off ~~into~~ into another deep hole. The river was fast and the current drove us steadily closer to the far shore. We took a terrible pounding and I knew when we were rolled that I would be lucky if I could make the bank. I would be ground to hamburger. Tom always told me, never fight the current, try to stay on top and let the current carry you to the shore, it always hits the bank somewhere. While we were fighting for our lives I never gave the thought of swimming in the rapids a thought. All I could think of was the horrible mess when we rolled and what would happen to the dogs, my conscious didn't bother me, I was sure that all aboard were thinking pretty much of their own skins.

Oh God, I thought is there any end to these rapids, will the barrels be torn off on the bend we were heading for? How much longer can the cables hold in this frantic pounding? Tom never quite paddling, where he got the strenght was a wonder.

When all seemed to be just a matter of time before we were all drowned. The jeep was raised completely out of the water, as if a huge hand had picked us up. We were high and dry on a bolder. The water was boiling thru the jeep, but the planks were dry.

Nobody said anything, we were to stunned to move, only the miracle that we were alive seemed to be going thru everyone's mind.

We were on a boulder, but we still had 75 feet of water between us and an island. Sometime during the ride, Les had gotten back in the driver's seat. He doesn't know why, but when the water was running over his lap, he jumped out and that seemed to bring every one back to the land of the living.

Everything but the dogs, one rifle a 22 and the box of food on the hood of the jeep was gone. The bedrolls were still on ~~top~~ ^{THE ROOF} and some of the suitcases.

GOODEBYE TO A LITTLE BUDDY

Tom quickly ordered Sam, Major and Jeep into the water to swim ashore. I watched them bob along the swirling white mass of foam and boulder's and hoped they weren't bruised crashing against the rocks. All were strong swimmer's and as soon as they hit the shore we breathed again.

Lots of activity and little conversation was going on, Tom lashed two long lines together and handed one end to Les. He lept over the side of the jeep and headed for the island with the line. Les was tall and still the water was up to his waist, it took all his strength and agility to keep from being washed down stream. Watching him fight the rush of the river I couldn't help wondering how Whammy and I could make it, we were ~~knock~~ both built close to the ground and Chan was so light he couldn't possibly stand against the current.

When Les made the line fast to a pile of drift and hung on to the rope, Tom put Chi Chi on the roof of the jeep and without further ado, helped me into the river. I held tightly to the rope and Tom walked with me on the down river side. My feet kept washing out from under me and I half swam and half walked. Tom kept me from being washed down stream guiding me to shore. The distance was'nt very great but to me it was a long, wet, hairy walk. When my feet were on dry land and I stood alone, Tom returned to the jeep.

His next rescue was Chan, he clung to the rope tightly and he was so light it was all Tom could do to keep him from being washed away. Many times his feet were washed out from underneath him and Tom would make a wild grab to hold him. I could see Chee Chee patiently waiting for her turn and Whammy looked as if he would like to try it on his own.

When Chan stood beside me, Tom returned for Whammy, he made it a little faster this time, in spite of the fact Whammy was short he had weight and it ~~helped~~ helped him stay on the bottom. All the time this was going on I ~~didn't~~ didn't hear a word spoken. Tom would speak to us to encourage us on the way to shore, but that was ~~it~~ all.

Whammy stood beside Chan and I as tho in a trance and we wathced Tom return for Chee Chee. She hadn't moved since he put her on the roof, had she jumped and tried

to swim she would have ended up in Norman Wells. Chee Chee was so light and tiny the current would have been too strong for her to swim against.

Tom silently looked at us and then we all stood staring at the little jeep sitting high on a boulder in the middle of the river. It looked so tiny and lonely, sadly we knew we had lost a little buddy.

I gathered wood from the drift pile and started a fire, we were all soaked and it isn't exactly warm in the North in the fall. The dogs ran up shaking and wagging tongues hanging out. They were all forced some distance down stream and had run back up the shore, only to have to swim from the mainland to the island to be with us. I was sure Major was laughing, he loved water. The mutts investigated the island, then flopped on the beach to snooze.

The fire was crackling merrily and we all gathered around for the warmth. I was still stunned and realized our troubles were just beginning. Whammy looked pale and tired and Chan was exhausted. He hadn't hurt his back too much, but it was sore and he would have a nice black and blue mark.

There was nothing left but for Tom and Les to return to the jeep and bring ashore whatever was left. They made three trips and the pile that stood on the beach when they were thru looked pretty desperate. We all had our bedrolls and some clothing, but there was darn little grub. Whammy had a suitcase full of pills but they wouldn't help the larder. Fortunately we had the dog packs and even the little pile would be a good load for the mutts. I was secretly sure of one thing, the tourists would know what the dogs were for and be darn glad of them in short order.

After having a cup of coffee, Tom and Les again returned to the little jeep and unlashng the barrels, brought in the planks and line to make a raft to cross the channel separating us from the mainland. Time was passing and none of us had yet recovered from the wild ride down the river and our miraculous escape.

Tom worked swiftly and quietly as he built his raft. Whammy had little to say, as yet he hadn't come up with another dream and I feel he would have kept it to himself if he had.

Once again Tom whistled for the dogs and sent them across the channed. Chee Chee would be priveleged and ride. The raft looked pretty loaded, what with the pile of gear for six people exclusive of food it was impressive.

Tom said O.K. Mrs T.O. you sit on the load, Les will go across with another line and Chan and Whammy can hang onto the raft in the water. He would stay with them and push while Les pulled, keeping the raft from tipping.

Whammy set up a real ruckus, he couldn't swim a stroke and was scarred to death he would drwon. Chan couldn't swim either, but he was ~~stillest~~ silent and took his place alongside Tom. While Les pulled and Tom steered out progress was slow but steady. The raft was top heavy and I thought Tom was going to knock Whammy unconscious, he was so frightend he kept trying to crawl up with me and he very nearly swamped us. I didn't doubt I could swim to shore, but I was going to be darn mad if I lost my bedroll. Again and again Tom pulled Whammy back in the water and threatend to drown him if he didn't calm down, I think Whammy believed him as he finally just clung to the side for deax life. Always being a good swimmer and never fearing water, I couldn't help but feel sorry for both of them.

Les tied the raft to a stout tree and started unloading, Whammy and Chan had scambled to shore and were breathing deeply. The day had taken its tole and they had a ~~if~~ lifetime of thrills.

I built another fire and put the pot on. Tom said, he had know idea how far downstream we had gone and would try to find a trail to the road. We still had to get the gear packed and start hoofing it. Major and Chee Chee gleefully trotted behind their soaked master and hoped for more excitement.

Les finished piling the gear on the beach and again all was silent. I was wondering what would happen when they all got their second wind. The situation was a little different now.

Tom returned shortly saying it wasn't to far to the road, but it was a steep climb and everyone would have to pack. Whammy and Chan groaned to their feet and gathering what they could staggered off up the mountain. Les took a load and followed. Tom and I thought it better to get all the gear to the road before

fixing the dog packs. It was a cinch that some of this stuff would have to be left and it was up to the men to discard what wouldn't be essential.

Whammy and Chan could only make the one trip so it was up to the three of us to get the rest of the gear. We struggled thru the buck brush and up the mountain a dozen times before we had all the supplies on the road. I was thanking my stars I was young and rugged, because you shore gotta be tough.

Les had had little to say since we lost the jeep, but his attitude had certainly changed. He was surly and indifferent. I watched him gather a few items and put them in his pack and take off. Tom called him back and told him he would pack his own bedroll and any personal gear he wanted. Les looked, grabbed a down coat from the pile and walked back to the river and threw it in. I have never forgotten this stupidity. There is nothing heavy about a down jacket and he would well wish he had it before this trip was over. Then he mumbled the dogs could pack the rest and again stalked off. We all ignored him, but you could feel the hostility in the air.

Whammy had us in stitches, he just couldn't decide which pills he would need. How in the name of heaven he would pack his pigskin bag and all his little treasures. He thought he might as well cache his teeth as their was precious little food to use them on. Chan had little trouble making his decision, he packed his bedroll and a change of foot gear. Tom had stressed the importance of dry feet and good boots if they had these ~~stuff~~ it would be half the battle.

Whammy finally put all his pills etc in the pigskin bag and hung it in a tree. We left all the guns except the rifle Tom packed and my 22. Les had a pistol strapped to his hip and we had plenty of ammunition we thought.

When we had all gathered what was essential to our comfort ~~ex~~ there was still an awful pile of stuff on the ground. Between pots and pans, dishes remainder of the grub and odds and ends the dogs were going to have a load.

Tom told Chan and Whammy to head up the road and He and I would follow as soon as we had the dogs packed. Whammy was all for staying right where we were for the night but Tom finally convinced him we would be better off making as much mileage as we could, we had a long way to go.

Tom silently smoothed down Sam's rough coat and put his pack on. These packs were a little different than the general pack. They had been built for the Hudson's Bay prospectors and were a solid piece of heavy rubber. Most of the dog packs were made of heavy canvas and were ripped easily on snags, plus they weren't water proof. The rubber dog packs were heavy but Sam was a big dog weighing over ~~near~~ 100 pounds. Long legged and strong. They were hotter on the dogs than canvas and it was important to brush their fur flat before putting the pack on. Tom tied the pack under his belly and across his breast. Jeep was wagging like mad, this little guy loved to pack. He was little compared to Sam, weighing about 90 pounds, short and strong in the back and broad in the chest. His coat was heavy and black. Tom cinched him up and tied them up.

Sorting out the gear I mumbled there was far too much for Sam and Jeep. A good pack for a dog is about 40 or more pounds and we had well over a 100 pounds on the ground. All we could see was to pack Major, if you can imagine a springer spaniel with a pack on. He would only stand 18 inches on tip toe and the size of a pack was usually 20 inches wide by 18 or more deep. I would have to improvise some way. If nothing else he could carry the 20 pounds of rice we had. Shortening up a pack to the smallest possible size I measured him and it would do. Major was so short I just couldn't tie the cinches and he kept sitting down like a good little dog. So I just put the pack on the ground, rolled Major on his back and put the pack on like a mother would put on a diaper. Not exactly protocol for a work dog, but it served the purpose and now Major could join the men.

Before loading the dogs, we took a last walk to the river to make sure all was picked up, and bid our little buddy farewell. Tom silently cursed as he looked at the jeep abandoned on a rock. It was all so unnecessary and a valuable piece of equipment was lost. Finally looking at me, he said, Well Mrs T.O. guess we better go. Not a word about our predicament or the horror's we had come thru. Thinking to myself how silent, are the silent men of the north.

I loaded Jeep first and he staggered away, tail in a tight curl and proud as punch. His sturdy legs bearing well the weight he had.

I poured the rice in Major's pack and turned him loose. He was hilarious, all we could see were his long ears and stub of a tail going 90 miles per. If he sagged in the middle we couldn't tell as his belly was nearly on the ground anyway. Proud as Jeep he took his place at his side and off they went.

Tom had sorted most of the heavy stuff for Sam, the price of being big. As I loaded the pack I could see he would be way over loaded. Tom didn't say anything, but when he staggered under the load, tears rolled down my cheeks. I just couldn't put any more on him and told Tom I would pack it myself. He could see Sam could hardly stand and I was sure he would soften. However, he said, O.K. but it all has to go. Tom tied the axe on the top of Sam's pack and watched him stagger after Jeep.

While I filled my own pack, I ~~again~~ again inwardly raged at Les. Not only were we a million miles from nothing, but my dogs were going hungry and packing twice as much as they should to keep these people alive. ~~Enough~~ More than once dogs have saved the lives of men in the bush, but this situation was stupid and could have been avoided.

I lifted my pack, hoisted it over my shoulders and Tom held it high while I adjusted the straps. I let the tears dry on my face too mad and too tired to wipe them off. Tom was good to dogs, but if they were work dogs they worked and those who coddled them as I did could never brag of a good team. I sometimes thought he was cruel, but this is the way of the north. "Only the strong shall survive!"

Helping Tom with his pack we gave Chee Chee a look and with a flick of her tail she shot up the road after the big dogs. She didn't have to be so smart, she could have packed Whammy's teeth.

I braced myself as we approached Chan and Whammy, Les was still a half mile ahead of them. Tom asked how they were doing, but he didn't sympathize with their plite or soften what was to come. I knew he was worried about these two men, he knew we could walk to Norman in a few days with no ill effects, but with one man ill and the other in bad physical shape it wouldn't be easy. Les would prove to be a problem. His ~~total~~ total lack of consideration for other's and his conciet would be his undoing.

Tom and Chan started ahead of Whammy and I. Chan would have kept up to Tom if it killed him. Whammy made about 100 yards and asked me to tell Tom to slow down. I could have told him it wouldn't do any good, but instead I just ignored him. He said, he was tired and couldn't we stop. Lordy I thought if we make 5 miles a day at this rate it will take us another month to reach Norman and we wouldn't last a month.

When we left the river we were 131 miles from Norman Wells and that is a long walk for a bushman let alone a tourist and a hungry tourist at that. It was pretty plain, that from now on Whammy was my problem and Tom would make sure he kept well ahead and out of earshot. Bless him.

Man I thought what I couldn't do with a taylor made cigarette. Whammy had done most of the rolling for Chan and I and did a pretty good job, but nothing is worse than burning paper and burnt coffee. I asked Whammy if he thought we should try some of the Yukon weeds. We had forgotten about it ~~immediately~~ after discussing it earlier. As soon as T.O. stopped for a breather I would see what kind of weed we could smoke.

So far we had had beautiful weather and not a flake of snow. It was warm walking and we had our jackets lashed to our packs. It was getting late and Whammy started complaining that Tom was going to walk all night. Knowing Tom was looking for a shelter, I again held my peace.

Shortly before dark we found a shelter and it would do for the night. The shelter was clean and equiped with stove, beds and table so we were in luck. I could hardly wait to get the packs off the dogs and just wished I had a great big steak to give them. Poor little Major had made a million miles on his ~~hickies~~ stubby legs and we were proud of him. Chan remarked how amazing it was a dog could outpack a horse for his size, which he does.

Major layed on the road and rolled and scratched. Jeep and Sam had a wild shake and flopped contentedly on the ground. I gave them each a drink and hoped I could get enough gopher's to feed them.

Gopher hunting had been taken up in earnest and during the day Les had shot about six of them. The gophers would dive into the four inch pipe laying along side the road and getting them out was a riot. The dogs would be snuffling and barking at one end and Les trying to ~~shake~~ shake them out the other. It was all a ~~ix~~ little confusing, both to the dogs and the gopher. However, we needed meat and one way or another the gopher had to go.

Tom cut wood and Les hunted for squirrels, he got enough to fill part of the cavity so at least the dogs would get a little food. We had rice, coffee and gopher for dinner. I made soup of the bones and gave it too the dogs, if nothing else I had to keep ~~their~~ their stomachs from shrinking. More than one Indian and trapper has killed his dogs by letting them starve then giving them a big feed when they got some game. By giving them soup this was prevented. Providing the ammunition held out and we could get a couple of gophers for each person and three or four for each dog we would survive. It wouldn't be caviar, but we'd eat. I felt sorrier for the dogs than for ourselves, we knew better and they were foolish enough to trust us. They had to work hard and all they got for their faithfulness was a starvation diet and a pat on the head with luck.

It had been a long day and god knows a wild one. Conversation was limited to low groans and moans. Whammy had aches and pains from head to toe. Les said his shoulders were broken, yet he had the lightest pack of all. He had thrown every thing away but his bedroll and pistol. Chen still didn't complain and I wished to heaven he would, he just looked awful.

Morning came too soon and if the moaning and groaning was in gear last night it was in high pitch this A.M. Everyone had aching muscles where they never knew they had muscles. Not only sore, but the old boy upstairs was really testing us. It was pouring down rain and blowing a gale.

We had a big bowl of rolled oats for breakfast and the trappers diet was coming into its own. Tasted wonderful, dry milk and all.

It would be nice to say the heck with it and sit by the fire all day, but this is for the rich, so off we went, the dogs with tails high and happy.

Whammy and Chan couldn't get over the idea they had eaten gopher. Les was noncommittal and I assume after the life of a combat soldier your stomach could stand most anything. The most surprising thing was that gopher meat is good. Sweet as pork and white as chicken. I found in later years it is a great delicacy with the Indians, only they singe the fur and roast the gopher on a stick in front of the fire, guts, and all.

The men had peak caps on and it helped to keep the rain from dripping off the end of their noses, I wasn't as fortunate. I was wearing a bandana and it just held the water so it fell in a steady stream. Every one was ~~was~~ miserable and even the gophers stayed underground.

We crossed numerous creeks and it was either straight up or straight down. The road was slippery and didn't help the lousy disposition of the traveler's. Tempers were short and Les was doing his best to promote trouble. He carelessly shot away precious ammunition at nothing. ~~was~~ He ridiculed everyone and everything about him. It never seemed to enter his head that he was solely responsible for our plight and if he had an ounce of brains would consider such and be ~~quite~~ quiet.

We huddled on the side of the road by a fire and ate lunch, chicken noodle soup and coffee. I gave up the idea of a weed for a cigarette, I was wet enough and the thought of a wet cigarette didn't appeal to me.

Tom, Chan and Les took off leaving Whammy and I to trundle behind. Whammy was crying steady, he was tired, wet and hungry, couldn't we stop. This was a never ending reverie. Believe it or not he could be fun and in between crying he had me laughing half the time.

Chee Chee was busy snuffling through the bush and I noticed Whammy kept watching her. Finally I could see the reason. Chee Chee would find a berry bush and pick off the berries nibbling contentedly. Whammy just couldn't stand it and after awhile he would follow her aways and when she found a bush loaded he would sit with her and eat berries. I always knew the Tal-Tan was remarkable, but there is one thing sure, Chee Chee would never starve if she were left in the bush.

The rain let up as the day wore on and the miles dragged by. Whammy and Chee

Chees were in and out of the buckbrush eating high bush cranberries.

Walking along one of the few level stretches of road we could see a large camp. It was close to dark and I guessed Tom would make camp here for the night. It was still a couple of miles distant and to us that was an hour or more. I felt like running ahead of them ~~with my pack~~ but I was water logged.

What made me notice Major at that time I'll never know. He was twice ~~times~~ his size, he looked like a ~~piece~~ pork barrel with a twitch of a tail and long ears. I couldn't believe my eyes. The camp was getting closer and I could hardly wait to find out if my suspicions were right.

Tom helped me unpack the dogs and put Jeep and Sam in a dry place. They were tired, wet and hungry as we all were. When I unpacked Major I couldn't help but laugh. Tragic as it was it was funny. The rain had wet the rice and it had swelled giving Major his size. Well wet or not we would have to eat the stuff. If I had known how to make Saki, we could have floated to Norman Wells in an alcoholic haze. Taking Major's pack in the cook house I spread ~~it out~~ the rice to dry.

Tom started the oil stove after Whammy had the light plant going/ The larder looked pretty skimpy, sour rice and bisquits. Believe me you haven't lived until you have eaten fermented rice, but beggar's can't be choosers. I made the balance of the flour into bisquits and if carefully rationed we would have another 3 days of bread. In fact all but the coffee and tea would be gone in another 3 days and we still had 115 miles to go.

What a sorry looking meal for 6 tired hungry people. I just felt terrible. At least we had something, the weather had made gopher hunting impossible and our poor hard ~~work~~ working dogs only got warm water. If love would keep ~~them~~ our dogs alive I sure loved them. When I took out the water I could have cried. Sam rubbed his big old head against my leg and his huge body wiggled happily as I talked to him. Jeep waited patiently for his turn and when I kneeled in front of him, his lovely green eyes were wide with trust. Tears poured down my cheeks ~~and I cried~~ while I hugged and whispered in Jeeps ear. OH GOD! I prayed, don't let anything happen to these wonderful pups because of us.

When I returned to the cook house I felt lower than a snakes vest button. I was so upset about our family I gave little thought to the welfare of human's.

The shock and seriousness of our situation seemed to hit ~~us~~ everyone at the same time. Tom was telling Chan that the only thing we could do was keep going as fast as we could. He knew that the men couldn't make very good time and were averaging about 8 miles a day. If all went accordingly we would still have another two weeks walk.

Whammy immediately insisted Tom leave us and ~~hurry~~ light out for Norman to get an airplane. Chan interceded saying, he just knew that his wife had sent for an airplane by now, but with this weather it would be impossible to look for us. That we should keep going until the weather cleared and then make further plans.

Les of course could see little sense in any of this and said so. He reminded Chan that he had left order's for a plane to be sent after them if they did not return to Johnson's Crossing in 6 days. We had been on the road for nine days and if the weather was out in Whitehorse a plane couldn't make it. So why all the fuss? Les was implying we were making too much of nothing and what was a few hundred miles between friends.

Tom quietly told Les that in 3 days we would be out of food and it would be up to him and T.O. to see that none of starved. That if he didn't stop firing his pistol at the wind and wasting ammunition he would find a way to prevent it.

The three of us were stunned. We watched the lines around Les's mouth tighten. He glared at Tom and the hate was naked in his eyes. ~~Tom's~~ Les could feel the tension in the air, he knew he was outnumbered and he had met his match in the man looking at him with ice blue eyes. The muscles in Tom's neck were hard and strained, I sensed it was all he could do to keep from strangling Les. The minutes passed without a word. Les wheeled and left the room. The air cleared, but we knew it was only temporary.

Whammy was getting panicky and he started playing one against the other. He hounded Chan to agree that Tom leave. He pleaded with me to see that he would. I knew if Tom left, it would not be alone and these men would perish without him.

Les came to the table silent and surly in the morning. Whammy was trying to smooth things over, but when men have lived together and breathed down each other's necks for days on end the third party only makes the situation worse. I could have kicked Whammy. Chan and I could see eye to eye on most things but Whammy could get my Irish up pronto.

Tom had the dog packs on when I finished the dishes. He and Chan were ready to take off and Whammy and I would bring up the rear as usual. Les was not in sight.

It was still drizzling and low cloud scudded across the sky. We were high and above timber line. Only a few stubborn leaves clung to the buckbrush defying the tug of the wind.

The dogs trotted along with tails high and noses twitching. They had gone with out any diner, but they were happy just being with us. Major would be twice his size again tonight, but the rice was already fermented and a little moisture couldn't hurt it.

Looking to the side of the road I noticed Les off to the right. He was walking with his head bent and looked miserable. He had thrown away a good jacket and all he was wearing was a kaki shirt and Eisenhower jacket. He looked neither left nor right I wondered what was going on in his mind.

My thoughts wandered to home and how I hoped I would see them all soon. The mud squished underneath my boots and the rain dripped off the end of my nose. Whammy was quiet for a change and I guess he too was thinking of home. Our packs were getting heavier as the time passed. My arm felt a foot longer with the 22 hanging loosely in my hand. I looked at Whammy and asked him if he would tie it on my pack. The thought of taking my pack off and getting my back wet was appalling. I should have waited. As soon as he finished he asked me to ask Tom to stop. I knew he was tired and so was Chan. If we stopped every 15 minutes we would never make the hoped for eight miles. Whammy insisted if we would just stay put, we would be found and all would be rosy. I just kept walking and again silence closed ~~xxx~~ around us.

Chan and T.O. were about a quarter of a mile ahead of us. I thought how close yet so far. Here I was, 4 ~~xxxx~~ men and a girl, ~~living inches~~ living inches apart.

in thousands of miles of wilderness. Loving, hating, eating sleeping and ~~breath~~ breathing, always in sight of one or all. Yet a million miles apart.

About noon the rain let up and the low clouds raised. We could see part of the country again. We had been going down for about an hour but were still above timber line. Low rolling hills and small clumps of Balsam were spotted on the summit. It was cold and the wind blew consistently. Small creeks rushed across the road. Then the sky brightened with each step and as quickly as it had come it was all over and the sun came out in a blaze of glory. You could feel the warmth and every^{one} stepped higher. I could see Whammy straighten a little and look happy.

Tom called a halt and we scrounged the barren ground for wood. Building a big fire we stretched lazily in the sun and slowly munched bisquits and sipped soup. Les joined us but kept silent and a little apart.

Whammy started on Tom again. Would he go after an airplane, they would pay any price, just get us out of here. Chan did not even mutter, he just listened and when Tom got up to start walking Chan followed. I thought if T.O. ever tells Whammy off he'll sulk for a week.

About the middle of the afternoon, Chee Chee let out the damndest yelp. I just about lept out of my boots and Whammy jumped about a foot. She was over a short rise in the terrain and we couldn't see her, but nobody could help hearing her. She kyyyied and yapped steady. Her screech got louder and higher and I swore she was being killed. Tom took off on the dead run in the direction of the cries, Jeep, Sam and Major were stretched out behind ~~xxxx~~ him, packs just flying. We didn't follow and waited patiently to see what was wrong. Whammy said, it must be a bear. I was hoping he was wrong, the last thing we needed was a mad grizzly running loose.

I could hear Tom yelling at the dogs and cussing a ~~xxxx~~ blue streak. When he came over the rise holding a big fat Porky I could have squeezed Chee Chee to death. Again she had saved the day. ~~xxxx~~ One look at the mutts and out came the pliers. They had quills coming out there edrs and that is what all the cussing was about. Chee Chee proudly carried one quill on the end of her nose. Tom had killed the Porky with the axe handle. The interference was terrific.

We would all have enough to eat tonight. A porky weighs about 20 pounds and is rolling fat. Lots of powder in the meat and good soup for the pups. Happy day.

Tom said, when he finally caught up to her, she was yapping at the nose of the Porky and trying to herd it in our direction. Everytime he turned his tail to her she was gone and right back at his nose. Her father was a bigger dog and he used to flip the Porky on his back, but Chee Chee was too small. We were real proud of this little black dog.

Spirits were a little higher. The sun was bright and the miles slowly passed. The sunset was fabulous and when I told Whammy how beautiful it was, he granted. I thought to myself, he is missing a lot, we didn't have much but beauty was all around us.

Leg had shot a few gophers and again I forgave him his attitude. What with the Porky and gopher's everyone would have a full belly tonight.

Half way down the mountain it was dark and Whammy started crying. He would fall and break a leg, what was the matter with Tom, why didn't he stop. I just couldn't stand it any longer and yelled for Tom. He waited until we caught up to him and listened to Whammy moaning his fears. When it was over, he told Whammy he could not stop, there was damn little wood and we had to get dry. We couldn't camp out on a ~~stone~~ rock soaking wet. The last thing he wanted was anyone to catch pneumonia and we were going to keep going until we came to a shelter. What with that he started off. Poor Whammy, he just knew he wouldn't make it but was too frightened to stay alone. He started mumbling about Tom's inhumanity to man, and again he got my Irish up. I informed him in plain english if it wasn't for Tom he'd probably end up dead and he just might yet. So we walked silently a million miles apart.

It wasn't long before we came to a shelter and believe me it looked like a castle. We tied the dogs at each end and rustled around for wood. There was damn little so we chopped some of the outer boards off the shelter. We had to cook, and we had to dry our clothes, so the shelter couldn't be spared.

We finished the sour rice, Ughhhh! Whammy and Chen didn't say boo when the Porky was served. They hadn't been able to eat the last one, but they were too hungry to

be picky and ate with relish. I was real happy to take the dogs a delicious fat soup and a hand full of bones. They would have been as happy with water, just to have me talk to them and hug their lovely heads. They had worked so hard and though the packs were getting lighter, their belly's were getting smaller.

Sitting around the warm shelter with full tummies, we all dreamt up what we would most like to eat. The menu's were mouth watering and from then on FOOD was the main topic of conversation. It would have been nice to have a cigarette to finish off the feast, but Whammy was still rolling tea and coffee fags.

Another day had passed and still no plane. Chan once again expressed his concern. He knew his wife must be frantic and Whammy said, he still thought Tom should go for a plane. Tom refused, and finally he told Whammy he was out of his mind. If he left them we would never see them again. Whammy had already insisted we were on the wrong road and he was close to panic. Tom had said, he would get them to Norman Wells and he would, but by no means would he leave them. He ix said, he would not leave me behind, if he did they would talk me into leaving the road or do something stupid and nobody would find us. Waiting for a comment from Les and the inevitable, he said nothing. Chan agreed with Tom. Saying that now the weather was better we would see a plane in a few days at the most, but we should keep walking. Whammy was defeated, but he didn't take it lightly. I was the one that had to listen to him all day. I felt sorry for them in many ways, I had been green in the bush just a short time ago and nothing is as terrifying as the vastness, wildness and emptiness of the North.

So to bed, head to toe, but warm and sheltered.

What a beautiful morning, the mist lay softly on the ground but the sun was shining brightly. We ate mush and saved the bisquits. One more breakfast and we would eat air.

Off again, one in front of the other. Slowly down the mountain and then up the other side. The hills were steep but short. We were in the timber and it was cool. The road dried quickly and made walking easier. The dogs were hot with the sun beating on their packs and lapped water from the puddles alongside the road.

With the sun shining, the gophers were running in and out of the pipe and the dogs were happily sniffing each opening. I was wishing they were about the size of a moose, it took so many to make a meal.

We came to an old camp at noon and busily investigated every ~~nook and cranny~~ nook and cranny looking for food. We found old cigarette butts and these we took the ~~last~~ tobacco out of and Whammy rolled us a few diesel soaked smokes. They were awful but a change from tea.

We dreamed up a few more exotic choice dishes as we munched our dry bisquits. I couldn't stand looking at the dogs, they ~~wasn't~~ were stretched out near by and never missed a mouth full. Chee Chee was off snuffling in the bush and filling up on berries. Wish she would come and take her buddies with her. More than once Tom had to stop me from giving them my food. I just couldn't stand it, if it weren't for the dogs we would have been far worse off. They asked for so little and I didn't miss the little morsels they got. I swore if we ever got out of this mess they would never go hungry again, and until they ~~did~~ died, they never did.

The ~~next~~ siesta over we groaned to our feet and headed up the Canal Road. Les had gone on and we could hear him shooting in the distance. I only hoped he was getting gopher's and not firing at the wind again. Tension's were high and nerves ragged, it wouldn't take much to send Tom into a rage now. He had carried the full ~~responsibility~~ responsibility since we lost the jeep and the cooperation had been anything but good.

Tom had spent many sleepless nights wondering what was best for us. He wanted to hunt but he didn't dare take the time. Chan was getting weaker, though he never said anything and Whammy was was making things difficult by crying and insisting Tom leave. I was worried about Les. Tom had controlled himself to the point if he blew he would think nothing of shooting the man and I am not being dramatic. The law of the bush was harsh and life only a superficial thing. Tom had been trained to kill and spent 3 years doing so, he would think nothing of shooting a man, it was harder for him not too. Les must have sensed it as he gave Tom a wide berth and only played on Whammy's fear.

The thoughts tumbled through my head and I could not shake the feeling of apprehension.

Chan had to rest more that day, he was so thin and pale. Whammy in spite of his diet was still packing considerable weight. It was the first afternoon we had talked to each other more than once. Les was still in the distance and still shootin

Whammy offered Tom \$1000.00 dollars to leave us and go for a plane. Chan also asked, he was now sure that the plane would never find us and his wife would be out of her mind with worry. I often wondered why Whammy didn't worry about how his family would feel. Tom didn't answer them and only started up the road. Chan was dissappointed but he held his peace. It was a gloomy afternoon, I knew Tom was doing what he thought best if they would only trust him.

Hit The Road.

We came to another camp early in the evening and T.O. decided to stay rather than ~~walk~~ walk again in the dark. Chan could use the rest and it would give us a breather.

While scrounging thru the camp I found a whole bag of dried fruit. I was so sure we were saved. I happily ran to the men with my find, we cut my only pair of extra pants into bags and divided them amongst us. Whammy had found a pair of snow shoes and bundles of bandage. He ~~didn't~~ worked like a beaver bandaging his legs and said he would use the snow shoe as a crutch. Of course he sent us in gales of laughter, what with bound up legs and a crooked crutch he made quit a sight.

Les came into the cookhouse and glared at Tom. He hadn't shot any gopher's and was out of amunition. Tom had taken his fill, he looked at Les with icy contempt. When he spoke it sent chills up my spine.

Whammy you have begged, cajoled, lied, cried and done all in your power to get me to Norman after an airplane. Once again I refuse, for ~~\$1000.00~~ \$1000.00 or 10 thousand dollars. I told you I would get you to Norman and I will. Now he looked at Les.

You he said, have stolen, cheated, refused to help in any way and if you don't hit the road right now, I'll shoot you. Whammy you can pay Les the thousand and just hope he gets to Norman and gets a plane, Jeanne, and I nearly choked, he said give Les some bisquits he's leaving.

Chan said, well Les it is your fault we are in this predicament and I suppose you should be the one to go. Whammy didn't mention the \$1000.00 if Les stayed he would get shot, so he had to go and that would kill two birds with one stone.

I handed Les the bisquits, he took them and left. We were 91 miles from Norman and he said he would be there in two days. Later accounts of this story made Les a hero, the true story was never told.

Whammy started the light plant and the camp lit up for blocks. We were in the middle of nowhere and if we had food would have been in the comforts of the city. The thought of a plane flying over and seeing this lit up camp would probably put the pilot in a state of shock. We were 100's of miles from airways and only a bird ever flew here.

Whammy was in high spirits thinking someone was on the way for a plane. He again claimed he didn't care what it cost he wanted out of this no man's land. Chan felt better too, but we knew it had been done the hard way. Tom wouldn't discuss the matter, it had to be and he had done what any man would do under the circumstances. Whammy didn't even care ~~how~~ that he had been called anything but a man.

When Tom and I had picked a bed, I asked him if he thought Les would make it. Yes, he said, he can make 40 or more miles a day and if he is lucky he may find an Indian close to the Mackenzie River. God knows, I wouldn't be able to keep from killing him if he stayed. Tom knew more than I about Les and his actions, but I trusted Tom and I would have backed him up under any circumstances. He could be hard as steel, but he was fair and loyal.

I tossed and turned, thinking of Les, ~~and~~ our hungry dogs and the long days ahead. We would have our last breakfast in the morning and only fruit and bisquits left. We hadn't seen a track of any ~~kind~~ kind since loosing the jeep and it seemed fate was still running the show. If Tom left us to hunt, lord knows what Whammy would do, he was close to cracking up and I felt Tom was getting a little worried about our mental attitudes.

Ninety one miles, at least another 11 days if we weren't found and Les didn't make it to Norman Wells. I just couldn't understand why no one had looked for these men. The trip was only going to take 5 days and we had been gone 12.

Fruit anyone?

Our thirteenth day started out beautifully. The sky was a clear blue and the sun shone brightly. The fall air was crisp and frost lay on the ground. Food or no food the air was invigorating, let us hope we could live on it.

The last of the mush went down the hatch and all we had now ~~was~~ ^{were} bisquits and fruit part of which ~~they would~~ be gone in the morning. I was glad that we had lots of coffee and tea at least we could smoke and drink.

We packed the dogs and how hard it was to watch them look at us with trusting eyes and no that unless we got a gopher or something they would go hungry again tonight. I hated every minute of and cursed the day Les was born. We still believed he had lied about flying over the road and wondered if someday we would know the truth?

Whammy wanted Tom to put part of his pack on the dogs and I could have strangled him. The dogs were as tired and hungry as we were. They were doing there share and evidently Whammy was tired of doing his. If he had put so much as a sock on one of those dogs, I would have shot. The blast he got from all concerned convinced him he would be wise to carry his own pack and pipe-down.

Tom and Chan took off, the dogs trotting behind. Whammy picked up his unsightly crutch and away we went. Snow shoes had a purpose in the snow but this was the first time I had ever heard of one used for any other reason than walking. He looked rather foolish as he hobbled along and I just had to laugh. Part of his bandage was hanging beneath a trouser leg, now tattered and ragged and surely he looked like an orphan.

Tom and Chan had taken their bags of fruit as we had and Whammy and I were munching as we walked. The sun was getting warmer and we shed our jackets, piling them on my pack. I hoped Tom didn't notice me carrying anything of Whammy's he would have blasted us both. I thought it might help and it wasn't heavy ~~any more~~.
Yet.

We crossed a small creek and started climbing again. Whammy slowed as the road got steeper and we were almost crawling. We broke out of the timber and as far as we could see above us, the road climbed and climbed. It was so steep that they had built switch backs, a mile long and up for miles. We were at sea level

when we left the creek and the summit was 6500 feet so we had a long climb/ I could see Tom was watching us and suspected he thought Whammy would balk any minute. Climbing is tough at the best of times, but when a guy is hungry, weak and out of condition it is rough. Whammy leaned heavily on his crutch and it was helping him tote his weight.

We would climb awhile stop and get our wind and climb awhile. I had turned to say something to Whammy when I couldn't see him. There was nothing but boulders and grass so I must say I was astonished. Suddenly he popped out from a rock and red in the face hustled back to the road.

I said, what in the world struck you, it is bad enough on the road what in God's name are you charging off in the buckbrush for. He cursed and raved and grabbing his bag of fruit threw it a mile down the mountain. I couldn't believe my eyes, it was all the food we had, he must be mad, stark raving crazy. When he had satisfied himself it would be the last he saw of that, he said, that god damn stuff gave me diarrhea and I'm weak enough. With that he took off for the biggest rock he could find.

Poor Whammy, I laughed until I could hardly stand. Not only did he have to suffer the indignities of being with a woman but there wasn't much to hide behind and the higher we went the less he would find. However, my sadistic sense of humor kept me in stitches and I had to share it with Tom and Whammy.

When I caught up to them and told them what had happened, they both followed Whammy's example and threw their fruit down the mountain. Neither of them had eaten any of it and it hadn't bothered me, so only Whammy would suffer such indignities. As I have said, Whammy was always good for a laugh.

We were heading up Abraham plains and going up the long switch backs and steep climb was almost the undoing of Chan and Whammy. They were completely beat. When Tom wasn't looking Whammy would hand me his pack, I just couldn't refuse he was in a weekend condition and it wasn't that heavy.

Many a conversation was interrupted as Whammy retreated behind a rock, he was as weak as a cat. When Tom saw his pack on my back he roared at Whammy and he would

take it back, but as soon as Tom turned his back I got it again. Finally Chan took exception to Whammy's thoughtlessness and said, Jeanne I would lay down on this road and die before I would hand my pack to a woman. I said, it was alright the day's of Chivalry were dead. Whammy blew his top, and stated, that any woman that lived in this God Forsaken country didn't need chivalry. Little did he know how right he was. You just gotta be tough.

We slowly got higher and higher, Tom was stopping more often for Chan and Whammy and I kept throwing his pack back and forth. He still kept a pretty steady retreat to a rock and between the two of them I expected to pack one of them.

Tom started a small fire half way up the mountain and we drank some tea and ate a bisquit. Huge thunderheads were building over the mountains and Tom and I looked at each other. Seldom in the summer on a warm day would you avoid a thunder storm. Everything seemed to be testing us, we couldn't beat the elements, we ~~could~~ couldn't even join them.

Where in God's name was the plane Chan expected, what was the matter with the people in Johnson's Crossing. They wouldn't know we were with them unless Thorpe had mentioned it, and he was probably still at the Macmillan River building a bridge. They were well aware of the hazards of the Canol and knew these men had families and business to get back too. If I ever got the chance they would sure get an ear full from this gal. Likely Tom would have something to say, he was well aware of the consequences when men ~~fox~~ went into the bush poorly ~~equipped~~ equipped.

Groaning ~~to~~ our feet we slowly struggled on. Whammy clung desperately to his crutch and Chan was getting ~~lower~~ lower and lower to the ground. We weren't going to make many miles today. I wondered how Les felt going over this mountain in the dark. I could almost bet he ran as much as he could. What a desolate place and not a stick for shelter.

Thunder rolled and crashed over our heads, in seconds were drowned in a deluge of water. It poured down in buckets and we were soaked to the skin in a matter of minutes. Brother what next, the Old Boy was really throwing the book at us.

Half drowned and miserable we still steadily and slowly climbed the Plains of Abraham. How appropriate.

Terror at Midnight

The storm passed and wet ~~knak~~, bedraggled and tired we plugged on. Toward late afternoon we reached the summit and at our feet lay thousands of miles of bush. The view was breathtaking and a little terrifying, as far as we could see we knew we were the only ones around. We felt like the last people on earth and looked like the first. What the best dressed tramp will wear. So far we hadn't run out of soap and had kept pretty clean. The men had shaved nearly every day, so they were ~~practically~~ beardless.

Walking slowly along the plains it was eerie, not a tree and as flat as a pan cake. The grass was short and only sparsely scattered buckbrush. Small clumps of boulders popped out of the earth as tho stacked by human's. The wind blew in a straight sweep with nothing to stop the wailing.

Silence again had taken over and each with his own thoughts lifted one foot in front of the other. Steam rose from the dogs packs and our clothes. The smell of wet wool and wood smoke was pungent. No wonder we hadn't seen any game, we would probably affixiate any unsuspecting animal.

A mile or so in the distance we could see a shelter and how wonderful it looked to our tired eyes. I was hurrying whanny and I should have known better. He nearly threw his crutch at me, and if he had he would have fallen flat on his face. As it was I got his pack again. Chivalry???????

I thought we would never get there. The shelter loomed larger and larger and finally we stood and behold, there were two. Tom hurriedly rushed the dogs into one and we struggled into the other with Chan and Whanny. I didn't have to worry about dinner, we could eat at our leisure. Bisquit anybody.

How weary we were, hungry yes, but bone weary. Even the usual menu game was forgotten. We sat quietly and listend to the fire crackle in the pot belly drum stove. Someone long ago had left a nice pile of wood in this shelter, they must have hauled it from the valley, as there wasn't a stick on the summit, not even a lonely balsm.

We bid Chan and Whanny a goodnight and headed for the other shelter where we could keep an eye on our family. Seldom were we out of sight of eachother.

As tired as I was I layed wide-eyed and stared at the ceiling. The dogs were flaked out and Major was snoring up a storm. We had left the door partly ajar, it would be too hot for the dogs with it shut. I felt every muscle slowly unwind and fell into a deep sleep.

We were wakend by Chee Chee, she was yapping in Tom's face and wouldn't quit. She would run out the door and back again. After numerous trips and ear splitting yips Tom finally got up. O.K.O.K..... just wait a minute he told her. Pulling on his pants and grabbing his rifle he followed the little black frantic dog.

Chee Chee led him to a cave in the ground and Tom was all for coming back. He was sure she had found a bear and he wasn't about to disturb a sleeping bruin in the dark. However, Chee Chee had other plans and she just kept up the awful yapping and running in and out of the cave. Finally deciding he couldn't let a little dog get the best of him, he braced himself against an onslaught of fur and followed her in. She had found the biggest Porky we had ever seen.

Rushing back to the shelter with his treasure, we woke up Whammy and Chan and had ourselves a barbeque. It was delicious and our family had a thick soup, rich in nourishment and lots of bones.

We went back to bed full, and content, thankfull to the little dog that never quit hunting. Chee Chee seemed to sense our plight and played a big part in saving our lives.

It was drizzling in the morning and Whammy was bushed. He told Chan he just couldn't make it, every bone ached and he would just sit and wait for the plane. Chan talked him ~~back~~ into trying and Whammy groaned his way out of the sack. I looked at Chan and he looked like death warmed over. I felt so sorry for him and thought if anyone should lay in bed it should be Chan. His eyes were hollow and his cheeks were sunk in, ~~his nose was yellow~~ even his skin was yellow. Yet he never complained or asked for any favors.

Whammy could afford to loose 20 pounds, but he was 20 years older than we were and it was showing.

My heart ached for them, but I could not go against Tom, regardless how hard hearted he seemed. Compassion would not get any of us to Norman Wells and Tom was using the same psychology he had used on me last winter. I was getting pretty close to the balking stage myself. I just thought I'd rather sit down and starve than keep walking, it wouldn't be so ~~kick~~ exhausting.

Again Whammy leaned on his crutch and Tom and Chan took off up the road. I hoped Whammy could make a mile or so before the usual cry of "ask Tom to stop",

Before long we were soaked and the drizzle did little for our dispositions. Whammy said, he was going to catch pneumonia, well he wouldn't be alone. Strange, but none of us caught cold.

We got over the plains and started down the mountain to timber line. The visibility was poor and we couldn't see much, but it would be nice to be off the wind swept prairie.

Stopping at a broken down camp to see if we could find any food or something to smoke, we were startled by the growl from Sam. For no reason at all he jumped Jeep. My God, I thought, he's going to kill him. Jeep couldn't move, Sam had him by the back of the neck and furiously shook him. He wouldn't let go and eyes emerald green with rage he gave a vicious shake and Jeep collapsed. Still Sam hung on. Tom ran for a two my four and cracked it over Sams head, but he didn't even feel it. He got a bigger timber and ~~hammer~~ pounded Sam till it snapped in two, that did it. Sam ran away hiding under one of the bunkhouses.

We rubbed Jeeps neck and stroked his back for an hour. I thought sure he was dead. Finally he opened his eyes and in a few seconds stood up and shook his lovely black coat. Jeep wagged and licked my face and I was so happy he was alright I cried. Chee Chee and Major quickly came to investigate and after sniffing him all over were satisfied he was O.K.

Tom and I went to get Sam, we called and begged him to come out. He snarled and snapped at Tom and wouldn't move an inch. It was no use so we went back to Whammy and Chan and put the tea pot on. We couldn't leave him, we'd just have to sit and wait.

Whammy couldn't care less, it gave him an excuse to rest. Both he and Chan were amazed and could hardly believe dogs could be so ferocious. Neither of them had ever seen what we call a dog fight. If ~~huskies~~ malamutes knew how to kill their would be far less sleigh dogs in the north. They try to kill, I've seen them so full of holes they look like a sieve. Ears torn, eyes bulging, blood and foam from head to tail, but they always pull out of it. Both Tom and I have sutured many a tear in our dogs. When it is all over your weak in the knees and nerve ends left dangling. They scare me to death.

So we drank tea and waited. Sam finally crept out, but he shied away from us. Sam was a strange dog, he was half wolf and we couldn't trust him. Not that he was mean to people, but he was too independent. When the going was the toughest and we needed him the most he would ~~spring~~ ^{quit} you could beat him to death but if he didn't want to work he wouldn't. You couldn't go at Sam with anything in your hand or he would fly at you teeth barred. When Tom punished Sam it was man against beast. I had been warned many times and forbidden to go near Sam with so much as a stern look. I forgot about him one time on the trail and was walking past the dogs with an axe in my hand, when I got along side Sam he lunged at my leg and if he hadn't been in harness I would have worn his ~~precious~~ pearly whites in my ~~skullcap~~ calf.

Tom ~~finally~~ eventually coaxed Sam to him. He petted him and put his pack back on, which had been torn off in the battle. We were both furious with him and I think Tom could have killed him for jumping Jeep. Had Sam killed Jeep, Tom would have shot him. Needless to say, Sam was in the well known dog house.

Tom searched Sam's head but not a mark. "Sacre blue" he said. I broke that 2 x 2 and 4 x 4 over his head and didn't even raise a bump, would have killed the normal dog."

~~Sluggish~~ Plugging along toward civilization, Whammy still thought he should cache his teeth. He was ~~xxx~~ bandaged from head to toe and leaning hard on his crutch. I thought he should be getting tougher but it was obvious he was getting weaker every step. Chan had slowed considerably and Tom had to stop and let

him rest. Knowing how important each mile was, Chan said he was sorry to hold us up. I looked at him, he was a sick man I only hoped he would make it at all.

We only made 6 miles that day and it took longer than if Tom and I had walked 20. We were completely out of food, until now the ~~ampk~~ situation had been pretty fair. We had gotten enough gopher's, porcupine, berries and squirrels always with a little something in our stomachs, but now the cupboard was bare. We had nothing but tea and coffee.

We stopped at a shelter and a pretty sorry looking crew. The dogs were listless and tired. Our clothing was drenched, we felt real sorry for ourselves. Tom and I were not in bad shape, we were a little gaunt but had plenty of steam left. Whammy and Chan were on the last gasp.

I kiddingly asked Whammy what he would like tonight, filets, or baked ham. He chose filets. While we cabitised a little I noticed Chan was scarcely breathing. I looked at Tom and he quickly went to Chan and asked him what was wrong. The story he told us, scared us to death.

Chan had a collapsed lung and his very life depended on it being pumped full of oxygen and frequent intervals. He should have ~~been~~ been in the hospital for ^{showed} treatment 4 days ago. He ~~showed~~ us his side which was caved in way under the rib cage. Knowing Chan I didn't need to ask why he hadn't mentioned it before. His courage was unbelievable, he was a doomed man and nothing in the world we could do would help.

I suddenly felt repulsion for Whammy, he had cried from the very beginning and there was nothing in the world wrong with him except blubber and self pity. I was even more disgusted when it didn't shut him up. He would cry to the grave and no doubt live longer than any of us. It isn't any wonder Chan's wife would be frantic with worry. She would have to save her husbands.

Even in tragedy humor will out. Tom was sure he could do something and asked Chan if he could pump him up with a bicycle pump. There were lots of pumps in the camps.

I thought Chan would split laughing, he was so weak but he just layed there and howled. "God Tom, he said, if anyone could do it you could, but I'm afraid it wouldn't work. Now you know why I was so insistent when we left Johnson's Crossing that if we were not heard from in six days they were to send a plane. Why they haven't done so I will never know! "Unless, he said, they thought I wouldn't pay for the plane?"

I couldn't trust myself to speak, but the admiration was bright in my eyes. How ~~useless~~ helpless we were, victims of circumstance, stranger's thrown together in a foolish venture. My thoughts suddenly turned to Les. I wonder if he made Norman, he had been gone two and a half days, he claimed he could be there in 2 days. Now I wished more than ever that he was safe at Norman Wells and we would have a plane soon.

Chan was sleeping when Tom and I slid into our robes. Again we had brought in the dogs, they needed all there strenght and keeping them warm and dry would prevent them using there energy to keep warm. Chee Chee curled up at my feet and Major plopped on the foot of the bed.

It was still raining in the morning but we were almost to timber line ~~mark~~ What a blessing it would be to get off the bleak, barren, lonely wind swept summit. Even in the worst of weather the timber seems friendly.

At least we could start out in the mornings with dry clothing. The thought of crawling into wet duds was enough to stop any man. Maybe we wouldn't be dry long, but as long as we were walking we could keep fairly warm. I thought, it sure is strange we haven't had a snow storm by now. I wasn't complaining, just thinking.

The timber was getting thicker and we left the ~~ice~~ balsm behind, welcoming the tall heavy spruce. Whammy clung to his crutch, but he was not crying as often. I think he was too tired.

~~While crossing a small creek~~

While crossing a small creek, Whammy fell down, his foot slipped on a mossy rock and when he went down his arm went thru the foot of the snow shoe pinning him under his own weight. When I thought he would never get up, he struggled to a sitting position, and cussing a blue streak threw the ~~skis~~ with all his strenght down the creek.

He glared at me ~~atx~~ as though it was my fault. He said, "I damned near drowned in a foot of water." So he did, and wet he was.

Tom and Chan were out of sight, but it didn't matter much. Whammy and I tried another cigarette of weeds. We dreamed of the nice cool taste of a camel and decided it would be a toss up which we would like best, a good smoke, or food.

The miles were going so slow I swore we were going backwards. If I had try to rush Whammy he would have strangled me. I noticed Tom had Chan's pack and was not stopping as often. I had taken Whammy's pack after he nearly drowned and was suprised how perky he was, maybe the bath was the secret and not my relieving him of a cumberson burden.

It was quiet in the timber, the call of the Whiskey Jack and Chee of the squirrel were music to my ears. If nothing else we could get squirrels and have another meal. The rain had let up, but the sky was still overcast.

Tom called a halt, he built a fire and put on a pot of water. He asked Whammy to make some tea, while he and I went after squirrels. Whammy and Chan were glad of a chance to rest and hoped we got a bushel.

Tom only had his rifle but if he hit them in the head we wouldn't loose any meat. I took the left side of the road and T.O. took the right. He said, Mrs. T.O. when I fire two quick shots, come back. We can't stop long, but there is lots of sign around and we may get enough for a feed, with luck. I grimed, waved and took off. Chee Chee went with Tom and Major snuffled along at my heels. Both of the dogs were good squirrel dogs, Major would just sit and stare at a tree with a squirrel in it, I have stocd for ten minutes and couldn't see it, but sure enough it would move. Chee Chee had diferent tactics, if she saw a squirrel she would try with all her heart to climb the tree and she never quit yapping till it was shot. They had marvelous eye sight.

This was the first time in many days I had been away from anyone. I felt like running and jumping, free as a bird. Major was sitting staring into a tree 20 feet in front of me, so I had better get busy and bring home some vitals.

When I heard Tom's rifle, I hated to go. Major and I had gotten 4 squirrels but it was so peaceful in the bush. The ground was soft and fresh after the rains. Everything smelt so good and my troubles were nil. How nice it would have been if Tom and I were alone and could enjoy the lovely world around us. So....back to reality and fear.

T.O. had 5 squirrels and Whammy had the tea made. We sat ~~and~~ drinking tea, while Tom cleaned the squirrels and put them in his pack. The dogs were so excited at the smell, they jumped and sniffled and wagged at the pack. If not much at least we would all get a squirrel tonight. Call it trapper's caviar.

While huddling along, Whammy and I found a can of salmon. We showed ~~it~~ it to Tom and he said not to touch it." We could all die of tomain, god knows how long it had been laying out in the weather." Well it is pretty hard to pass up food if your starving, and we didn't think we were going to make ~~if~~ much of a loss if we did die, so when we were alone, Whammy and I ate the Salmon. Too be sure, if we had gotten sick, it would be a hell of a note to admit we ate a ten year old can of fish. Neither of us had the nerve to get sick. We felt a little guilty, but sick, never.

Chan was doing much better at a lower altitude and even had a little color in his cheeks. In fact all of us felt better. Maybe the Old Boy was taking pity on us.

Coming around a long bend in the road, we could hear the roar of water in the distance. I didn't even think of it, if it was another river I'd quit. Whammy nor Chan could hear the ominous roar, but I had heard it too often. Tom gave me a quissical look and a half grin. Oh Brother that was a stinky thing to do.

We could see the high walls of a canyon before we got to the river, but the roar grew louder.

The four of us walked to the bank and looked down. The white water was roaring by about 20 feet below us. On the opposite side there was a canyon wall that rose 200 feet above us. Where we stood it couldn't have been 12 feet wide, but the angry, boiling, churning white water would make a man think twice.

We unpacked the dogs, made them a spruce bow bed and chained them up. Major and Chee Chee were running loose as usual, the thought of another dog fight spoiled

Sam's freedom.

Chan and Whammy layed under a tree while Tom and I scouted the river. He went back to the canyon and looked at the narrow space separating ~~us~~ us from our way to civilization. There was a small ledge on the opposite side, but if a man slipped and fell into the river he would be pounded to a pulp on the canyon walls. Even if Tom could have made it, the rest of us couldn't.

He said, "you go back with Whammy and Chan Mrs. T.O." I'll go upstream and see what I can find." Maybe I could drop a log across the canyon."

Tom took off up stream, Chee Chee and Major on his heels and I sat on the bank for awhile. The water fascinated me, I just stared at the boiling furry. Slowly rising, I went back to camp.

Chan was dozing and Whammy was stretched out on the ground. They looked content, like some Sunday picnickers, resting after a big feed of fried chicken. ~~Next~~, Each thinking, saying little.

Tom walked into camp about an hour later. I looked into his rugged, handsome face. His blue eyes swept over us and he grinned. I thought, now what?

Tom said he had found a powder shack a mile upstream, and a cable was strung across the river. Looked like one the army had used to transfer equipment until the bridge was built. We asked about the bridge. "There is nothing but the approach on this end," he said, "The river is half a mile wide and a sand bar in the middle". There is a good camp on the other side, and I can see a cat in the yard, maybe I could get it going and haul us out to Norman." "and say Mrs. T.O. I saw the first moose track since we left the Twitya", I had to laugh, Tom knew I ~~it~~ didn't like moose meat, but it would have tasted pretty good now. He said, it was too late to hunt today, he would try to get across the river and hunt in the morning.

I was dead against going another inch, if I was going to starve to death it would be on this side of the Keele River and I didn't care what anyone thought I would not cross another river, I had had it. Tom didn't argue, he just took off.

I sat mutely, staring at nothing, but knowing I would never go on the river. Nothing nor anybody could change my mind, I was petrified and rather die where I sat.

Tom returned, he had found the pipe that Les had crossed the river on, but with the high water from the rains it had broken and he thought only in the last few hours. How ironic, the one who desperately needed help was helpless.

Tom told us he thought he could go over the cable hand in hand if it was calm. I nearly blew my top, your crazy, you aren't as strong as you think, if you fell in the river you'd be bust in two and if you got banged up on the bar we couldn't help. If anything happens to you we've had it anyway. Panic welled up in my throat and I just stared at him.

He said, well come up and see what I'm talking about. So we walked up the river with him. We could see the camp on the other side, and it was a long way across. The river was fast and deep, the approach stood in tact but there was no bridge, another damn lie of Les's, unless the man is blind. Fear, it engulfed me like an evil thing, I couldn't think straight, all I knew was this was the end.

I returned to the present and stared at Whammy, he had just offered Tom another \$500 if he would try it. Chan and I couldn't believe our ears, this man was trying to buy a mans life. Why did Whammy refuse to face the naked fact, that without Tom none of us would make it anywhere or have gotten this far. I thought he's mad.

Tom wheeled on Whammy, I thought he was going to hit him. "Why is you guys think that money will buy anything, you've promised \$1000 for a plane, any amount you'll pay, your a cheap fraud. You can't buy me, I don't give a damn for money. All I am trying to do is get your fat carcass to Norman Wells in one piece, I said I would and I will, that you can't buy now or ever"

Whammy was undaunted, Chan and I waited for him to apologize, but he was to desperate to care about anything except his skin.

With that Tom yelled at us to stay where we were, he would go get the dogs and the gear, we could camp here.

You could cut the air with a knife. Chan sat stunned and I boiled inside.

Building a fire and getting water for the tea, I looked up and saw the sky was blacker. I groaned, more rain.

Tom returned, he chained the dogs under the bridge approach and told Whammy and Chan to take the powder shelter, he and I would ~~xx~~ sleep under the bridge.

We gave each of the dogs a squirmed and fried the remainder for ourselves. They tasted pretty good and wished we had a dozen more. The coffee was hot and tasty and after a lousy smoke we called it a night.

The dogs made a fuss when we joined them, I couldn't stand to look at them. All the suffering they went thru and still wanted nothing more than to be loved. They ~~all~~ got a good night pat, and Chee Chee and I curled up in the robe.

~~Reaching~~ Sometime during the night it had started to rain, I had stretched out and my foot went into a puddle of water. We were sleeping at an angle head high, and a good thing I guess. The roof had leaked, ha, and the bottom of my bedroll was a lake. I jumped up cussing and poured the water out. I was so darn tired and mad that I just crawled back in and slept with my knees under my chin. If I did that today I would die of consumption.

6 Cracking Up

My eyes seemed to be glued stuck, but in the back of my mind I thought I could hear someone yelling. I struggled up and listened, Tom was also sitting up and pulling his pants on. Whatever it was it was getting louder.

It was Whammy, he was running and slipping down the bank to reach us. God, the first thing that entered my head, was Chan had ~~xxxx~~ passed away, what else could drive Whammy out in the rain and dark.

The dogs were on the end of their chains growling and barking and this howling mad creature. Whammy stood over the bedroll shouting above the dogs, did you hear it.....~~xxxx~~ did you hear it.....Tom and I looked up at him and yelled hear what? I heard an airplane he roared, an airplane, did you hear it?? We shook our heads and Whammy started to cry. Chan didn't hear it either he said, but I heard an airplane, I know I did, the tears rolled down his cheeks and I thought he was cracking up.

Whammy struggled up the bank to his shelter and I lay in the cold wet robe trying to get back to sleep. I wondered how in the world I would ever get this thing dry if it kept raining. I tossed around trying to keep my feet out of the puddle, cussing the day I ever left home. I was feeling so sorry formyself I wasn't even hungry.

I looked down at the faithful mutts chained at my feet and thought how nice it would be if I could chain them to a moose quater. They had lost a lot of weight and were foot sore, yet all I had to do was look at them and they would wag and wiggle all over. Too bad people weren't as gratefull for a meal and a little love.

It was so still, with the stillness that only comes with fog. The roar of the river was muffled and the drizzle fell ~~as~~ softly as snow flakes. Only a short while ago Whammy thought he had heard an airplane. I looked out from under the bridge, daylight was just breaking ~~and~~ from the looks of the sky, even a bird would need radar to fly. Low cloud scudded across the ground and visibility was zero.

Tom sat up, he was restless and I bet he was awake half the night trying to figure out what to do. I looked at him, saying, things look pretty grim don't they. Answering me with a grin, he said, "The Lord will provide Mrs T.O." Tom always said this when things were going the wrong way and he fully believed it, for him, the Lord always did provide.

Speaking softly he said, "I went over the cable last night while you ~~was~~ slept. There was nothing to it, I found some pulley's and bed springs, I think I can rig up a carrier and get you all across."

It would be useless to rave at him, it was done, but I thought what if he had fallen in the river? We never would have known what happend to him. Was Tom cracking up too? "The Lord did provide."

While sitting looking at one another, I was sure I heard a low drone. Tom had unconsciously cocked his head. I knew ~~it~~ the sound was getting louder, but after thinking Whammy was losing his marbles, I wasn't about to admit I was losing mine. Obviously T.O. felt the same as he said nothing.

When the loud drone could no longer be ignored I asked Tom if he could hear a plane, grimacing and shaking his head, he said "Yes".

Leaping out from under the bridge we ran to the shelter, I had forgotten about my clothes and was donned in my long John's looking anything but glamorous. Chan and Whammy were standing staring at the sky listening intently. Your plane is coming back Whammy, Tom said. He was too overjoyed to answer. None of us thought that this could be any plane but one looking for us. Never dreaming it might be a plane just flying over, not even knowing we existed.

Tom yelled at me to get a fire going, with that he grabbed the axe and dashed for the timber to cut some brush and green poles. He was going to make the biggest smoke the north had ever seen. Whammy rushed after him and started sawing on the tree with a jackknife, he nearly ended up with his hand chopped off. Tom brushed him out of the way and shoved a pile of green bows in his arms.

Chan came running out of the shelter dragging a blanket behind him. He proceeded to run up and down the road waving the blanket like mad. Where he got the energy we still don't know.

I stood in my long johns watching all the activity. The fire was crackling at my feet the roar of the engine getting louder. It just had to be an airplane looking for us.

The weather was still sour, low stratus covered the hills. The ceiling couldn't have been 500 feet above the terrain in the canyon it was right on the deck. Looking up the road instead of overhead was the most beautiful sight I ever saw in my life. I yelled at the men "There he is"

at
Following every bend in the road not more than 200 feet altitude flew a beautiful silver plane. Not shimmering and silver as in sunlight, but shostly and dull in the drizzle. ~~Manoxxx~~ Banking over the bends in the road we thought

he would never get to us.

The smoke was rising in great billows, he just couldn't miss seeing it. The roar of the engines was deafening and when he flew over our heads and gave the age old sign.....wagging his wings.....emotion filled our throats and we couldn't do a thing but watch this wonderful silver bird. Gratefull that he had found these four miserable ~~souls~~ souls in the middle of nowhere. Sure that we had been forgotten by man and God.

~~Free Drop~~
-FREE DROP

The pilot made a tight turn and on his next pass his speed was much slower. All eyes were lifted to the thrilling sight, and as he flew over our heads he dropped something out of the plane. Suddenly a little parachute opened and floated slowly down.

Tom retrieved the treasure and to our amazement it was attached to a can of spam. There was a note tied to the chute, but before we read it we ate the can of meat, it was delicious.

What the pilot was thinking as we ate ravenously who knows, but he patiently circled. The note read, glad we found you, will return to Norman for supplies. If there is anything you require in medical aid the code card will explain how to spell out your needs.

While we read this note another chute came fluttering down. If we ~~thought~~ needed a stretcher or doctor wave our arms. We didn't wave. Another pass and another little chute, we were getting a feed of spam. This note asked us to stay where we were and not start walking.

Walking I thought, where, or couldn't he see the bridge was out? Well Les hadn't noticed it was gone and this fellow was busy.

He disappeared in the low cloud and returned for another pass and dropped another chute. We had been too busy eating spam and reading notes to lay out any messages, so he surmised all was well and said he would see us again soon. With a waggle of wings he shot upward, clawing for altitude.

The roar of the engines died to a low drone and the drone to silence. We were appaled by the ~~silence~~ stillness. What a glorious sound ~~the plane had made,~~ the plane had made.

Tom asked Chan if when the plane returned he wanted them to bring a doctor from Norman. Chan said no, there was nothing a ~~doctor~~ doctor could do, he would have to get to a hospital." In spite of our joy at being found Chan's illness was upermost in our minds.

You never heard such eager speculation as the four of us conjured up. We would eat until we dropped. We would have a cigarette in each hand, what a glorious time for all.

The plane had just left and Whammy was already crying about what it ~~cost~~ would cost him. My god I thought, all he thinks of is money, only an hour ago he would spend a million for an airplane. Well, he couldn't dampen our spirits.

In one of the notes the pilot had written there was a rescue party on the way from Norman Wells on foot. There would be 5 miner's and a Mouny. If they needed anything spell it out in code and it would be flown out. We assumed the rescue party was close and should be along today.

When some of the excitement had died I noticed my attire. Lord, I better get some clothes on. Rushing back under the bridge I put on my well pressed slacks and starched shirt. I hugged our family and told them they would each get a steak real soon. I rushed back up to the read.

Chan was sadly looking at his blanket, what a mess. Covered with mud and sticks and soaking wet. Chan had kept this blanket spotless the whole trip and now look at it. He grinned, and I helped him shake ~~some of the big hunks off,~~ off some of the big hunks. It wasn't a very good drying day, but he draped it over the willows in hopes.

In little over an ~~hour~~ hour our wonder bird returned, we could hear the low drone of the engines throbbing in the distance. Suddenly he appeared, flying low and heading straight for us. He flew over and on his next approach a huge bundle fell out of the plane door. We watched it tumble toward the earth and when we expected a horrible crash a beautiful chute opened settling a 45 gallon drum only 50 feet away. What a beautiful drop, it was perfect.

The pilot circled while we dove into the barrel. We must have been a sight from the air, like a bunch of chimunks in a nut cache. When we finished our search and read the note the doctor from Norman had written we were terribly dissappointed. Not one single morsel of solid food. Soup, cereal, medical supplies and instructions to eat slowly and lightly until our stomachs were in better condition. We ~~unanimously~~ unanimously agreed we were in fine shape and what we needed was food.....good solid food.....and lots of it.

Our gaurdian was still circling and Tom quickly read the code card. F for food. There ~~was~~ ^{was} yards and yards of cloth in the barrel to spell the code, so Tom immediately set to building a huge F.

When the pilot made his pass and saw the huge F, he wagged his wings and headed for Norman Wells.

Whammy was still digging in the barrel and with a whoop and a holler he appeared with two packs of cigarettes. Tom and Chan were making soup so Whammy and I thought we would relax and light up a taylor made. What a shock, we coughed, choked, realed around like drunks and fogged up like a couple of addicts. We had never dreamt the effects of tobacco on an empty stomach could be so violent. Never let it be said we were curred. Our determination paid off, we were soon puffing away like pro's.

Smoking and drinking our soup, we again heard the low drone of our hero. A long low pass and whoosh, another huge shute opend just above the ground. A perfect landing for ~~such~~ ^a 45 gallon drum.

We loped over to have a peek. On top of the pile was the thickest, juiciest most beautifyl steaks you ever did see. Underneath was bacon and eggs, bread, butter, cans of fruit, vegetables and just everything you could name.

The pilot made another low pass and as our heads popped up a tiny shute came floating down. He had written a note saying he had two more drops but they were Free.

We had little knowledge of the aviation lingo in those days, so Whammy immediately assumed he wouldn't have to pay for this drop, it was on the house. Kindness itself from a big hearted pilot.

So we stood and waited. Whammy was sauntering up the road when the plane roared over head. In seconds a thud that shock the ground and a sack landed within 15 feet of Whammy. On target.

Whammy jumped 10 feet and we stood gawking at the bundle on the road, thinking maybe the chute didn't open. When we finally reached it, there wasn't a chute. It was a big gunny sack full of meat and bones for the dogs. I was the happiest gal alive. I could kiss the thoughtfull guy that remembered our wonderful dogs.

We saw our angel return and all of us scrambled off the road, we sure knew what a free drop was now. Flying close enough to touch him, the door wide open we saw a fellow push another bundle out of the plane. Again an earthshaking thud. This time it was books and magazines, also the latest paper's. Wow! if these fellows didn't think of everything.

Tom suddenly laughed, we waited and then he spluttered. My God, we'll need a D.C. 3 to pack the stuff away. Funny Oh yes! Hilarious. My back ached at the thought. Even on a full belly Whammy and Chan might manage a package of soup.

We all waved as the 3 returned, he wagged his wings and headed for home. I thought its fantastic. We have been entertained, fed, inquired about and watched over without a ^{word} ~~message~~ spoken. We didn't even know who they were.

I made a beelinge under the bridge with all the meat I could carry. Our family was going to get the steak I promised them. They were so excited I thought they would wag in two. They were so busy and so hungry they forgot to growl at one another.

Relaxing around the fire, full of good food and content with the world, the miseries of the last few days faded away. If only we could get Chan out, all would be well with the world.

Late in the afternoon the low drone could ~~again~~ again be heard in the distance. We couldn't imagine what he had forgotten unless it was a portable bathtub. We waited patiently until the great bird flew over our camp. The pilot tossed a small ~~sack~~ chute out the window. This time it was a message to tell us the ground party was only 10 miles away. With the familiar wag of his wings he headed for Norman.

Ten miles mused T.O. well they should be here in about three hours. I guess I'll go back across the river and string up the bed springs. We can cross in the morning."

Whammy and Chan looked at Tom speechless, he hadn't told them he had gone across on the cable last night. Now Whammy thought he was crazy, there was a rescue party coming let them do it, after all that is what he was paying them for.

Tom ignored Whammy, I knew he was thinking of Chan and the quicker he got medical aid the better. If he could hurry it along ~~with the rescue party~~ the happier he would be. I didn't like the idea but he made it on an empty stomach, I guess he could do better on a full tummy.

We watched him swing and sway across the cable. I thought he would never get to the opposite shore. When he just hung getting his wind, I was sure he had played out and couldn't go any further. Finally after eons, his feet touched the ground and I breathed again. Lord, I have been so scared for so long I wonder how the normal folk live?

It was getting dark when Tom finally returned on his sling. He had a bed spring hung on two pulleys, and he pulled the spring across the cable by hand. His arms would be six inches longer if he kept this up much longer.

Sitting around the fire chewing the fat we were startled to hear a loud Hello.....anyone over there.....Hello. Tom jumped up and fired the rifle twice. They yelled back, Got any grub over there?? I don't know how they figured on getting it, they surely couldn't swim for it and they didn't know Tom had a sling on the cable. They wouldn't even know there was a cable it was so dark.

Tom yelled Back...Yeah....I'll bring some over, and with that he ~~gathered~~ gathered up a pile of vitals and headed for the cable.

Whammy, Chan and I waited patiently, he was gone for so long we were going crazy wondering what happened. Maybe he was stuck in the middle of the cable. Horrible thought, but then I was getting used to horrible thoughts.

Tom eventually returned and told us the rescue party had just been rescued. Now who is crazy, ironic yes.....but true.

It seems they had been out of grub for two days. One of the miner's had run a spike in his foot and they had to leave him at camp 31 in Do Do canyon. They were glad to hear that we weren't stretcher cases, they would get back to their wounded buddy quicker than planned.

We all said, at the same time...Stretcher cases.....Tom grinned saying, It seems our friend Les told them we were starved and sick! I just groaned. The mounty ~~isix~~ told me," he continued, "that they found Les 18 miles from Camp O, he had collapsed on the road. They had him in the hospital for shock and exposure, when he told them there were three more men and a woman collapsed on the road every miner at Norman volunteered to walk in and pack us out." We ~~six~~ couldn't believe our ears. It seems the first 28 miles of the Canol Road is still maintained and parolled by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It was on a routine patrol they found Les. Nobody had ever heard of us, or that any one was on the Canol." Brother, I thought Whammy and Chan would have a stroke. The mounty told Tom it was compulsory to notify the R.C.M.P. in both the Yukon and Northwest Territories of any plans to venture on the Canol Road.

The air was blue. What Whammy and Chan weren't going to do when they got out of this mess. I could picture Les hanging by a rope, his bosses keeping him company.

I bid them all goodnight, the day had been wild and exciting and terrifying. Crawling down the bank in the dark, I could here our family whimpering ~~in~~. They could ~~isix~~ hardly wait to see me. Giving each of them a hug and feeling their full tummies, I snuggled into my wet robe and died.

It was a ~~isix~~ brisk, cool frosty morning when I peeked out of my robe. Chee Chee growled at being disturbed and I laughed. Sam and Jeep were on the end of their chains wagging from head to tail.

Tom was gone, so I struggled out of the ~~six~~ kip and up to the road. The men were gathered around a roaring fire drinking coffee. The aroma was wonderful. Well" I said, "what will it be? Steak and eggs or bacon? Some sadist said, both.....

So we had both.

Ater breakfast, Tom took a load across the river while the rest of us packed the gear. We really had a pile of stuff. The rescue party was stirring around across the river and we were anxious to meet them.

By the time Tom had crossed most of our gear and was ready for me the day was well along. Chan had gone in the morning, but it was slow hard work. The pulley's didn't slide very easily on the rusty cable. How Tom kept it up, I'll never know.

Chan had taken Jeep, Whammy had taken Major and I was to take Sam and Chee Chee. When Tom got the spring loaded and called for me I nearly balked. The load looked tremendous and Sam had most of the room. So with my heart in my mouth I crawled aboard the ferry. I mumbled something about after all this I hope I don't get dumped in the river and break my neck. It was 75 feet to the water. However, my remark was ignored as I suspected it would be. Tom was busy and tired but I glared at him anyway.

We chattered like monkey's when I met the ground crew. I was immediately appointed chief cook and bottle washer, but it was better than not having any thing to cook.

One of the miners was a first class mechanic and operator so he was busy examining the cat. The mounty was a young blonde fellow not over 25, he had been stationed in Norman for a year. The following winter we heard ~~in~~ he was in the hospital in Edmonton. While driving his dogs in 50 below weather ~~handmade construction~~ his lungs, were frost bitten.

The mechanic finally found the trouble with the cat. A piston had gone thru the cylinder wall. He was not to be daunted by such a minor thing, ha. Filling the hole with an old mattress, he fired up the starting engine and in short order had the cat coughing and spitting to life. The men hooked an old sleigh to the cat and we were in business.

Loading the gear and the bodies on the sleigh we headed for Norman Wells and civilization.

The grinding of the steel runners on the gravel and the slow pace of the cat drove Tom and I wild. We jumped off and started walking ~~and~~ two of the miner's

joined us.

It was the first time since we lost the jeep I really enjoyed walking. I drank in the beautiful scenery. The peaks rose high and rugged covered with the first snow. Fifty miles away was the mighty Mackenzie River. I could hardly wait to see it.

Tom and I were still walking ahead of the camp and we saw a fellow walking toward us. When he joined us he said he was from Norman. He was an Indian and a fine looking man. He was telling Tom that he and a friend had been hunting sheep on top of the mountain 2 or 3 days before he saw the airplane that found us. While they were up there they had been bombed. We waited, thinking he was scared by the wheetigo, (Indian witches) he went on saying, a small plane had flown over them and threw something out. When it hit the ground it had exploded. They investigated and in the sack of food was a box of matches. This was also a free drop, so when it hit the ground something had to give. They never saw the plane again.

While Tom and the Indian talked I watched him walk. I had never seen any one float over the country the way he did. He didn't even walk on the road but off to the side in the buckbrush, and every step was like he had springs on his feet.

Tom looked at me and said, "See you in camp Mrs T.O., we are going sheep hunting." Tom loved to hunt sheep and in a strange country he would be in seventh heaven. I watched them literally lope up the mountain, thinking, whats a few more mountains or miles to a bushman?

I was walking alone now and Whammy decided to join me. He was getting cold on the cat. Chee Chee had gone with Tom, but Major snuffled along with us. It was late in the afternoon as we headed down from the summit and ~~the~~^{toward} DO DO canyon.

Whammy asked me why I didn't ride? I told him I enjoyed walking and it was to noisy on the cat. I couldn't stand the racket and it was to slow. He mumbled under his breath I was crazy,

Walking along and talking Whammy was getting some circulation back in his bones. The cat was a half mile behind us and we could hear the rumble of the tracks on the road.

Do Do Canyon

I was telling Whammy how the American Army had hauled in every pebble to build this part of the road. Then every spring it was washed out with flash floods. One spring the mail truck was caught in one of the floods ~~and~~ the driver and his passenger couldn't go anywhere, so they stood on the cab and barely escaped being washed away. The water rushed over the hood of the truck and soaked the mail. There wasn't much of the road visible where we were walking.

Whammy agreed the engineering was impressive. Saying, "if that cat doesn't end up on the rollers after scraping over this stuff, we will be lucky."

The steady drone of a thousand horses drowned out the rumble of the cat. Our flying gaurdian had returned, but not expecting to see a cat on the road flew over us and headed for the Keele River. In a matter of minutes he was back, flying on the deck banking every curve looking for his wards. Every time I saw this beautiful plane it was a thrill. He spotted the cat, climbed for altitude, made a tight turn and pulling off ~~his~~ power soared over us dropping another small chute.

The pilot was glad to see we had transportation and were on our way to Norman. If we needed anything for the cat let him know. He could fly our anything from filter's to tracks. The operator was quite happy with the way the cat was operating and didn't think he would need anything. I all was well, would we wave. So on the next pass 20 arms flew in the ~~tax~~ air waving frantically. With a waggle of wings the night bird climbed into the blue.

I thought Whammy would strangle, Boy, he said, "is this costing". I couldn't help but laugh, poor whammy and his badly bent pocket book. With a full stomach and trasportation his tune had sure changed.

The sun was low and the canyon walls loomed above us. Whammy puffed along beside me. Suddenly he stopped, put his hands on his hips and yelled, "Damnit woman do you have to run." It was so unexpected I just howled, I was only walking my normal speed. Giving ~~up~~ in ~~his~~ disgust he waited for the cat.

Do Do canyon was weird, long pinacles of sand stone balanced precariously thousands of feet high. Fantastic shaped shadows covered the canyon floor, creeping up the canyon wall as darkness descended. A small river crossed and re-crossed the valley cutting a deep shimmering necklace from wall to wall.

The sound of the cat had died in the distance, I was walking faster wondering where I was and how far it was to camp. It would be a hairy walk in the dark.

Major ~~xxx~~ snuffled along at my heels plunging in and out of the creek having a ball. Running up beside me and shaking his energetic little carcass. I didn't need any second hand water, I was getting my share slipping and sliding over the rocks.

I thought maybe I should wait for the cat, but it would be a long time reaching me and I would freeze if I stopped. Thoughtstumbled thru my head. What if I met a bear, I didn't have a rifle. If the creek was too wide and deep to wade what would I do, I couldn't build a fire and dry out. There was nothing but rock and water and sheer walls reaching to the heaven's. Very little of the road remained and it was tough going.

I raised my eyes to the wierd fingers leaning over the valley and thought one of them could easily be shaken loose from the vibration of the cat, and it would fall on me. My speed increased. Every few yards I had to wade the creek again some places above my knees.

I felt so alone in this fantastic world of rock. The sky was getting darker and darker, I was walking faster and faster horrible thoughts running thru my ~~xxx~~ tortured mind. The canyon was narrow in many places and close to a mile wide in others, it was like being squeezed in a subway. I thought what if I fall in the creek and hit my head on a rock, nobody will ever find me.

Major was as happy as though in his right mind and I could have kicked him. I seemed to be wading in and out of water every ten feet. Darkness came swiftly in the canyon and I was petrified. I stumbled on rocks and tripped over my own feet. Slipping and nearly going down in the water had me numb with fear. How many more miles and how many more times will I have to cross this mad tumbling

bubbling creek that was trying to drown me? I was beginning to hate water and there was nothing beautiful about DoDo Canyon now.

My legs were getting weary and my chin was resting on my chest. If I could hardly see the ground and only knew I was walking to my doom. Finally picking my chin off my chest and looking into the distance I could see a small light. Well I thought, this is it, hallucinations, next thing I'll think I'm on the hot sands of the ~~Mar~~ Death Valley. As I ~~started~~ slipped, stumbled and cursed my way over the rocks the light got bigger and brighter. It must be the camp.

Running as best I could Major and I made a beeline for the light. When we approached the building we didn't even slow down, but bust threw the door like we had been sent for.

Laying on the bed with a huge bandage on his foot was a man I had never seen before. A pot of coffee was brewing on the stove and Tom and his new found friend were butchering a nice Ram. What a wonderful sight.

Nonchalantly I took of my jacket and poured a cup of coffee. The wounded miner was somewhat amazed to see a woman barge in alone.

The Indian turned to Tom and said, "this your woman". Tom nodded and the native remarked, "she sure walk good". Tom grinned.

Little did they know it was the longest, most terrifying walk I had ever taken. The coffee tasted wonderful and slowly I forgot the agony I had gone thru and thought how nice it is to be with people.

We could hear the rumble of the cat echoing along the canyon walls long before it reached the yard. Tom put on another huge pot of coffee and I started frying sheep steaks. What a treat, good food, shelter and friends.

When the door opened and the bodies poured in they were numb with cold. Whammy was vibrating from one end to other. I said, "you should have stayed with me Whammy," Joke.

Chan looked terrible, he was so tired, but it looked like the rescue had done more harm than good. He was completely exhausted and difficulty in getting his breath. Poor devil, we felt so helpless.

Every one was drinking coffee and yaking up a storm. When diner was ready we ate like we were still starved. Our new friend was thrilled to see everyone. He said his foot was pretty sore and hard to get around on, but when we looked at it, it was healing well and not infected. Lucky we had the cat, he could ride home.

I took our pups a great feed of meat. They had ridden on the sleigh all the way and were happy to see me. Sam's feet were pretty sore, poor fellow. Thank goodness they wouldn't have to pack any more this trip.

How wonderfull to stretch out in my robe. The day had been long and exciting. Only one more day and it would all be over. "The Lord will provide".

~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

Carcajou

Shortly after daylight the familiar drone of a thousand horses filled the air. Flying low looking for the cat, I thought he would sczepe his wings on the canyon walls. Everyone stood in the yard wathcing the manuever's of our gallant pilot. Flying over our heads he waggled his wings, with a wild roar he pushed the throttles forward and banked steeply climbing in a tight turn and headed back to base.

An hour later the party was ready to travel. Well rested and a hearty breakfast of hotcakes, bacon and eggs. We were really living it up.

The runner's were worn pretty thin on the sleigh and with more miles of rock and gravel to travel over, I hoped they held together. The faithfull old 8 puffed and snorted along inspite of the hole in her side.

Tom the Indian and I walked ahead of the cat. It was a beautiful morning. Frost covered the ground and the canyon was ~~was~~ glorious again. Wharry got cold and joined us. He was still mumbling about the story Les had told the mouny. Now that his belly was full, he was a little put out that he was supposed to be in a state of callapse.

The miles fell gway and we broke out of the canyon. The county was as flat as a table, I couldn't believe it. As far as we could see nothing broke the monotony. Looking back the mountains rose high and the snow lay on the peaks. It was the last of the mountains for a thousand miles across the artic.

We didn't stop for lunch but munched on sandwiches I had made. The cat skinner wanted to get to the carcajou before dark. The cat was pretty well on its last legs and he hoped he wouldn't have to do a major overhaul at this stage of the game. Nor was anyone anxious to peek stretchers. If the cat did poop out, Chan and the miner with the bad foot would have to be carried.

I felt like a million and was enjoying the walk with Tom and his friend. He told us some wonderful stories of his tribe. His wife was in the hospital in Edmonton with T.B. and only a few of the tribe were left. They had all been wiped out with the deadly disease. When he was a little boy he used to go with his family and the tribe to the great divide between the Yukon and Territories where they would hunt all fall for the winter's meat. In the winter they would return to timber line and trap, then return to the divide in the spring and hunt beaver. Late in June they would build skin boats and ride the wild Cravel River down to the Mackenzie and sell their fur. They were a rich happy tribe and when their famous Chief ~~stix~~ died the Indians reverted to the ways of the white man and it was the end of them. There was sadness in his voice as Paul told us the story of the famous Fort Norman Indians.

In later years while hunting the divide Tom and I found one of the graves. It was still in good condition with a white picket fence hewed out of spruce and painted with flour and water. Tom figured about 7 people were buried there.

We reached the Carcajou River late in the afternoon and I was amazed at how wide it was. From bank to bank it was a mile and I wondered how Les had gotten across. Even a strong swimmer would end up a long ways down stream in that current. Before I could express my thoughts, the mounty told us that only a few days ago they could wade the river, but with the rains it was running in flood.

Our cat skinner was grinning from ear to ear, he patted the tracks on his iron coach saying, "sure glad we're here, the old girl wouldn't make another five miles. She was heating up pretty good trying to pull that sleigh."

The miner's had a couple of long river boats tied to the beach. I thought here we go again. Tom, Paul, our dogs, the mounty, one of the miner's and myself

got into one of the boats and the rest of the bodies struggled into the other. We also had a mountain of gear. The motor roared to life and numerous pulls on the rope and the usual cussing. We sped away from the shore and 50 yards ~~in~~ ~~the~~ from the beach the motor quit. I looked at Tom and he just bust out in gales of laughter. I could have spit. Somebody was going to drown me yet and I didn't think it was one bit funny. Holding my breath I thought I'd bust when the ~~motor~~ motor finally sputtered to life.

Climbing out of the boat I stared into the faces of at least 50 curious people. There was so much activity going on that Tom and I started down the beach to tie up the dogs. We heard one of the airmen yell, "where is the woman?" The mounty said, "She and her husband just walked by you with there dogs." "You mean that couple were in the party that was lost" said another. "They sure look in good shape to me".

I really believe ~~they~~ they were dissappointed that I was mobile. Tom and I brewed a cup of tea waiting for the organized confusion to settle down. There were at least 20 airforce men there and I asked Tom where he whought they were from. "God knows Mrs T.O., maybe we are at war again."

The mounty finally called us, and gathering up the gear and our dogs we were loaded into pickups for the ride to the Mackenzie. I just got comfortable it seemed when the truck stopped. We must have been flying ~~to~~ to get to the river so fast. Of course, shanks mare isn't famous for speed.

Jumping out of the truck I looked across the majestic Mackenzie. The life line of the artic and most of northern Canada. Where we stood it was four miles across. Brother, I'm glad we didn't try to drive the jeep across something like this.

Tied to the pier was a 50 foot launch that belonged to the oil Company. It sure looked good ~~than~~ this was more my style. Big, safe and inboard. Wow?

When we got to the other side we were agian met by a huge crowd. I think crowds scared us, so Tom and I stood off to the side and wathced the commotion. While feeling a little let down and tired a tall fellow in uniform came up and

introduced himself. I'm Bill Day" he said, I was the pilot on the Dak. He said, "I am sorry I didn't meet you at the Carcajou but I landed on the other side and let my crew out, then flew over here and when I got to the beach they had gone and left me."

I thought how ironic, the man that had done so much, who was so well known without ever seeing him and the one man that should have been the first to meet the ones ~~whos~~ whos lives he had saved, had been left behind by his crew.

Bill was a flying officer in the ~~Rix~~ Royal Canadian Air Force. He and his crew had been stationed at Norman all summer doing photo work. They had spent most of the summer mapping the Nahanni.

We were so glad to see him and had so many things to ask and to tell him that we all started talking at once. Bill laughed, and said, when I saw you from the air Jeanne I thought you were a sqaw and Tom was a half breed. I never thought of a white woman. When we didn't see your dogs we thought you had eaten them. It was quite a thrill for us to find you and carry on a rescue operation. "

I mumbled you were thrilled, you have know idea what thrilled is, your plane was the most beautiful sight in the world and I fell madly in love with you not even knowing who you were.

Both Tom and Bill laughed and our conversation was brought to a halt as some one else came and got us. Bill tagged along, our new friend was the mine ~~manager~~ manager. He said, "Mr. Connolly we have taken Mr. Chase and Mr Wilson to the clinic, but would you and your wife like to go over to the cook house and have diner?" It sounded wonderfull.

The manager ushered us into the cook house and told the cook to give us whatever our hearts desired. He would be back later and take us to our lodging. We were a little stunned, every one was being so kind and wonderfull to us.

Talking a mile a minute we tried to tell Bill how we felt about the rescue. I thought he'd die when we related our idea of a free drop. He said, when the crew saw us eating the spam they were horrified, one of them yelled, MY God Sir: they are eating that stuff.

We just didn't have time to tell everything in one night. While we were drinking our coffee our host came to get us. Piling into a station wagon, Bill said, I'll see you folks later.

Stopping in front of one of the houses we were ushered into a well furnished cozy Company house. Mr Cain, said, "this is yours as long as you are in Norman Wells and if there is anything you need or anything we can do for you just ask. I will come back in an hour or so and take you to meet some curious people."

It was all too wonderfull, a lovely big bath tub and lots of hot water. Big fluffy towels and soft rugs. This was living. My lord, I may be clean but I couldn't be classed as one of the best dressed females. The press was out of my pants.

When we were on our way to visit I asked the manager if there was anywhere I could send a wire to my family. I thought my mother may have heard of our adventure. When we were told it had been on all the major radio stations and in Time magazine, I knew some one in the family would hear of it. We drove by the office and he sent my telegram.

Les was at the home when we arrived. He looked wonderfull but was quiet. We hadn't heard of Chan or Whammy and wondered what happend to them.

We were introduced to the doctor and when I told ~~afdrincumx~~ him of our sentiments when we read his instructions everyone howled. He was very good natured, but I think he thought us a little mad.

We returned to our house and when I snuggled down in the clean white sheets it was more than my ~~mayx~~ weary bones could stand, I was asleep before my head hit the pillow.

We were picked up in the morning and taken to the cook house for a good breakfast. While we were finishing our coffee Bill Day appeared.

He told us that they had flown Chan to Edmonton last night he was in pretty bad shape. Whammy had caught the night flight to Edmonton. So I bust out laughing. Bill and Tom gave me anxious looks, I said, well there goes a well earned 1000 bucks and not even a good bye."

The clean white sheets and lovely soft bed were more than my weary bones could stand and I was asleep before my head hit the pillow.

Tourists

One of the miner's picked us up in the morning and drove us over to the cook house. We had a good breakfast and feeling almost normal. While we were finishing our coffee Bill Day appeared.

He told us they had flown Chan to Edmonton last night he was in pretty bad shape and they didn't have the facilities here. Canadian Pacific Airlines had a flight into Norman twice a week and Whammy had left on last night flight. I bust out laughing and Bill and Tim gave me anxious looks. I said, "well there ~~you~~ goes a well earned 1000 bucks and he didn't even say goodbye."

Tom said, "just think of the experience Mrs T.O. you couldn't buy that for a thousand bucks," I said, "who would want to".

Tom had finished his breakfast and Bill invited us over to the mess to eat with his crew. I couldn't eat another bite, but Tom could and Bill was getting a big kick out of Tom's appetite.

The crew told us how they had been in Watson Lake when the news broke ~~was~~ we were missing and believed lost on the Canol Road. They had been waiting in Watson for weather and Bill asked them if they wanted to go look for us. The crew were all in favor. They sorted out what gear they had in the aircraft and made up a drop. They donated their cigarettes all the emergency rations and one fellow donated his chute.

This was a suprise to us and we said so. The airman said they are only issued one chute and if anything happens to it they have to buy the next one or pay for the lost one. However, he felt under the circumstances it was worth it.

The weather was sour and below limits when Bill left Watson Lake. The tower raised heck, but the fact Bill was airforce they couldn't stop him and off into the blue.

After they left Watson to the horror of the tower the weather got progressively worse the further north they went. They got onto the Canal on the divide around 222. When they were about 50 miles from where they found us the ceiling went to the deck, it was socked in solid ahead of them. Bill had to abort and they were all disappointed. The following day the weather was out again and it wasn't until the third day they could search again.

One of the fellows said they sure were glad they could help and if it had hapend after tomarrow they couldn't have, they were leaving for Ottawa. Tom and I looked at Bill, he explained that they were thru on photo and would close the base tomarrow and head for Ottawa the day after. It took a minute to sink in, but this was another example of "The Lord will provide." We were very lucky.

After much gossip Bill asked us if we would like to tour the walls. We jumped into a jeep and made like tourists. The town was a company town and most of the houses were identical. They had bunkhouses for the single men and a huge cook house and recreation center. The tanks storing the oil were immense and lined the river bank. All the oil went out by barge until the Canal Road was built. It was the oil from these walls that was intented to supply the north during the war. However, the pipe line did not prove economical on a peace time program so they shut it down. The refinery was dismantled in Whitehorse and taken to Alberta by truck. I asked about the old Fort, but it was 50 miles down stream so we didn't see it. Tom had been there before the war but I was hoping I could visit it.

We enjoyed our tour and were so grateful to Bill and his crew for all they had done. I knew we could never repay him, but we would never forget them. He told us that Whammy nor Chan would have to pay a cent as it was on the Canadian Gov't. I was nasty enough to say, "Too bad".

Bill said, "well Tom how about lunch", knowing he couldn't fill him up off to the mess. After lunch Bill took us to the mine office where we thanked Mr. Cain for all they had done for us.

Bill said, he had some work to do so he took us back to the house and said he would pick us up at the cook house tonight.

Les Finally appeared and told us that there would be a plane from Carcross to pick us up in the morning weather permitting. He said he had lost everything on his will~~l~~ walk but that he was feeling fine and none the worse for wear. We didn't remark at all on the trip and figured it better to chalk it up to experien

After Les left, I sighed a sigh of relief. We had been prepared to walk back to the cabin and it would have been late in the fall when we got there. If Les's company would fly us it was wonderfull. I didn't realize at the time the tremendous responsibility his company felt about the situation. We were nothing to them and had only come on the trip at Whammy's and Chan's insistance. Les certainly was not to blame for that.

We spent the remainder of the day thanking people who had been so kind to us. Our dogs were back to normal and Chee Chee was the pride of the town. Tom ate every ~~stare~~ chance he got and it seemed to me we were always sitting feeding our faces. He just couldn't get enough to eat.

Bill was tickled to death with Tom's appetite and as soon as we finished diner in the co. cook house, away we went to the mess. Things were rather hectic for Bill, he was trying to get squared away to leave and stuff was stacked all over the place. The crew wandered in and our and we spent the evening telling tall tales. Bill finally took us to our little house and another day had gone.

Bamboo Bomber

Les picked us up early in the morning, he said, "the plane is here and he is in a hurry to get going." We gathered up our dogs and bedrolls and jumped into the pickup. Les went to the cookhouse and we had breakfast. Gulping out coffee with a sense of urgency.

Whistling onto the runway, there in all its ~~glory~~ glory sat an Anson aircraft. The Anson was a training plane during the war and made entirely of plywood. It

Bill had some work to do so he took us back to the house and said he would pick

Bill and his crew were having a ball watching us get loaded. They kidded with Herman the pilot and asked him if he would like a tow?

When Tom was loading the pups Sam got in a half hearted growl and got a whop on his ear for the trouble. I thought Tom would loose an arm but Sam was well behaved for a change. He could probably ~~remember~~ remember the lpd. Jeep and Major were gentlemanly and quiet.

Herman Peterson was an old time bush pilot and well known in the north. Tom was glad he was ~~transporting~~ flying us back. Ray Farrel was Herman's engineer and as anxious as Herman to get air borne.

Bill had given Tom a pile of surplus cereal and he was frantically throwing boxes of shredded wheat and corn flakes in the tail of the Anson. Herman was having appoplexy. When we couldn't get another box in the plane, Herman shook his fist at Bill and slammed the door. We waved to all the fellows and tried like monkey's to talk thru the tiny windows.

Les went up front with Herman, the three ~~rest~~ of us sank into seats, Tom with Major between his legs and Chee Chee on my lap. Herman put the engines through a run up, as we taxied away Bill gave us the V for victory sign. I felt a little sad leaving a freind.

At the end of the runway Herman held the brakes till the tail was high and we started to roll down the strip. We rolled and rolled and rolled and I thought we would never get airborne. Suddenly the ground fell away and we were off into the blue.

The flight to Johnson's Crossing was five hours over some of the roughest terrain in the North. Herman new the country well and was anxious to get this flight over with.

Major and Tom were petrified, I dodn't know who scared who, but I could have knocked Major's eyes off with a stick. The poor little mutt just sat ridgid between Tom's legs and stared into his face.

I was in my glory, it was a beautiful day and Herman only flew inches above the peaks. The wings seemed to scape the peaks. When I said, to Tom how

wonderfull it was, he looked at me with complete disgust and said, Mrs T.O. you must be nuts, there is nothing normal about flying." Tom hated airplanes. In later years he thought he would fly and after 40 hours dual the instructor told him he would never,.....never.....be a pilot.

There was a 45 gallon drum in the front of the cabin and after we had been cruising about 3 hours, Ray moved up and Les helped him pump the gas from the barrel out to the wing.

Well that about did it, I thought Tom would bail out. He cursed and raved that Herman had been flying on the deck all the way and why the heck didn't he get altitude, now the ~~thick~~ idiot was gassing from a barrel. What if it got an air lock. Well if I ever thought I could dream up horrible thoughts, I couldn't hold a candle to Tom when it came to flying.

We passed within a short distance of our cabin, I tried to get Tom to look but he wouldn't. He and Major just sat in stony silence.

Close to Johnson's crossing the terrain was not so formidable and Tom perked to life. He looked out at the familiar country and started talking a blue streak. In another 40 minutes the engineer told us we would be in J.C.

It was late when Herman made his pass over the short strip at Johnson's crossing. He had buzzed the camp to let them know we were hear and before we rolled to a stop a pickup was waiting for us.

When Tom jumped out of the plane he reached down and kissed the ground. I don't know who was more shock, the pilot at his lack of faith or his wife at his show of emotion. Unheard of for a mountain man.

While we were talking to Herman he told us that he had never flown Les down the Canal Road. When they got on the divide the weather was out, so they flew down the Gravel River. They ran into weather on the way back and came straight across. So now we knew, 4 people had nearly lost their lives because this ex army officer had lied.

We never saw or heard of any of these men again. Les, Whammy or Chan.

Twenty one days with the wrong woman.

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