

# Recollections Along The Way.....

The Alaska Highway,  
A Celebration



Written by those who built, lived on,  
and loved to travel, the Alaska Highway



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## Message from the Mayor

The 50th Anniversary of the Alaska Highway has been the catalyst for celebrations, reunions and various projects throughout 1992. The Fort Nelson Fall Fair Association's, "Recollections Along the Way.... the Alaska Highway. A Celebration," project is one of the more exciting and important of these projects because, when the celebrations and reunions are happy memories, it will remain as a written history of the first fifty years of life on the Alaska Highway. The book in itself will become a part of our heritage.



Congratulations to the Fall Fair Association for their dedicated efforts, both to this community project, and to their 30 years of service to the community. Let us look back on our first fifty years with nostalgia and fondness- we've come a long way. Let us also look forward with enthusiasm and purpose-we've just begun.

*Mayor Frank Parker*

## About this Book

The Fort Nelson Fall Fair Association decided to produce this book as part of the Rendezvous '92 Celebrations. We solicited submissions through the Community News section of the community newspapers and the result is this selection of anecdotes, biography, recollections, poems and fiction, photographs and cartoons, which we hope you will enjoy as much as we did.

*Verna Sellors*

President  
Fort Nelson Fall Fair Association

# Canadians and Americans Built the Alaska Highway

*By Mrs G Follick, Strongfield, Saskatchewan*

Soon after the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbour, the American generals feared that the enemy might use Alaska as a stepping stone to attack Canada and eventually the United States. All supplies for Alaska were sent by ship, up the West Coast. As this was no longer safe, they said: "We must build a highway as a military route to carry supplies to military installations in interior Alaska and to the airfields enroute. Airfields at Northways, Tanacross, Fort Greely and Ladd Air Bare (now Fort Wainwright) were actively engaged in the transfer of aircraft between the U.S.A. and the Russian allies. This highway would run through Alberta and the Yukon Territory. Such a highway would be protected from Japanese planes by a great mountain wall two miles high.

"It can't be done!" the critics said. "Your highway is impossible. The mountains near the Alaska boundary are the highest on the continent. Weather up there goes as low as fifty below zero. Your men and machinery will freeze. When spring thaws comes your road will wash down into the mountain gorges. The bottomless muskeg will swallow roadsmen and machinery and leave not a trace."

The Canadian and American engineers met and decided the two countries would share the work and Canadian aviators would map out the route. Day after day, they flew over the forbidding lands, taking thousands of pictures of the country below. Wherever they saw spruce and tamarack in the photographs, the engineers knew there would be muskeg so they would plan to detour to higher ground. The route they planned was from Edmonton to Grande Prairie, to Ft. St. John, into the Yukon, through Whitehorse, Burwash and Snag, and on to Delta Junction in Alaska, where it would join with the Richardson Highway on the way to Fairbanks.

Construction on the highway began in March, 1942. Engineers blazed their pilot trail, followed by bulldozers, and then, men with pick, axe, saw and shovel. If you had looked down on this road-making crew from an aeroplane, you would have seen a ribbon of ants, thirty or forty miles long. There were seven such crawling ribbons spaced out along the entire route. It took 15,000 men and 11,000 pieces of equipment, at a cost of \$115 million for the 1422 miles of highway. There were whites and negroes, northerners and southerners, Canadians and Americans, all-working together for the same cause. The negroes felt the cold but happy as ever, used to joke about the snow in this wild north country. "It is bad for us if enemy bombers come

over", they said. "They can see us so easily against the white snow."

But what a tremendous job it was! Sometimes the road led through dense forest; sometimes, it led up the side of a precipitous gorge; (at other times they had to use a winch to haul a bulldozer up a cliff but the steel cable broke and the machine hurtled over and over into the dizzy depths below); once, the ice broke as they were crossing a river with the bulldozers - two had gotten over safely but the others had to be water-proofed and pulled through the stream like crawling crabs. But perhaps the worst section of the route was by the Liard River, where it was a quaking bog. After some crawler tractors had disappeared under the mud, they built a corduroy road of logs placed crosswise across the trail, many layers of logs were needed to make the road bed firm enough to hold up the machine traffic. The highway was finally completed in November, 1942.

Through the efforts of both the United States and Canadian Governments, the Alaska Highway, which was known as the "Alcan" for a short while after construction, has been continually improved, widened and straightened - and shortened somewhat. According to reports, the road was intentionally built with many crooks and turns so that convoys of supply trucks and equipment could not be entirely wiped out by enemy bombers striking in a straight line. At first the road was narrow, with very coarse gravel on it, causing a tremendous amount of dust. But today, most of the highway is paved and widened. Before gas stations were few and far between. A sign at Fort Nelson said: "100 miles to the next gas station." whereas now you will find one within 50 miles, although some close up for the winter.

We have travelled the Alaska Highway and found it a most enjoyable trip in the summertime. The scenery is beautiful with mountains, trees, rivers and lakes while nestled between wild flowers...the bright fireweed grows. This highway is no longer used for army supplies but is kept busy with tourists in cars, trucks, Campers and buses. One place where this is shown is at Watson Lake, just over the Yukon border, where a young soldier, who was working on the Alaska Highway, became so homesick that he put up a sign with the name of his hometown on it. Now there are thousands and thousands of signs -some large and beautiful some small and well carved; some are of tin and painted, while others are bare wood or even a paper plate; some are from Australia, Europe, Japan, California or Saskatchewan - an assortment that would take hours to read. it really shows how popular this north country has become on this, the Fiftieth Anniversary of the building of the Alaska Highway.



Mrs Glen Follick of Strongfield, Saskatchewan has a Certificate stating that Ken and Gwen Follick have gone through the Trials and Tribulations to reach Mile 1422, the End of the Alaska Highway at Delta Junction, Alaska, on this date, August 2nd 1985. She writes: "we travelled on it and although we were held up a times by construction work we didn't mind waiting until it was possible to get by. They have lots of gimmicks about "Travelling the Alaska Highway and Living" but we found it fascinating. The scenery is beautiful and fresh"

# New Road North... To Alaska

*By Lola M. Pinno, Smiley, Saskatchewan*

**D**ateline: EDMONTON, ALBERTA The Year was 1942. An agreement had been made between the Government of Canada and the United States of America...to build a road North, starting at Dawson Creek, B.C., up to Alaska.

It was necessary to protect the borders of the United States and Canada from possible aggressiveness from the enemy. After all, World War II was on in Europe and our countries had troops in active placement overseas. The folks at home needed protecting as well.

This joint venture began, not at Dawson Creek, B.C., but at the jumping off point of Edmonton, Alberta, where American troops began arriving, with all forms of road building equipment ... bulldozers, graders, scrapers, trucks, transits, camp kitchens, bivouac materials, jeeps, a flotilla of personnel and photographers to record this great joint venture.

Many American men knew nothing about Canada, let alone the far North country. When they touched down at Edmonton's Municipal Airport in the central part of the City, they were taken over to their canteen and sleeping quarters nearby. It was at this point that many Canadian men and women, who had been especially chosen for the task, assisted them in settling in at Edmonton before moving northward. A prerequisite for a chauffeur was a road test, and the knowledge of how to repair any minor emergencies that might come up while driving, such as changing a tire.

One such woman who was chosen to drive personnel was my mother, Margaret "Prudy" Harris. She had various shifts around the clock, picking up for transport anyone in uniform, from a sergeant to a four star general. (It often became a matter of small boasting who had the highest ranking official to squire around on any given day, between the drivers, be they male or female chauffeurs.) Local folks were chosen as drivers because they knew the city better than visitors. The remuneration the chauffeurs received was excellent as well, as there were not many jobs available in those days, especially for woman. Many U. S. soldiers made friends of the Canadian people, and were taken into private homes as friendships were made. To me, the daughter of Margaret Harris, this was excitement ... to actually meet someone from Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, New York or wherever they came from. Often arriving at our home with a Babe Ruth or Tootsie Roll Candy bar (in hand for me was a real treat) as Canadian chocolate was not to be had. After all, a war was on, and our fighting men were sent the best chocolate.

Sometimes the soldiers would bring army issue music song books, many of which I still have. We passed many an hour with a singsong around our piano, entertaining and trying to make the fellows feel at home when theirs were so far away.



Margaret " Prudy " Harris chauffeured sergeants and four-star generals

A chauffeur never knew who they might have as a passenger. One day, a highlight for my mother was a negro gentleman, private first class, who asked, while they were being driven to where they needed to go, if there was a golf course in Edmonton that he might be able to play on. My mother, being an avid enthusiast herself, said that she could arrange a game with the club pro, Bart Gee, down at Edmonton's Municipal Golf Course. A friendly, competitive game was had, and my mother will always remember her game with the great Joe Louis, the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, who had come up to Canada to sponsor a Golden Gloves Tournament in Alaska, as a moral builder for U.S. troops.

Of course, there were rules and restrictions for any Canadian personnel who worked for the U.S. Army as staff car drivers, but the rules were bent a few times.

(When the road was finally completed, men were sent home, and I've been given to understand, much of the machinery did not return with them, some of it being buried in the roads themselves, the distance too far to bring back used and abused machinery the 1500 mile plus distance out. )

Today, thousands of vehicles, and tour buses still travel the ALCAN HIGHWAY, right on up to Alaska. They comprise American people, Canadians, and tourists from other parts of the world. This joint-venture between two countries was managed much easier by co-operation of men and machinery, brings the world closer together, especially when there was no talk of free trade back then.

# The American Rush

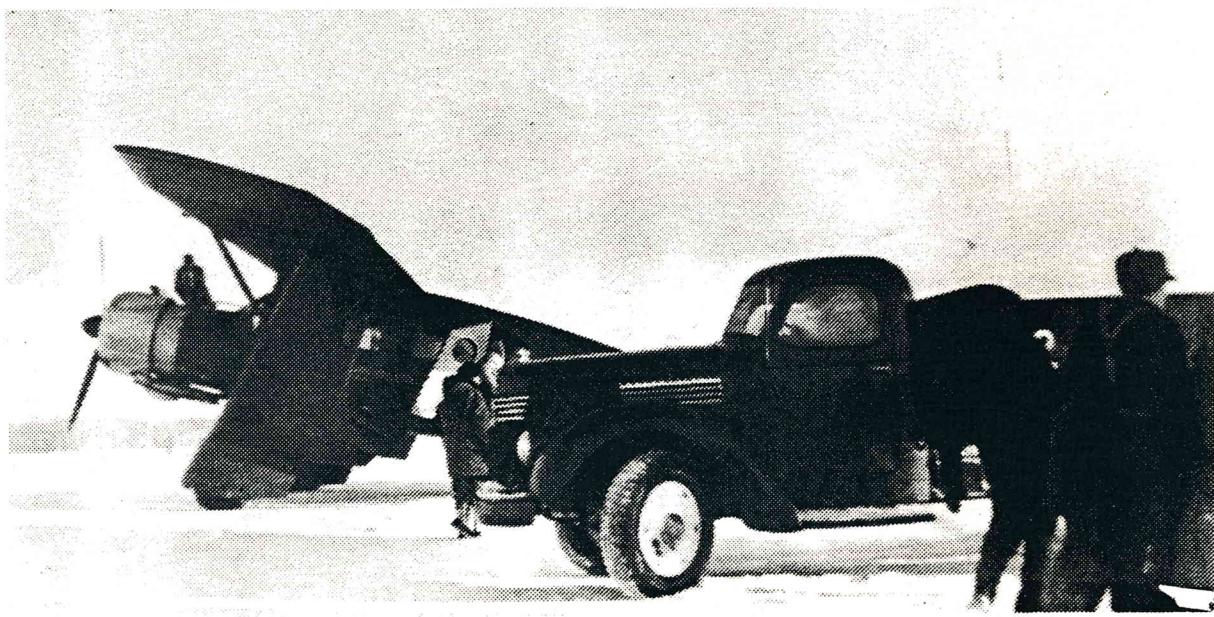
*It started out quietly enough*

*By Gerri Young*

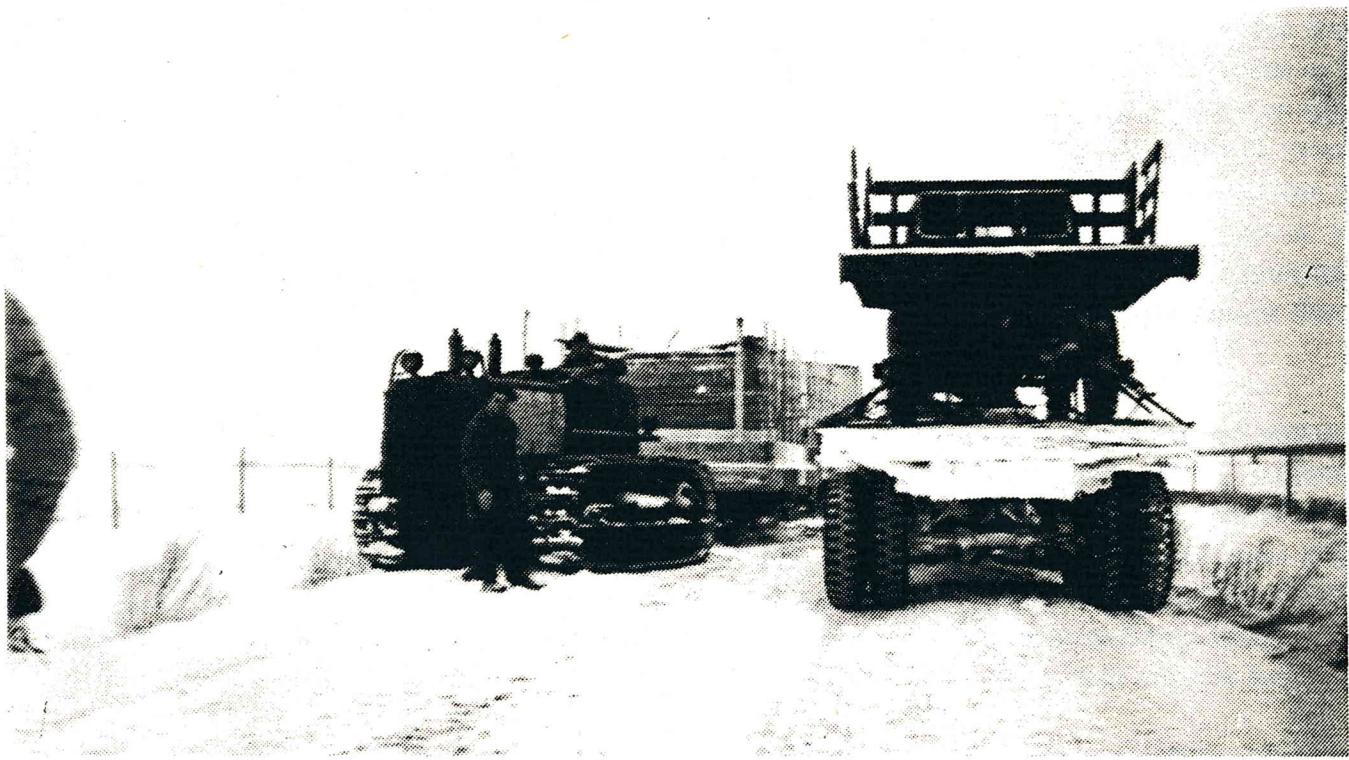
In the early thirties it was just the occasional bush pilot flying overhead, carrying mail and light freight. By 1937 Grant McConachie's Yukon Southern Air Transport acquired the mail route between Edmonton and Whitehorse which meant a regular stop in Fort Nelson. Yukon Southern operated ski and float planes, which meant that, for six weeks of the year, the plane couldn't land because the river wasn't frozen enough or thawed enough.

McConachie's dream was to have a first class airline operating on wheels, all year long. He needed an airport in Fort Nelson. The Canadian government did have plans to build an airport there, since Fort Nelson was part of the Northwest Air Staging Route, over which lend-lease aircraft were to fly to Russia. But, by the time the government hired a contractor from Edmonton to put a winter road through from Fort St John, McConachie had already had a primitive runway scraped and ploughed out of the forest. Now he could land a 'big' plane - with about twelve passengers in it.

In 1941 Fort Nelson was an isolated fur trading post with a population of about one hundred people. Then, the 'town' was at the Old Fort, on the east side of the Nelson River, and the locals soon got wind of the airport destined for their back yard, and the highway that was supposed to connect them to the south.



Baggage and freight was hauled by truck and plane to remote areas.



A cat and loaded truck

Their skepticism was fueled by stories they heard of the cat train that left Dawson Creek in February 1941. A bulldozer broke the trail and the cat train crept slowly north through the frozen wilderness, bringing construction supplies and equipment. The cat train consisted of special sleighs, with twelve-foot runners and an eight foot spread. There were five freight sleighs, consisting of a complete portable sawmill, blacksmith shop, mechanical equipment, one big grader, nails, tarpaper, miscellaneous building materials, gasoline, diesel fuel and food. One sleigh was loaded only with meat.

And there were four sleighs with barracks for the crew. Five were pulled at a time by a D7 Cat. The bulldozer would plow the trees down and the D7 would pull five sleighs as far as the trail was broken, then go back for the other five. They were plagued with mishaps and progress was slow. It took three days to go down the Sikanni Mountain. Bulldozing, clearing, blasting, making bridges, roughlocking on all hills. Sometimes taking one sleigh at a time, leaving the rest chained to trees, up the other side, winching, prying, cursing, then go back and repeat the whole procedure.

Dropping the cat through rotten ice was the most serious hardship. Fifty feet from the Sikanni River bank the cat slipped and plunged to the bottom of the river. It took three days to raise it up, using a huge tripod made of logs and cables, then it had to be dried out under a large tent. They got as far as the Sikanni river by April. They had to return south before spring breakup. It was impossible to drive bulldozers in

muskeg, which was like quicksand and the cats would disappear into it.

They left the equipment guarded by two men. When the river had finished flooding in the spring a barge would be sent from Fort Nelson to haul it all north. The rest of the crew headed south. They travelled day and night to stay on frozen ground. They found it difficult to sleep on the move, and would sometimes wake up, almost standing on their heads, to find their bunkhouse chained to a tree on a steep hill. By now crew morale was low, with a lot of threats and cursing. Three months of twelve hour shifts, for forty cents an hour, didn't always help them feel good about having a job. Even if it was the first job for many of them since the beginning of the depression. Fort Nelsonites joked and doubted they'd hear much more about this road. They were completely surprised by the arrival of US Armed Forces and Engineer Corps in the spring of 1942.

Pearl Harbor had forced the Canadian and US governments into building a road to Alaska as fast as possible. The Canadian government agreed, as long as they didn't have to pay for it. By the fall of 1942 there were 2000 US soldiers in Fort Nelson and more on the way. It wasn't a gold rush, it was an American rush. And the locals were overwhelmed. The Americans came and took over and built the road, and spent millions. George's Store and Cafe was the only one of either in Fort Nelson. Loderma George said, "...they took over. They had money and they spent it. We had the only place anyone could go for a meal... of course they were sick and tired of Army food ... they just about mobbed us..."

The Georges kept track of the meals they served during August and September, 1942, and it averaged 150 meals per day. "I only had one table that would sit fourteen ... we charged 75 cents for as much as you could eat ... we did the cooking ... it was hard work, but it was lots of fun...some of the soldier boys would have days off and I said 'if you want to do something, there's the dish pan' ... and I had the Post Office, a little six by six room, which was fine when we got mail once a month, but soon the American Army had mail coming in seven times a week, twenty bags a day, I said: 'What am I going to do with all this?' I had to pile it up all around the store." The Americans even renamed the town. They called it Zero. On their maps it was the intersection of two roads, the beginning of one road north to Whitehorse and the other to Fort Simpson. The American Army started the first service station, with a sign that said: POSITIVELY NO GAS SOLD FOR CASH, because it was for Army vehicles only. They opened another restaurant with a flagpole in front, and set up a movie hall in a quonset hut. They even had big name entertainers, like the Andrews Sisters come and perform. They danced at George's and skated on the river. When Earl Bartlett first came to Fort Nelson, in 1943, he said the letters USED were stamped on all vehicles. "I was surprised there were so many used vehicles, until I realized the letters stood for United States Engineering Division."

Loderma George said, "There were a lot of awfully nice men, a lot of awfully homesick boys in the bush..." who by the end of the year had completed the road. "It seemed there was a vehicle every five minutes, on that old road ... that first bunch of boys that went through ... they deserve a lot of credit." By 1943, a lot of Canadians were moving to Fort Nelson, to work for the American Army or to set up their own businesses. By 1946, the US Army transferred command of the highway to the Canadian Armed Forces. But the work on the highway continued, with largely civilian crews, to make it, and keep it, an all-weather road. Now the highway is wide and straight and sports expensive cars and RV's from all over the continent, it would be unimaginable to the freezing men who struggled, a hundred and fifty miles through the forest, with a lurching cat train in the spring of 1941.

# From Ordnance to Bush Pilot

*By Ben Parker*

**I**t seems as clear as if it was yesterday that I was sitting on my bunk in England, reading a letter from home. In it was a clipping from a newspaper, saying that the Americans and the Canadians were going to build a road from Ft. St. John to Alaska, and it was going to start right away.

I had spent some time in the area north of Ft. St. John in 1935 or 1936, I can't remember exactly, and I had taken a short trip with pack horses and walked the area north of Charlie Lake up towards Blueberry. At that time, and being from the Alberta Prairies, I thought that it would take forever to build a road through there. How wrong I was! The only road building I had ever done was at Hanna, my home town, and this was done with horses on a Fresno, a sort of scraper. I had never seen bulldozers and heavy equipment, such as was used on this job.

After the war, I came home and there wasn't much work around. I did try a job with my brother Tom, who was also just back from overseas, falling mine props, as they called them, for the Brazeau Colleries at Nordeg, Alberta. These props turned out to be trees up to 2 feet in diameter and being from the prairie, Tom and I had never worked on anything bigger than 6 to 8 inches. We worked hard at it for one month and then back to Hanna. Tom got a job for the CNR, which Dad happily, got for one of us. Tom won the coin toss so he got the job.



Ben Parker and company



**Ben and Addie ( Birkbeck ) Parker**

I hadn't seen my sister Winnie since before the war, so I figured it would be a good time to go to Fort Nelson where she and her husband, Lash Callison, and their two boys lived. Dad thought that was a good idea as I don't think we thought much of the way things were going. I'd spend most of my time in the beer parlor or a poker game, and be out most of the night. When I got to Fort Nelson, with my kid brother Jim, who went along with me, I had only a fiddle and a small bag of clothes.

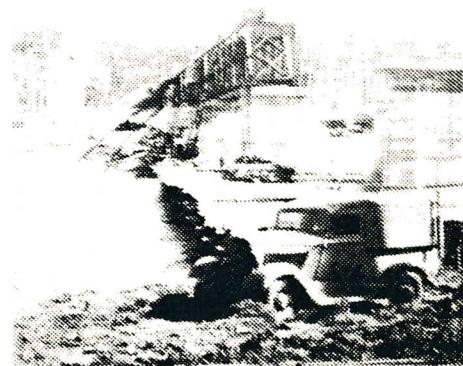
The Canadians were just taking over the highway from the Americans and I was lucky enough to land a job at the parts depot as chief parts man - because I had experience with that job in the ordinance corps - so it fit right in with my kind of work. I worked at that for six-years, and then the Army decided to build a new camp at Mile 295.

Ev Cantlon and I teamed up and we quit our jobs and took on the job of washing and sieving gravel for the new maintenance camp, which was a lot of pre-cast concrete. After that was over we had some mighty lean years, until the oilpatch got going and we could see our way to some better times. We eventually ended up with 5 Cats and an airplane, which I flew for a number of years, servicing our outfit in the bush. After this, DPW put out the first contract on the southern end of the Highway. We joined forces with Don Gordon and won the bid on the job, which I have been associated with ever since, until I retired after about twenty-five years. The last twelve years have been with Kledo Construction.

When I landed in Fort Nelson, in 1946, I got a room at the Staging post, a sort of Army hotel, and I noticed a young cook had a pretty nice smile, so I decided to pay some attention to her. Our job at spare parts left week-ends pretty well on our own, so a bunch of our crew would get the girls from the women's dormitory and, taking a frying pan and some goodies to eat that the girls managed to get, we would go fishing to the Tetsa River every time we got a chance.

My girlfriend seemed to love fish fresh out of the water and into the pan. Funny thing, after we were married a year later she seemed to lose her appetite for fish and hasn't got it back yet.

I think I can speak for both of us that we've thoroughly enjoyed our life on the highway and I wouldn't trade any memories for anything in the world. We now have two girls, with families of their own living here, and I wouldn't live anywhere else. We tried living in the Kootenays for nine years but eventually came back. I still boat on the rivers and I like to hunt. Addie still takes the odd boat trip with me, but most of her time is spent doing community work with the OORP. I sometimes have the dubious honor of peeling the spuds for her catering jobs. Many of our friends along the highway have passed on and a lot have moved away, but with the Rendezvous '92, we are looking forward to seeing as many of them as we can. Our door is always open.



Building a bridge on the Alaska Highway



Steamboat Mountain

# Toad River Tale

By Marj. & Dennis Callison

During the winter of 1941 the U.S. Engineers were trying to locate a route for the Alaska Highway. They had reconnaissance parties set out from different areas. The Callison brothers had trapped north and west of Fort Nelson. John and Dennis had gone through the mountain from Fort St. John to McDames Creek by pack horse with their Dad, several years before, so were familiar with a route. Lash took one party south from Fort Nelson towards Fort St John. Dennis and John took another party of P.W.A. Engineers west, from Fort Nelson to Toad River. They used their dogteams for transportation.

In 1942 & 1943, the brothers had camps with Miller Construction, cutting telephone poles, and wood camps with Bechtel, Price, Callahan, on the Canol Road. Diesel fuel was not allowed for heating so a lot of wood was required to heat their camps. By getting acquainted with these engineers and contractors, they realized there was an opportunity to get into the big game hunting business.

The Toad River area was attractive to Dennis & Lash. There was, a big Jupp construction camp at Mile 422, Toad River. They had taken the land at this site, and when the War Assets put it up for sale, they purchased all the building etc. This was the way many of the stopping places along the highway got started.

In 1947, Lynch, Lash & Dennis took out their first hunting party from this camp. They hunted in the Muncho Lake area. Later that fall a building to the south side of the highway (as most of all the camp was on the north side of the highway). They installed a gas pump and opened up the Toad River Cafe & Service Station. It was operated by Einar & Tiny Oberge. In 1948, additional buildings were moved, and torn down for use in building the addition to the cafe, which was for room rental. When living quarters were set up behind the lodge, Lash & Winnie, and boys Gary & Grant, as well as Dennis & Marj, and daughters Gloria & one year-old Janice, moved in. We then took over running the Cafe and Lodge.

The traffic was mainly truck drivers, U.S. people enroute to Alaska seeking employment, and U.S. Army and Airforce personnel transferring to Alaska postings. During the first couple of years we didn't have a phone, electricity or running water. Water was hauled from the Racing river, until a hand-dug well was accomplished at the back of the lodge, which is still being used. After the Alaska Earthquake the water level dropped and the well had to be dug two feet deeper.

In the next few years, land was cleared and broke-up for cultivation. When more feed was grown then required for the string of pack horses, a few cattle were purchased and raised. We always had a milk cow from day one: chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese and the odd pig were raised for use. Sometimes we had to share these with the lynx and mink.

The children of school age had to be sent to Dawson Creek for schooling. When the younger ones became school age, correspondence was taught. Finally, a school opened in Muncho Lake Maintenance camp. They were then boarded out in private homes for the week, coming home weekends. After grade 8, they had to attend High School in Dawson Creek or Ft. St. John.



Dennis and Marge Callison.

During the mid-fifties, Dennis & Marj bought Lash & Winnie's interests in the business. The Lash Callisons moved to the Racing River and built up a horse ranch.

In 1958 the Lodge was renovated. The rental rooms had private baths installed and in '59 the duplex cabins were built. Early in 1960, construction along the microwave site at Mile 428 began. They soon had their own camp, but we were very busy with extra crews. By this time we had the liquor licence in the dining room, which was very popular. Completion of the microwave site took two years.

A number of hunters were taken out during our time. Dennis' area was north and south of Summit Lake and Lash's area west of Muncho Lake.

Many interesting, humorous and sometimes frightening things happened over the years.  
In November, 1966, the business was sold to Bob & Maxine Kjos.

# Starved off the farm, we came here

By Rita McLean

**I**t was November 1941. I was 18 years old and living with my mom and dad in Hanna, Alberta. My older brothers were overseas in the war, and only Carrie, Jim, Kay, Alvin and Frank were still at home. One day, we got a letter from my oldest sister, Winnie Callison, who was living along the river banks at the Old Fort at Fort Nelson.

Winnie's husband, Lash, and his brother Dennis, had just opened up a two-storey log building which accommodated rooms and eating facilities for the men working on the traplines. Winnie needed some extra help. It was determined that I would go, so I packed my bags, said good-bye to the family, and rode the "North Mix" train to Edmonton. I stayed at the night at the St. Regis Hotel. The next day I traveled all night and arrived in Dawson Creek at four o'clock in the afternoon.

I took an eight passenger bus to Fort St. John, crossing the Peace River by ferry. I stayed at the Donis Hotel, in Fort St. John, for a few days until the weather cooperated and we were able to take off for Fort Nelson. I was a bit apprehensive when I caught my first glimpse of the aeroplane that was to carry me to Fort Nelson. My apprehension deepened when I stepped inside the "Yukon Southern". There was just enough room for one passenger. I sat on a seat on the floor, with a mail bag tossed alongside. The pilot's name was Wilf (I can't recall his last name.) The flight was cramped, but fairly uneventful. I was somewhat relieved when we landed and the familiar face of Lash Callison was there to greet me.

I was surprised to discover that I would be finishing my journey via dog team, but I climbed onto the sleigh and we arrived at my new home a short while later. There were only seven white women in the settlement: Mrs. George, who ran the Post Office; her hired help, Ivy; the Hudson's Bay manager's wife; Helen Alexander; Irene Blair; my sister Winnie and me. Needless to say, I got a hearty welcome when I arrived. We worked hard, baking bread every day and serving the soldiers coming across from the airport. We did get help doing the dishes from Garnet and Johnny Harrold, Ennis and Edward Gairdner and Charlie Jensen.



The singing quartet Cindy Wells, Pat Higgins, Cheryl McLean, Marcy Sheppard

For entertainment, there were pool tables, dog sled rides, and every once in a while we would have a dance either at George's place or at Callison's. Edward Gairdner was the fiddler, while George Behn danced the Red River Jig. One of the incidents I recall vividly was the boys capturing a wolf and bringing him in all trussed up so he couldn't bite them. They thought they could mate him with a dog, to build a strong sledding team that could withstand the elements of the North. They never could tame that wolf. They tied him up under the cache and had to throw the food at him. In the end they had to let him go. Just in time for Christmas, the freight teams would come up from Fort St. John bringing supplies. The freight teams were spearheaded by Lynch Callison and Norman Armstrong. I am sure that it took over a month to get here, with bobsleds and horses fighting the elements.

The freighters would often fall through the ice on the rivers and work for hours to free themselves and their equipment from the freezing slush. When they arrived, dirty, tired, and bewhiskered, they were a welcome sight. New Years Day, 1942 was beautiful. I remember a real chinook, with the water running off all of the buildings. I was reminded of my childhood home on the Alberta prairies. Spring came and the rivers melted. This allowed the boats to travel again. Anyone who wanted to come across the river would come down the banks and yell for someone to come and get them. I stayed until May, when my mother passed away and I returned to Hanna.

I came back often for vacations to the Old Fort and also to Toad River where Winnie and Lash had moved to in December 1955, starved out of the farm, married, and with 3 children in tow, we headed North again. Our first stop on the Highway was Lum & Abner's, which was being operated at the time by my sister Kay and her husband, Frank Dolan. We stayed there while my husband, Logan, went on to Fort Nelson looking for a job. Logan landed a job driving an FWD truck, delivering fuel to the army personnel. He would alternately drive a 40 passenger bus for the army camp.

He then accepted a job as a water treatment plant operator for the DND (Department of National Defence), and then the DPW (Department of Public Works), which lasted until 1967. When the DPW camp closed, Logan went to work at the West Coast plant for a short time, until he was offered the maintenance supervisor job at the hospital. He worked at the hospital until he retired in 1980.

We ran a roadhouse for tourists for many years, as a "part-time" job while Logan worked for the DPW. We enjoyed meeting the people, and were often entertained by the stories the American tourists would tell. It was a good way to get glimpses from the outside in those days, before TV. I remember how I used to enjoy receiving Christmas cards and letters from some of the people that had overnighted with us. I would glory in their praise of the cleanliness and peacefulness of our facilities. They say the north gets into your blood. It must be so, our family had increased to seven and most of them are still living here and involved in the community.

A lot of changes have occurred since we first arrived. I think they are all for the better. I especially enjoyed it when the streets in Fort Nelson were finally paved and all that thick heavy mud was gone forever. We like living here and have no desire to move anytime soon. In closing, I would like to pay tribute to anyone and everyone who had any part in the building of the Alaska Highway.

# An Alaska Highway Romance

*It was love at first sight*

*by Shannon Soucie*

"I remember the first time I saw her she was standing in the kitchen doorway at Toad River and she was wearing a mauve dress," recalls Frank Dolan. It was the spring of 1951 and Kay, the beautiful, young Alberta rose had just arrived to work at the lodge, for her sister Winnie and husband Lash Callison.

Frank, a Saskatchewan farmboy, started out for Dawson Creek in 1943. He signed on with the U.S. Army in Edmonton, but instead of Dawson Creek, he was assigned to the airport which the U.S. Army was building at Namao (now the Canadian Forces Base), near Edmonton. Then, convinced that the war and the boom were over, he returned to Regina for two years. After the war, he headed for Dawson Creek. His older brother Jack had ridden a boxcar up to Dawson Creek in 1937.

In 1947 the Canol Pipeline, built in 1943 from Norman Wells to Whitehorse, was being dismantled and sold to Iran. Frank worked on the pipe haul driving U.S. 6X6's and trailers. In 1949 he bought his first truck and went to Haines, Alaska, hauling freight to a U.S. Army camp at McRae, near Whitehorse.

When Frank met Kay, he was hauling supplies from Dawson Creek to Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska, for the American Army. The Korean war had brought on another hauling boom. The highway was only a few years old and still very primitive. The loads were heavy and the equipment a far cry from what it is today, so the going was often very slow. On the long steep hills it wasn't uncommon, in good weather, for drivers to get out on the running board to chat with a fellow trucker coming from the other direction.

Frank began to stop at Toad River, even more frequently than he had been, and the romance blossomed. That winter, Kay moved to Fort Nelson to work in the mess hall at the Canadian Army maintenance camp. Their courtship continued under the very watchful eye of Kay's big brothers, Ben, Tom and Jim, who were all employed there by the army. Kay and Frank were married the next June, at Our Lady of Perpetual Help





#### MILE 233, ALASKA HIGHWAY

Church in Dawson Creek. Frank bought his first tanker truck the day before the wedding, and they made their home in Dawson Creek.

Frank continued trucking until after the birth of their daughter, Shannon, the next spring. Kay often went along on trips, with Shannon sleeping peacefully in a banana box. Many times Kay would drive the truck empty on the way home so Frank could get some sleep. Frank enjoyed the trucking, but, he didn't like the long trips away from his loved ones. It took five days up and four back, to make a trip in those days. So, in 1953, Kay and Frank purchased Lum'n'Abners, the lodge at mile 233.

For the next five years they lived there very happily. Help was always hard to get, and they both worked long, hard days, but they built up the business until it was renowned along the highway for the food and the service. Sons Pat and Bill were born while they were there, although Kay had to go to Dawson Creek to await their arrival near a hospital.

Lum'n Abner's became the social center for the gathering of the Parker Clan on many music, food, and love filled occasions. Kay was very fortunate to have her sisters Winnie, Rita and Carrie, and brothers Ben, Tom, Jim, Alvin and Frank, living and raising their families nearby. They were a tremendous 'support group' for each other throughout the years.

When Frank's father decided to sell the farm in Saskatchewan and retire, Frank moved the family back to Ponteix to see if he'd like to go back to farming. It was too late by then, Frank's heart was in the north and trucking was in his blood. So, a year later, after their daughter Kathy was born, Kay and Frank moved back to the north country for good.

Son Barry was born in Vancouver, and baptized in the little St. Paul's Mission church at Prophet River. By this time, Shannon, was old enough to start school, so the family moved into Fort Nelson in 1959, and Frank com-

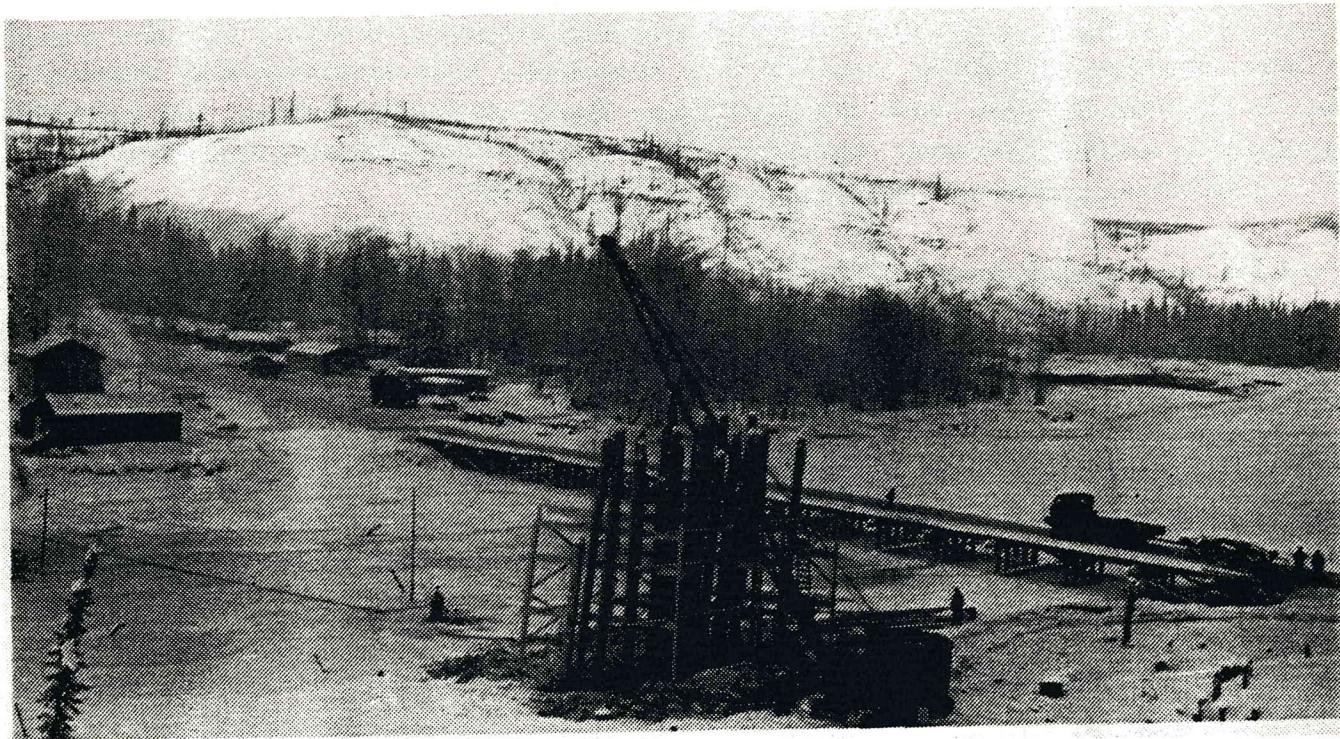
muted to Lum 'n' Abner's. Frank always put his family first, and he and Kay made the decision to sell their beloved Lum 'n' Abner's, in 1960, so they could be together.

Frank then began his career, as a bulk agent, that was to span the next thirty years, and British American, Gulf, and Esso Oil Companies. He built up a fleet of his own trucks, to work the highway and the booming oilpatch. In the heyday of the boom, in 1970, he had up to thirty-five leased trucks hauling for him that winter. He hauled four and a half million litres of fuel that March, to Pointed Mountain, N.W.T. Kay and Frank's sixth child, Daniel, was born after they moved to Fort Nelson.

Frank & Kay started up a Travel agency, which they operated for thirteen years, but, there wasn't enough trucking in it for Frank, so he went back to the fuel hauling business. At the present, Kay and Frank own Dolan Air Express and manage Loomis Courier Service.

Kay and Frank have always been in love with the north. "It's been a great place to raise a family, people are friendly and there is so much opportunity." Sons Bill and Barry, and daughter Shannon, live with their families in Fort Nelson. Kathy and family live in Edmonton and Dan lives in Vancouver. In 1978 their eldest son, Pat, died in an oilfield accident near Fort Nelson.

This June 14th, Kay and Frank Dolan celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary in Fort Nelson. "We've been happy here. We have traveled to many places around the world and we've never found a place we'd rather live. This is home."



Building of the Peace River Bridge

# A day to Remember

*by Jenny Thomson*

It was Monday, August 5, 1957, when we departed from Dawson Creek to make our home in Fort Nelson. My husband Jim was employed by RCEME workshop, at Mile 295, and had been successful in renting a house from Mr. Jack Sime, so it was just a matter of getting there.

We were to be travelling by Canadian Coachways bus. There was Jim and I, our two boys Bill and Dennis, and our daughter Anne. We left Dawson Creek shortly after 8:00 a.m.. The weather was beautiful so we really expected to have a good journey.

Everything went fine until we reached Mile 125 and the driver pulled over to the side of the highway and announced that there seemed to be a mechanical problem and that he was going to check it out. We all sat in the bus for ten minutes or so when the driver suggested we get off the bus and walk around a bit, as he had not discovered the problem. There is generally a bit of good in every ill wind, and this day our good fortune was that we had stopped beside a large patch of ripe raspberries and, as it was nearing lunch time, everyone made the best of it. We were there for a good hour when the driver advised us that we were to return to Wonowon, as he did not want to chance taking the bus further north. When we returned to Wonowon the driver contacted his headquarters, who ordered him to sit tight until a serviceable bus would arrive from Dawson Creek. They had a spare bus in Dawson Creek but no driver was available. They finally got a driver at Grande Prairie, however it was getting late in the day and this bus did not arrive at Wonowon until 10:00 p.m. that night.

The day had been very hot, the air was full of dust from passing vehicles and we had been stranded for eleven hours. We could sit in the bus but it was hot and stuffy so most passengers were quite tired by the time our luggage was transferred to the second bus, which departed for Fort Nelson at approximately 11:00 p.m.

The remainder of the trip was uneventful but when we arrived at the Bus Depot, which was the Avonlea Hotel, we discovered it had rained and the streets were muddy and full of puddles. All our luggage, which consisted of suitcases, boxes and a trunk were off loaded to the wet ground. As it was approximately 4:30 a.m., obtaining transportation was almost impossible and it was too much to carry all our luggage to our house, which was behind the hardware store.

It was still dark and Jim saw a vehicle coming north on the highway so he ran and flagged it down. It was an empty pick-up and the driver was very obliging, and pulled over to the bus depot and loaded on all our luggage and hauled it to the hardware store, which was as close as he could get to our house. As soon as our luggage was unloaded the driver jumped into his vehicle and drove away without receiving an offer of pay or a word of thanks. We don't know to this day who it was but he was certainly one good neighbor and we would love to meet him again. We all got to our makeshift beds by 5:30 a.m. Jim had to get up to go to work at 7:30 without breakfast of course, however everything turned out for the best. Most of our family still resides here fully enjoying the lifestyle of friendly Fort Nelson.

During my thirty-five years living on the Alaska Highway I have many memories of sad and happy incidents, however my first journey to Fort Nelson will be one I will never forget.

# I Am Wealthy

I am wealthy beyond all measure.

At forty something, my health and enthusiasm are  
Still basically intact, even though there are a few  
Lingering injuries to my body and spirit.  
One child has been raised to adulthood, and there is  
Hope that this most satisfying of all human experiences  
Will be shared again.

I have loved, and been loved by, my fair share of  
Wonderful women, and perhaps may be again.

There is enough unspoiled sea and wooded wilderness  
To last beyond the rest of my nomadic lifetime.

Some wonderful things have been created by these  
Humble hands, and they intend to make a few more.

I have known what it feels like to be a free man,  
Self-reliant and content upon the land, removed from  
Other men, and hope to soon luxuriate in this freedom  
again.

My enemies have felt, or will soon feel, the night of  
my vengeance, so that my sleep may continue undis-  
turbed.

So, even though many people would consider me  
Poor, I feel that I have been blessed above all reasonable  
Expectations, and that above all men:  
I am wealthy.



Raven Woman statue by Mike Camp

Mike Camp  
Lives at Mill Creek  
Alaska Highway  
The poem is from Tales  
of a Handyman



Summit Lake

# Women often held down the farm with the children's help

*By Marion ( Day ) Moore*

She was born in the old hospital west of Dawson Creek in the thirties and raised at Groundbirch. Dawson Creek moved when the rail road came through. Her pioneering parents are Bill and Constance Day and they cleared their farm with horses and a Model T. Marion was in the Air Force from 1957 to 1959. Today she is President of the Sooke Fall Fair, Sooke, B. C.

**I**t is hard to believe the Alaska Highway is fifty years old because my memories make it seem like yesterday. For Dawson Creek, Fort Saint John and the farming communities, it contributed to a sense of security against a war that was getting closer, as well as creating employment for many. Women often held down the farming, with the children's help, while the husband and sons were in the military overseas or working on the Highway.

Times were hard and merchants welcomed the additional sales. Shacks grew overnight to accommodate the volume of people looking for employment. This housing was constructed so quickly that quality was non-existent. A good number of these needed replacing when the explosion and fire cleared out a three block square. The glow in the sky could be seen thirty miles away. The Co-op Store remained, and what a fire sale.

Weather and roads, which we accepted as part of life, must have been overwhelming for the soldiers who were accustomed to mild climates and paved roads. Winter temperatures of down to 60 degrees below, howling winds and snow drifts were challenges to always be prepared for. Summer gave heat and mosquitoes.

Crops and gardens grew quickly. Wild fruit such as raspberries, saskatoons, strawberries, cranberries, and blue berries were plentiful and free for the picking. Roads were dirt, as in 'gumbo', in the summer rains and icy in winter glare. The mud was tricky to drive in, so in the ball-up stage we just waited it out. We thought the gravel highway was marvellous. The bridge across the Peace River brought people from far away, just to see the massive structure. It collapsed in 1957. Fortunately no lives were lost. The railroad bridge was planked, giving one way traffic interrupted by the train. Maybe not the best but it worked until 1960, when a new bridge replaced the old.

The Alaska Highway opened up the North for us when it was built, and since then has brought a tourism trade of its own. It is a major contribution to the present economy and a constant reminder that working together can bring countries together in the spirit of cooperation.

## The Death Of Our Land

Hear the muffled boom of the big lakes ice  
As the cracks run from shore to shore  
The big timber cracks like a rifle shot  
And the mercury drops lower and lower  
The dogs won't suffer they're warm and full  
Snuggled deep in their kennel beds  
And as for us, my wife and I  
Of the cold we have no dread  
The cabin is small but it's warm and dry  
And the old tin stove glows red  
We'll just read a book or play some crib  
Until it's time to go to bed.

We have lived many years in this frozen land  
It's our home and we're happy here  
With all natures blessings we are content  
It's the grim threat of progress we fear.

We hear on the news on the radio  
Words that make our hearts go numb  
They want to help the deprived northerner,  
My God, can they be that dumb!

They want to develop our oilfields  
There will be riches on every hand  
They promise a Garden of Eden  
For this deprived and frozen land.

And oh yes, they want to build us a pipeline  
It will benefit all mankind.

If they think, they are fooling the northerner  
Then there is some thing wrong with their mind  
We want no part of their modern ways

With it's hate and greed and strife,  
We live out here of our own free will  
And we know the truth of real life

We have watched with awe and disbelief  
As they ravished the land to the south.  
They have stripped the land and poisoned the streams  
The fish float in the slime at the rivers mouth

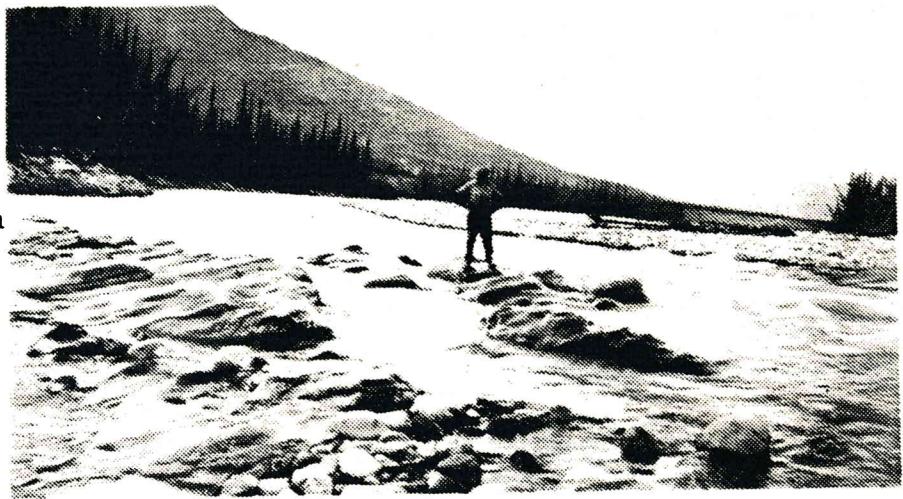
The game has dwindled from lack of range  
Protected predators roam the hills.  
The trappers and hunters are loosing their rights  
The do-gooders present the bills  
Now cant they see or don't they care  
That they are loosing more than they gain  
What of the future ? What is to be left ?  
Progress, progress, they must surely be insane.

We have tried to convince them but all in vain  
That of their help we have no need  
They promise riches and joys untold  
While in their eyes is the gleam of greed  
We plead and beg as on bended knee  
But in their greed they ignore our plea  
They will go right on, do just as they please  
For after all, Who the hell are we?  
Now I sit in my cabin with saddened heart  
My wife gently touches my hand  
They can't be stopped and we are forced to watch  
The terrible death of our land

*Norman L. Mackenzie*

# Born To Wander

As the days grow ever shorter  
And the inner light grows dim  
I sit here with my memories  
Of the places I have been  
I remember quite distinctly  
Wandering down a northern stream  
Where I satisfied my hungers  
And lived out my fondest dream  
I lived with mother nature  
I obeyed her rules and creed  
And I found she would supply me  
With everything I need  
I trapped and hunted wildlife  
As man was meant to do  
And tried to help all nature  
To keep the balance true  
I had a real good partner  
Of course I mean my wife  
She also loved wild country  
And our nomadic way of life  
When at last I lay this body down  
Where it never more will rise  
Just stuff me in the furnace  
And cook me down to size  
Then put me in a plastic bottle  
Good and tough to stand the strain  
Then seal it up securely  
So I'll not get wet from rain  
I don't believe we live again  
So of that I want no part  
I never camped in high up places  
And I never learned to play a harp  
I only worshipped nature  
I have no god to whom I pray  
So just drop me in the river  
And start me on my way



Racing River

I'd wander ever northward  
Where ere the waters flow  
When the bush is full of snow  
Then when the balmy breezes blow  
And sets the rivers free  
I'll wander on again in peace  
To some distant northern sea  
Don't sit around and grieve a lot  
For I've had a wondrous life  
With a bunch of kids I'm proud of  
And a kind and loving wife  
When walk down by the river  
Just sops and rest a while  
And watch the water flowing north  
Than think of me, and smile.

*Norman L. Mackenzie*

# Dusty Memories

*By Ruth Jackman, Richmond*

The year we were married, 1954, we travelled over the new John Hart highway to Dawson Creek, where we posed by the "Mile 1" signpost, and agreed we would follow the Alaska Highway as soon as we could. It was 1963 before we were able to fulfill that dream. The intervening nine years had been very busy ones for us. We left the farm in Alberta and moved to Vancouver, where my husband got a job with B.C. Electric, first as a bus driver, then as a bus mechanic. We also produced 5 children who, by 1963, were willing campers: Joan, 8; Joyce, 6; Tom, 5; Eleanor, 4; and Gordon, 3.

We spent months preparing for our trip. First, we bought a 1956 International Travel-All. This was before the days of R.V.'s but in a manner of speaking, Don "customized" our van. He put in a false floor so that all our camping gear, including a food cache, fitted under it. He mounted three rear seats so that the kids had lots of seating space, and slung a hammock along one side to hold soft items, such as pillows and jackets.

Directly behind the front seat he placed a barrel of gas and a chest of drawers for our clothes. It was less bulky and more convenient than a stack of suitcases. Because of the interior layout the children had to file one by one in and out of the front passenger door. That was too slow for them so they preferred to use the windows when we were away from traffic. It also meant that, when Mom and Dad were in the front seat, we couldn't see the children very easily, but usually that was for the better. On one occasion however, it was rather unfortunate.

Our budget was very tight and we couldn't afford to buy the expensive gas and groceries we knew would encounter, "Up North." All winter we bought a few extra groceries every payday to stow away, and we made a special trip downtown to the Army & Navy to buy insect repellent.

We were able to save \$400.00 cash, and so we set out in our unique vehicle with food, fuels and five kids, on our great adventure. And what an adventure it was! We had a wonderful time. The scenery was beautiful. Campsites had been carved out of the wilderness, but were still natural. The air was fresh, the water clean, the space immense.

Don recalled anecdotes from his childhood, when Edmonton was full of "Yanks" while the highway was under construction. The towns were still frontiers, and all they were so friendly. There was such an abundance of wild life. Foxes ran across the road constantly. Deer and moose were common. Near Fort Nelson, we camped by a beaver dam, both north and southbound. We were amazed at how much work the beavers had accomplished in the two weeks we were travelling.

We saw many bears, and once found our kids, who were exploring a campsite, admiring two bear cubs in a tree. We hurriedly got the children in to the car before "Mama Bear" spotted us.

We were equally frightened when we saw our one and only grizzly. On one "rest stop", a huge cougar gazed down at us from a rocky pinnacle. Another time, a frantic caribou plunged out of the bush, oblivious to us, and ran ahead of us down the road for 1/2 mile.

We recall Fort Nelson so clearly - the dusty highway running the length of it, with wooden boardwalks on either side. We shopped there, and were astounded to pay less for milk and butter than we did at home. I was quite indignant to discover insect repellent was also cheaper - it was such a hassle to get it before we left. The children spent a long-time deciding what to buy with their own money from Grandpa.

One brief episode among all the memories will always be a favorite family recollection, repeated whenever we get together: "Remember the time we left Eleanor behind?" Eleanor, at four years, tended to be more independent than the other children. Dan and I finished our shopping, and waited for the kids to pile back into the van, then we headed down the highway toward the Laundromat. The children were all busy with their purchases.

Before we got far, Don became aware that a vehicle travelling in the opposite direct was trying to get his attention, indeed was waving him down. He looked to the rear-view mirror, and through the cloud of dust saw a little girl charging down the centre of highway. Behind her was another car, driving very slowly, creating a shield for her. We rapidly reversed, and as we drew abreast, Eleanor ran up to the car gasping "Take me with you. I don't want to stay here!" And to this very day, she insists that we left without her, while I am equally insistent that she climbed out of the window and returned to the store.



Bears at a dump site

# While I Was There

By Albert L. Winje

This has to do with my stint on the Alaska Highway Project and mainly on my stay at the Beatton River Airstrip. It is being written in January, 1992, which is 50 years since I first worked there, spent the winter of 1942-43 on this project. In the story (On The Way In) I think I left off about the time we reached the Airfield site and we immediately started building log buildings for the cookhouse and bunkhouses. After we had several buildings built, I was sent back 20 miles to the Beatton River itself, as there was some heavy spruce along the flats near the river, stuff that had escaped the forest fires that had killed all the spruce on the ground above the river. There again it was getting a cookhouse and bunkhouse built first, and then setting up a sawmill to cut the big spruce logs into lumber for building more permanent buildings at the Airstrip and Radio Range. Also, timbers for bridges and culverts, as all the first crossings were all made on the ice.

We had the sawmill working by the end of the third day, that being after the buildings were completed. I had three men working with me, plus the cat and driver that did the skidding. We powered the mill with a D7 with a pulley on it, and it was good power, as all we were using was the headsaw and carriage drive. We had no edger. Think I mentioned in one of the other stories that the timber above the river flats was all jackpine that had come up after the fires, as it usually does on most burnt over areas anywhere in this Province. These jackpines were alright for log buildings but were so small for milling purposes.

After sawing a few days, another man showed up that had some sawing experience, so they sent me back up to the Airfield. I was to lay out 5 separate roads to the Radio Range buildings, as they were situated about two miles from the Airport. The reason for the 5 separate roads was on account of being bombed, as it seemed very essential that there was always a way to get from the Airport to the Radio Range Station. This was considered combat area at the time we were constructing it, as the Japanese were already on the Aleutian Islands off the Alaska Coast.

We even skidded 80 ft. poles clear from the Beatton River to the Radio Range, to set up camouflage nets so that they wouldn't be seen from the air. However, the Americans overwhelmed the Japs, and took the Airfields that they had established on the Aleutians and captured some of the Japanese' Zero's, although the Japs had destroyed most of them.

One night, when I was out at the Radio Range, the radio came to life and a voice said, "Seven Japanese Zero's approaching Fort St. John. None Hostile, flown by American Pilots, 2 request to land, remaining five will continue on to Edmonton", they were just about directly over us when they made this request and I can tell you it gave a person an eery feeling. After the Americans had control of the Aleutian Islands it was, of course, decided that the camouflage nets were not needed, so we didn't have to put them up.

Shortly, after a gang of steelworkers came in and put up a 140 ft. tower to increase the range. The boss on that gang was quite a young man, by the name of Barney, and would imagine that he would still be alive. There was another man that did most of the welding on the cats, by the name of George Lambert, and he worked for the Fort St. John Lumber Company in the 60's, so I ran into him when I worked for the same company.

George retired and lived at Chetwynd and Moberly Lake, until he died about 12 or 15 years ago. He was loved by every child that ever knew him, as he loved children, and always had a treat of some kind whenever they came to his house. He had never been married, but was a kindly and wonderful person, one that made you feel proud to know. During the winter, Jim Miller of the Western Construction Company, that had the contract to build the road into the Airport as well as the Airport itself, flew in to see how things were going. The Famous Northern flyer, Wop May, flew the plane and they also had the head man of Transport with them, his name was Heath.

Jim Miller introduced me to both Wop May and Heath, so I did get to know the famous northern flyer. If you remember, he was the pilot that was in on the great manhunt, when the Mounties were after Albert Johnson, the so called "Mad Trapper". In this story I will tell of one man's version of this manhunt but will cover a thing or two first.

There was going to be a time at breakup that the bull dozed road was going to be impassable, plus the fact that bridges and culverts would have to be put in after the breakups, so it was imperative that fuel and oil be brought in so that work could proceed on the airfield during this period. It amounted to well over five thousand barrels of fuel that was unloaded, to see them through. One cold winter night some Indians came by dogsled to the camp and wanted someone to take one of their members in to Fort St. John Hospital. He was sitting in a dogsled and never in my life have I seen anyone that was as thin as he was, absolutely just skin and bone it was of course T.B., which at that time was very prevalent among the Indians.

The man that was acting foreman at the time was going to take him in, and left shortly after supper with a van, but before he reached the Alaska Highway he had stopped to put oil in the vehicle and hadn't put the filler cap back in place, and it, in turn, shorted one of the wires and ran his battery down before he got very much further, so he was stranded until such time as a truck came by, so he had to build a fire to keep the patient from freezing. When a truck did show up and got him going again, he made it on into Fort St. John. But, the poor Indian only lasted about a week and he was gone.

A man drove into camp one day with a load of hay and oats, it was about a five ton load and he also had 9 dogs with him that he intended to take on North with him. The reason for the feed was on account of ten teams of horses that were all pulling sleighs of trade goods for two outpost trading or fur buying posts that he had. One was on the Hay River and one on the Stikine River, normally it took it a month to complete the trip and as the feed was used up they kept turning teams back.

By bringing the feed to this airfield, when the teams arrived they would have used up enough that the truck load could be used to get them back to their full quota again. That way they could haul more trade goods and still have feed for the trip. The factor, or owner, had allowed the teams a head start but even then he was at camp three days before the teams got there. The snow was deep and crusted well, so it was real tough going. During the three nights he was there, he and I talked late into the night, or should I say he talked and I listened. The stories he had to tell of his adventures in the North were fantastic. He knew Albert Johnson, the so called "Mad Trapper", but his version of the events leading up to the final man hunt were quite different than the way it is described in the book on this manhunt.

He claimed that Johnson had twice been at his Post on the Stikine River and seemed very nice to deal with as both times he had fur to sell and supplies to buy, although he did say that Johnson was not a very talkative man. His version of the whole thing was that the Mountie that Johnson shot to death, and he was also the one that Johnson had to deal with to get, or should say tried to get, a licence for the area he wanted to trap on the Rat River, was a very officious and obnoxious type, a type that shouldn't have been in the North at all. According to the Factor, he fully felt that it was this man's attitude that had started the whole things and in the 40 some days that this poor devil of a trapper eluded them in dead of winter, the factor felt that he could have shot a dozen of them if had so wanted to.

This of course, is only his version, the book on it makes it sound as though it was Johnson's doings right from the start. I, myself, have no opinion on it, as I do not know anything about it except what I have heard and read. When the Factor was ready to leave they had changed their minds about taking the dogs, so he asked me if I would feed them until the first team came back, which was just over a week. I, of course, agreed to that arrangement, and went with him whenever he fed them, in the three days that he had to wait for the teams to arrive. He warned me to never get too close to them as they are quite vicious and were all chained to separate trees, that I was just to throw the food to them. However, before the week was up I was friends with every dog, of course being the one to give them their food helped, but I also love dogs and they seem to be able to sense that. He only fed them once a day and that was at night, after we had our supper. The teams had originally started from Fort St. John, and the Beatton River Airstrip was about halfway between Fort St. John and Fort Nelson. It was what was called an emergency field. The first team back arrived about a week later and they took the dogs back with them.

I will have to tell you of the steady stream of aircraft that were flying to Russia. The Americans flew them as far as Fairbanks and Russian pilots flew them on from there, I was told that most of these pilots were women that ferried them on to Russia, but I don't know if that was right or not. The medium bombers, mainly B25's, flew at the highest altitude and always flew in pairs but sometimes four. Next in height were the fighter planes, they flew either three, six or nine and do remember that a lot of these were Bell Aircobra's though there were others as well. The big Bombers flew the lowest altitude and their twin 50 machine guns were plainly visible ticking out of every turret. They were mostly B17 and some B24's. These, of course, were the big 4 engine jobs. The B24 had quite a thick body but the B17's had a slimmer looking fuselage and were the most beautiful aircraft I had ever seen in the air, and always flew singly.

The work horse of the skies at that time were that DC3's and the cargo version of the same aircraft which was designated the C47. They could handle 23 barrels of fuel in their cargo area. This seemed like a tremendous load, but compared to the C130 that came out later it was small. I don't know when the C130 were first in use but I did not see any while I was at this airfield. It was years later before I ever saw one. These aircraft flew both night and day. One lot of aircraft would no more than be out of sound range when another lot would be approaching. It was absolutely unreal the amount of aircraft that passed over head in the months that I was there.

Many aircraft went down during this time and there were search planes flying around nearly everyday. Wop May was flying a lot in the search for missing aircraft. Before I finish this story, I would like to go back to the three men that were my helpers when we were building at the Airfield and also helped when we set up the sawmill. Two of these men were what you call "the hackers", and they were both close to 70 years of age, but they were working hounds if there ever was one.

When we set up the sawmill, we used two long spruce logs to lay the carriage tracks on and these old fellows hewed one side flat and then the log was put in place with the flat side up for the track to be laid. Back on the farm in Northern Saskatchewan I had helped father build a couple of log buildings and we hewed them flat on two sides with a common axe by chipping away.

Boy!, was I in for a surprise when these two old fellows went to work. They strung a chalk line the full length of the log and then leaped up on the log and did what you call scoring the side of the log to be flattened. This is making cuts about ten inches apart and as deep as the chalk line, and they kept the chalkline back with their toe while this cut was being made. They were chopping directly towards themselves while these cuts were being made. They used what is called a hothead and it is very heavy with a blade a foot wide and only one blow to each cut. When this was completed, they started from one end and made a downward cut with the broadaxe that went completely through with every stroke and about 1/4 of an inch away from the chalkline, but every cut was perfect, not once did they ever cut that line. When they got towards the butt end of the log the cut was getting deeper, and deeper but not once did they ever fail to cut completely through with every cut. The face of the flattened area was at least a foot wide at the base of the log, but the effort they put into it was phenomenal and with each blow they would give a grunt that you could of heard from a mile away. But like I said, before each stroke of the axe went completely through, regardless, if it was six inches or a foot or more of wood to cut.

These two men were the only two men that I have ever seen that could handle a hothead like that, and I doubt if there is a man alive today that could handle one like they did, I imagine it is a lost art. The last two weeks I was there, they had me take a big old truck and pick up loads from trucks that had broke down on the 80 mile trips in from the Main Highway. There was lots of them and sometimes some pretty hard stuff to handle, but managed to get everything in before the breakup came.

"On The Way Out" is the story from here on and I nearly lost my life on this trip, but, of course, that is only one of the many times that the grim reaper has been rubbing his hands with glee as he thought he had me for sure, but, so far, have eluded him countless times, but have heard the old scythe swishing awfully close on more than one occasion.



U. S. Army plane at Fort St. John.

# A bus drive north

*Mrs Berit Hagen of R.R. # 2, Donalda in Alberta saw our request for stories about the Alaska Highway and sent this wedding photo of Ray and Dorothy Easton who were stationed in Fort Nelson in the R.C.A.F. The bridesmaid Alfrida Berild sent the enclosed letter - postcard dated October 24, 1949 while on a visit to the Eastons. Later she worked as pay-master for the American Airforce.*

*The clipping from the newspaper was one that I cut out while teaching in Edmonton in the early 40's. I was acquainted with some of the officials, so found the news report surprising. Alfrida married Lorne Welsh of Fort St. John. She died of cancer eleven years ago. The Eastons are residents of Camrose, Alberta.*

Alfrida Berild's picture postcard reads : R.C.A.F. Fort Nelson. Hi Folks. Got here in one piece Friday night 8:40 Pacific time - after a wonderful and hectic trip - I'm flying home for sure - altho I enjoyed the trip up. The roads were terrible for the most part - the buses worse - and the scenery lovely. Had lunch at Athabaska-coffee at Slave Lake-dinner at High Prairie-arrived at Dawson Creek 2.00 A.M. (Mtn Time)-no bed-the hotels were full-so yours truly curled up on a couch in the staff dining room of the Dew Drop Hotel.

A game of some sort was going on in the next room-so little sleep I got. Left supposedly at 8.30 for Ft. N. Our bus was loaded to capacity -mail, express, freight, baggage. 4 Canadians, 10 Americans, 2 bus drivers & me. I was treated royally, fed cookies, chocolates-nuts & treated coffee, etc. The Alaska highway is in fair condition. Many hills -so we made little time. Eastons are fine -also Mrs. B. Send their greetings. It



Alfrida Berild was bridesmaid for Ray and Dorothy Easton

snowed yesterday, today it is melting off the roof. Went driving yesterday - 40 miles north. May be home next Tuesday. Out to tea on Saturday. Will write again. Fritzie

The post card shows the "Peace River Bridge that replaced the ferry at Taylor's crossing ten miles south of Fort St John. It was built by the United States Government at a cost of \$1,750,000.00. It was officially opened and presented to the Dominion of Canada on August 30, 1943.

It is a two lane suspension bridge, 2,275 feet long and the deck is 100 feet above the normal water level. The towers are 190 feet tall. The bridge will be of great value in facilitating transport along the great new 1,600 mile Alaska Highway."

The 1940 newspaper clipping says:

## Asks Abandonment Canol Project Now

Washington - Rep Leon H Gavin (Rep, Pa) demanded Tuesday that "The fantastic excursion", the Canol oil project, be shut down immediately instead of June 30, the date set by the war department. Mr. Gavin, whose Oil City home is in the Centre of Pennsylvania's crude oil region, told the, house .- "Economically, the Canol project was an absurdity of such high degree that anyone outside of government who would propose such a thing would be thought to be a fit subject for a mental examination ". Mr. Gavin asserted: "it requires \$1,000,000 a month to operate the plant in the Canadian wilderness " and that the only answer I can find for not shutting down now instead of waiting until the end of June was ... (that ) an appropriation was made last year of about \$16,500,000 for maintenance and operation of the project " It hasn't been used up yet, and it would be a violation of the traditions of this project to try to economize, by quitting now and saving \$ 2,000,000 or \$ 3,000,000."



Mae's Kitchen

# The Famous Mae's Kitchen

*(Miss) Hilmy Raja*

Mae's Kitchen is situated at Pink Mountain, which is the half way point from Fort St. John to Fort Nelson. It was built and started by Mae Moore from Texas. It was opened in 1978, to accommodate the truckers who were busy trucking during those days. One day Mae Moore served a bowl of soup to a trucker and he requested a piece of toast. So Mae sliced a thick piece of bread and toasted the bread on the grill for him. Thus started the famous Texas Toast at Mae's Kitchen.

I have been working here 12 years, and I have met a lot of you from Fort Nelson and Fort St. John. I have seen the school boys grow up to be young men and the girls to be young ladies. It has been a pleasure to serve the hockey teams and the basketball teams during the winter seasons when it had been slow. It was exciting to hear the hustle and the bustle of the kids.

We have had crews staying with us from Alberta to Fort St. John, and we always enjoyed having them, a change from the daily routine. Some of you have come here just to have dinner and enjoy the scenery, which encouraged us, knowing that you liked our food and the pies.

Of course, summer time is always busy with tourists and it was always fascinating to listen to different accents from different parts of the States. When the Air Streamers were introduced, it was almost like the whole of United States was moving to Alaska. It is not only the Americans who stop here, people from all over the world, especially those who are interested in butterflies which migrate from the south to the west at the top of the Pink Mountain. We have had the pleasure of meeting people who have walked, biked and wheeled the Alaska Highway.

We are looking forward to serving you this summer. Staff at Mae's Kitchen

# The Empty Trap

*By Steve Pischke, Mile 302, Pioneer Way*

For about at least the fifth or sixth time, the beaver trap that I set was sprung, dragged always and left empty. I've set it at different depths, trying to get a front or hind foot catch to no avail. It was either sheer good fortune or a wirey old beaver that was eluding a clean catch.

One day I decided to take a long shot, hoping to see it while laying in wait. It was a cold November day, getting on towards night fall. There was some snow on the frozen ground and ice along the creek's edge. About an hour later I noticed some ducks swimming up the creek towards me, looking back as though something was following them. Sure enough, something was. In the shadows I could see a wake in the water, then a large beaver head. My heart started to race because it was the biggest I had ever seen. It was swimming at a fast pace, then started to slow almost as if it sensed some danger. This made me more excited because I expected the obvious. A slap with its tail, the big dive and goodbye big beaver.

I tried sighting the 22 sights on it but was unsuccessful because a slight breeze was blowing and grass blades kept getting in the way. In the meantime, the beaver kept coming real slow, and started rising out of the water. Apparently in the middle of the creek was a sand bar, unknown to me at the time. By now, disgusted with the grass obscuring my shot, I rose and took a quick shot. As I later found out, the bullet creased it's forehead. When this happened the beaver took a backward summer sault and tried to make it back to deeper water.

I was twenty years old at the time, quite physically fit from working as a cowboy, wrestling big steers and calves day in and day out. Figuring by dropping my gun and charging after the beaver would do the trick. It was a bit disoriented by it's wound but didn't lack any of it's wild, furious strength as I would soon learn. A beavers hind foot makes a perfect hand hold. I managed to catch both hind legs. From then on things were a blur. The fight was on. I can only quote what I remember. One thing for sure, it shook loose my grip in short order, leaving me on my back in the ice cold water. By this time I was in waist deep water, with no beaver in sight.

At the time I could only think the the \$80.00 wagon wheel size hide had gotten away. In desperation I waded as fast as I could down stream, to see bubbles coming up from the water. By the time the beaver submerged I had both hands on the scruff of its neck. I pushed it toward the creek bank and held it best as I could with one hand and both knees and with the other hand groped for a weapon. I found a stick but it was useless. It broke the first time I used it. Finally, I found a small stone at the creek bottom. It hit the beaver a few times held it under the water till it stopped bubbling. Then I hauled it and myself to shore, now becoming aware just how wet and cold I was.

There were matches in my packsack on shore. So the first thing was to start a fire. While I was doing this, my hands started to hurt something terrible, which also frightened me because I did not know what was happening. I held both hands between my knees, rolling on the frozen ground forgetting again how wet and



Author with a beaver 30 years ago

cold I was. Gradually the pain started to leave. Only later I found out what happened. In all the excitement the intense grip that was put on the beaver shut off the blood circulation to the hands, plus the cold temperature contributed to it.

When the circulation started again that was the cause of the pain. I soon got the fire going, removed all my clothes, and started drying them out which took well into the night. While I stood there, drying out, it afforded some time to think of the ordeal. I was not proud or happy of the incident. Matter of fact, I'm still not. What surprised me was how I got away with not being bitten. If you ever saw a beaver's incisors you could well imagine the damage it could have done.

As I recall, the beavers main objective was to get away, which made me feel sorry for it. On closer examination of the beaver, it had one front leg missing and part of one hind foot, which perhaps explains the reason why it was difficult to trap again. About that time, the new body humane trap, called Conibear, came out on the market which is all I ever used since. I never shot another beaver after that.

# Cold Steel

*By Tess Casey*

Joe O'Neill woke up painfully-it was like climbing up out of a red and black well. Waves of pain surged through his skull as, slowly, he got his bearings. He lay on a bunk, fully dressed, apparently back at the oil camp-a definite improvement on some of the places he had woken up in. They must of hit the town last night and he must have got very very drunk. Peeling off his clothes he dragged himself to the shower. He stared at his face in the mirror and gingerly felt his swollen eye. Gradually the events of the previous evening returned to him, and with them a mounting rage. There had been an enormous fight and bitter and hard words had been said.

Their faces almost numb with the intense cold they had stormed into that bar in terrific form, himself and Mike, who was his closest friend and a life-long comrade.

Of course it was over a girl-some dumb chick they'd picked up, but that did not make the fight any less brutal or what was said any easier to forget.

The last thing he could remember was the feel of Mike's red woollen work shirt between his fingers as he held him by the throat. He supposed they'd torn them apart before he killed him. He drank black coffee and prepared to go out to the rig. He presumed he was on duty this afternoon. He hoped fervently that he would not run into Mike.

Ice tinkled in the air and a small grey wind whistled eerily through the encampment surrounding the tall grey oil rig. It was savagely cold. In weather like this steel could snap like a pipe shank. Joe pulled down his ear muffs and settled his neck deeper into the down filled parka. The powdery snow squeaked beneath his heavy boots as he crunched his way towards the rig. It would be his luck to have to go and change that cussed pipe in this cold. His eye smarted and ice formed on his beard.

Suddenly there was an ear splitting staccato crack, as if a giant rifle had exploded. Joe was just drawing near to the rig and he stopped in his tracks glancing up wildly. My God! No it couldn't be! In horror he saw the top of the solid steel structure actually waving in the icy air. The fifty below temperature had cracked the solid steel! And then there was a sound the oil boys will never forget-a deep metallic groan followed by a series of sharp cracks. Men started running, some in panic, and always away from the toppling death trap. Joe's bones seemed to have turned to ice- he could not move. He was literally frozen in his tracks in the stained snow.

"Joe run! Get clear of her. She's coming down. Run for Christ's sake!" Joe could dimly hear the voice of Mike calling him. Why should Mike worry about him? He had said he hated him. His mind was crystal clear now but still he could not move.

This was his thought , this was the end of him. That thing would crush him like an egg shell. This was his first real encounter with death, and in his young carefree life, it was hardly something he had ever dwelled upon. Violent deaths are, sadly, frequent in the oil fields, but nothing would ever happen to wild young Joe-his was a charmed life.

This was an encounter with the old boy himself, at his cold steely best, although Joe would hardly have phrased it that way.

The structure was now leaning at an acute forty-five degree angle. Screams were coming from the men, begging Joe to move...

Mike could stand it no longer. Tears were streaming down his face.

" I'm going in. He's frozen he won't move. She'll get him-I'm going IN!" As the men held the struggling screaming Mike by the arm he cursed lividly and kept screaming to Joe to move.

Finally, with a savage wrench, Mike freed himself from the men and rushed towards Joe. Something, the sight of his friend coming towards him, who knows what, released the paralysis of Joe's limbs. With a jolt, adrenaline flowed into him and he fled from the menace of the failing rig.

It was a race against gravity, as, for some reason, probably force of habit, connected with the area where he usually worked, he was running on the side to which the horror was falling. Did he have time? Would he get there first? would he get clear before the rig crashed to the ground?

As he tore away, he collided with Mike coming in and knocked him to the ground. Oddly, a football scene flashed in his mind.

Breathlessly the gathered men watched the drama. Nearer and nearer to the ground came the broken rig and faster and faster he tried to run.

Two yards or so to go and he put forth every ounce of effort in those last few feet, Mike pounding behind. Down came the broken mast with a fearful crash into the trampled snow. But Joe was clear by a scant few feet.

As Mike, running in his wake, neared the safety mark he slipped on a hard, icy polished patch, falling backwards as the rig came down.

There was nothing anyone could do. The men stood silent and motionless, not daring to look. Finally a foreman moved and went to get a crane to lift the broken tower. Joe sank to his knees in the snow weeping.

Teresa Casey worked as an X-ray technician  
at Fort Nelson General Hospital for many years  
and began her writing career while she was here.

She now lives in Ireland

# ANONYMOUS UNOFFICIAL

VOL. NO 1

MUSKWA B.C. JULY 30, 1943

ISSUED WEEKLY

## (No) Note from T.M

This space was reserved for an article by T.M. Roach, our supervising Engineer, but when approached on the subject by our Editor, his reply was QUOTE In my present state of mind, any article that I would write would be unprintable UNQUOTE.

This reply was undoubtedly prompted by the Requisition Gremlin.

## NAME WANTED

Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye!  
Ping pong ball for free.  
If you want to win it.

Just give a name to me!

Anyone interested in naming the paper, address your suggestion to the Editor, and drop it into the post office not later than Wednesday, August 4th.

Mass will be said in the P.R.A. drafting room on Sunday, August 1, at 9:30 A.M.

## NEW ARRIVALS

"Ready Kilowatt", our favorite short circuit of the Power House, is a sight to behold now-a-days. Two more Murphy's have joined his compact little group. The proud father is doing nicely.

More power to you, "Ready". We know you will give them a good ohm. However, we advise you not to show partiality, but switch your affections from one to the other.

## "Non Solicited Award"

A.W. Waynard, City Engineer, offers a box of "Cheap Ceegars" to each alleged ball player who has the office signal with fly ball in any legal game.

## Mess Hall Motto

"FILL-UP THE SEATS  
BEFORE YOU FILL UP YOURSELF!"

## HISTORY OF MILE 8

The first camp to be set up in this vicinity by the Public Roads Administration was established on April 10, 1942, at the Muskwa Airport, and was made by the Messrs. Curwen, Willeson, Warren and Ambos.

On June 2, because the small group had gradually been enlarged by Canadians, a camp was set up at Mile 8. It was transferred to Kledo River in July, and continued to move north as surveying progressed.

On August 6, headquarters was again established at the Muskwa Airport. Then, in the latter part of September, a clearing crew led by K. F. McKusker, was sent to Mile 8. On November 14, 1942, the airport camp was moved to Mile 8, to be joined, November 26, by the Kledo River camp; this finally consolidated Mile 8 as the Headquarters Camp for section D. The First vehicle to push through from Ft St John was a jeep, and it arrived here on August 25. Greyhound Bus Lines made their trial trip December 17, and has kept a regular service since that time.

A temporary hospital was established in November, in the present soils laboratory and nurse Doris Carter, the first woman in the Public Roads Mile 8 Headquarters Camp, arrived on November 15, and began erecting their sawmill on December 12.

The staff now consists of Drs. McGowen, Buccello and Kelly, and Nurses Schraeffel, McGee, Sloan, Smith and Scheck.

The next major event in the growth of this Headquarters was the laying of the first hospital sill logs on January 18. Then Captain White, of the U.S.E.D., arrived on February 4, and established headquarters for the Area Engineers. Shortly afterwards the Canadian Bank of Commerce built a branch office, and opened for public service on March 26. If the rumors of a store and post-office to be built are true, then Mile 8 will indeed become a metropolis.

## "THIS'N THAT"

**Barracks #1** - T.M. returns from snap-shot tour of the North country. Cousin Dean's electric shaver chattering back at news commentator promptly at 7:23 A.M. daily. . . J. Mueller and H. Adkison have just returned from a fishing trip up north.

**Barracks #2** - Last week a certain person, wearing a patch over his left eye, claimed to have been stung by a wasp. How does the other fellow look, Cousin Lou? . . If you're troubled with insomnia, contact Chuck, who manages to steal 16 hours daily and tries desperately for another hour. . . Showers are now available in

Barracks 2, but make haste while there's water--two soap covered victims were dragged out when the water supply failed and had to complete their baths in the basin.

**Barracks #3** - Carpenter Oscar's dam (Fire Hall #1) is in need of repairs, after Bob's midnight ravaging. . . Gordon New(l)y wed returns, weak but willing. . . Boneyard Art received an ultimatum turn radio off at 1:00 P.M., or else. . . welcome back, Dick Speers, from your happy holidays.

**Barracks #4** - All the girls wish to thank Mac for making coffee and tea tables for them. . . a truck was dispatched this morning for the common room furniture. We hope Mrs. Charles will enjoy her sojourn in our barracks.

**Barracks #6** - Barber Mac has set up outdoor shop. . . Are the weird sounds issuing from this barracks ghosts of dances held there, or echoes from Texas?

### Kehr General Hospital

Dr Buccello returned from his journey to the Liard river in the milk wagon. He strongly believes that the way to preserve teeth is to drink fresh milk which he delivers to his many satisfied customers up the line. We were wondering where the boat docked when our new Doctor D'Lacey arrived in blue serge and gold braid. . . We wish speedy recovery to Mr Willesen and Gordon Mills. . . Major Carnes arrived July 29th. . . Latest intern Dr. Van Buskin. . . Nurse Smith seen muttering to herself about some heathen short sheeting her bed. . .

### SPORTS

#### SOFTBALL, CHOWDER FIELD, MILE 8--Zero Warriors vs Buskirk's Furry Beavers.

Final score-13 to 15 in favor of the visitors. Impossible to give box scores, as reporter went to sleep also. But from remarks made around camp:-" It was an exciting game!"

Captain Van led the rally with two "fowl balls", fowl because they were buzzards--( they buzzed over the back stop)-- Later in the game, center fielder "Kireliuk" snagged a hard hit liner with his bare right hand. When asked why he did not use the glove which was made for that purpose, he said simply, and we quote--"Now they tell me".

However, it was a good game with errors on both sides, and every one attending the game seemed to think with a little more practice the St John Fowl Balls will be second best team. In the second game, played on Sunday, the Warriors trounced the Beavers to the tune 5 to 2. Next game Friday night, R.C.A.F. Fliers vs Beavers.

The Editor and staff wish to extend their appreciation to the R. Melville Smith Co. Limited for the use of their mimeograph machine to enable us to produce this chronicle.



Nurses on the steps of the Kehr General Hospital, Mile 308, in 1943

The nurses L. to R. Claire Schraefel, Helen Smith, Maggie McGee, Agnes Scheck,

We would like to put a small note of appreciation in here to our Camp Manager, who is so loyal about keeping the dust of the highway from reaching us. The other day, his water sprinkling truck was seen driving madly up and down the road during a small thunder shower, trying its best to keep the dust down. Congratulations Mr. Buskirk.

### FIRST AID HINTS

To the stiff-jointed baseball players--Get up fifteen minutes earlier in the morning and stand in front of your window. While inhaling the fresh Muskwa air, swing your arms like propellers. If you begin to take off, it's about time you stopped and had some breakfast.

### BUY BONDS

Ms Agnes Scheck, Fort St John, provided copies of the first newspaper Anonymous, later called Polaris, that was produced at Mile 308 where the hospital was located. She was one of the nurses stationed there in 1943. This is a selection from them.

# HIPOLARIS

Vol 3, No 2

Issues Weekly  
Muskwa B.C.

September 30, 1943  
Unofficial & Free

## Over the Backyard Fence

A ring appears upon her hand one day,  
But soon it up't and went away --  
Where? Why? We do not know.  
But our Dorothy Dix should find out pronto!

\*\*\*\*\*

Father Levaque, local padre, has completed the construction of a Chapel at Mile 8

\*\*\*\*\*

Congratulations to the "Muskeg" and its chawning editor, Mr Hutles, at Mile 85. However, if its fuedin' you want, Bub, we have a surplus of nasty adjectives, which we have for that purpose. See Bub

## Guest Artist

Ruth Reikie - "I'm a foreign correspondent for the Northern Lights, and I cannot and will not have any dealings with Polaris".

P.S. "I also think that the camp here at Mile 8 is the nicest camp that I have seen."

Greetings! - and the run of the joint - to our new representative of the weaker sex (?), Miss Jeanne Paquette.

\*\*\*\*\*

Nick and Laddie, Professional Photographers - Still work, priced reasonably. Blackouts, a speciality, enlargement - a novelty

\*\*\*\*\*

In spite of many requests it was decided not to publish the organization of the staff at this time. The decision was reached as a matter of policy, so as not to create disunity in the camp. Your contributions and suggestions will always receive our best consideration. Please drop them in to the box placed in the post office shortly.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Kehr General Hospital

On October 3rd 1942, the first medical counsel arrived at Mile 8 Camp in the person of Dr Kelly. He set up transitory clinical quarters in a tent. But by December 10, he had organized a temporary hospital in the Soil Laboratory. From this building, Dr Kelly, assisted by Nurse Carter and McCree, administered to the medical need of the Mile 8 townspeople and tourists.

Meanwhile, plans were laid for the erection of a general hospital upon which work was commenced late in December. In February, the kitchen

range arrived and actual construction of the hospital around the range was started at once. After considerable progress had been made, it was discovered that the range was originally destined for the P.R.A. kitchen, too late for retrieval and removal to its right location.

By April 20, the building of the Kehr General Hospital was sufficiently advanced so the medical staff could move in. By this time, Nurse Smith had replace Nurse Carter, who moved to the dispensary at Mile 210-N. The X-ray machine was put in operation on May 10, 1943. On June 2, the first operation was performed by Lt. Col Carnes.

Since the first surgery, progress has been fairly rapid, new medical equipment being installed almost daily. The average number of patients is 32, and soon there will be accommodation for 52. In addition, complete dental service is available, under the supervision of Dr Buccello.

It is interesting to know how the hospital received its name. Last January, Captain Kehr, Sanitary Engineer, was flying to Vancouver to join his family, and the plane was lost. In his honour, the Kehr General Hospital was named.

## Hosepistol News or What De We Kehr!

A big influx of feminine pulchritude has caused stir around the hospital. 10 patients have suffered relapses, and temperatures have gone soaring. Two Canadian Red Cross V.A.D. nurses, Miss Minnie Sparling and Mrs. Knox, and Miss Murray, former nurses aid at St. Joseph Hospital in Dawson Creek, have supplemented the overworked staff at Kehr General. It is understood that Miss Murray was slated for Mile 213 but due to the fervent pleas of Mr. Hunt, she may be retained at Mile 8. Miss Jawelson, Chief Nurse at Whitehorse, is taking over Nurse Schraefel's duties during Miss Shraefel's illness. Our own Head Nurse has been taking the count the past week or so, but is expected to be back in there pitching soon. Nurse Sloan, accompanied by Dr Carnes and Captain "Sure Shot" Sloan, was flown to Edmonton, Wednesday evening, where Annie will visit with her parents while convalescing from her recent appendectomy.

In the interim, Mile 8 Muskwa Mooses (or is it mess?) can relax and roam the wilds in peace. "Marvin" the marauding moose, has been having all kinds of adventures, getting his picture taken with all kinds of disreputable characters. The last place "Marvin" was seen strapped in the dental chair in Dr. "Moose Molar Mauler" Buccello's office. Our good Captain was just injecting novocaine into Marvin's gums! and when he looked in Marvin's mouth, he was heard to exclaim "Geez... it ain't got no back teeth!" Then, amidst repeated injections of novocaine and repeated "Now this isn't going to hurt", this de-to other de luxe demolarized our pet-mooses.

We notice diapers on the line at Kehr General, heralding the hospital's second blessed event. Elizabeth Sime, days old daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Hume Sime of Fort Liard, is the new darling of doctors, nurses and patients alike.

"Winterizing" of our buildings is still incomplete, but, we expect some action as soon as our beloved camp manager gets tired of sailing his boats on the water tanks behind camp.

And that's it!

# The Old Alaska Highway

Bud Hosker. Fort St. John, B. C.

I was lounging around our campsite while sipping a can of beer  
Another traveller had sauntered by in this friendly atmosphere  
We were camped on Tetsa River mile three-eighty to be exact  
This travellers opening comments had brought old memories back

We were on the Alaska Highway and the year was eighty-nine  
Now forty-seven years had past since construction of this line  
I've been here since it first began and my Dad hauled many a load  
Now these words caught my attention  
"Its a narrow winding road"

"Our roads are paved and have six lanes" our caller soon relates  
This is the first I've been this way  
I'm from the Western States  
Well grab a stool and sit right down as I'd thought this road estranged  
I have lived here all my life and I'll tell how the road has changed

I related back to Dawson Creek where the road had first began  
And the river of Kiskatinaw which a wooden bridge did span  
Steep and narrow with falling rock many a boulder to be swerved with access restricted at the bottom so the bridge had to be curved

The next big change was at the Peace where your brakes would get a test  
They cut the grade and all sharp corners and straightened out the rest  
Then a bridge replaced the ferry all waiting in line elapsed  
But they had to build a second time when the original one collapsed

Many curves would still be straightened many years it still would take To eliminate the stifling dust and be paved to Charlie Lake and slowly over many years some streams would be diverted

The road rebuilt through muskeg swamps that previously had been skirted

Earth moving equipment was put to use to lower steep high ridges Chemicals used to curb the dust and they replaced the Bailey bridges The narrow strips were widened out the low grades they would fill At mile one-forty-seven they would bypass suicide hill

Another spot they carved right down was at mile one-twenty-eight No sharp and steep blind corners where many trucks had met there fate

The Sikanni Chief has all new grade the corners now are tame The danger spots have been removed but use caution just the same

Continue on to the hills of Trutch the second highest on the highway You'd often encounter dense damp cloud and swear you were in a fly-way

The road was narrow, curved and steep which made many a motorist delay This stretch can now be drove with ease as you follow the Minaker valley

The crookedest stretch was yet to come and it slowed the traffic flow I believe they followed a wandering moose that didn't know where to go You'd often see your own tail lights while travelling this winding track You knew you were driving forward but would swear you were coming back

Some say it was built in the dead of night and the cat skinner fell asleep In reality they were avoiding swamps and bogs that were quite deep From two-forty-five to Fort Nelson the roads now elevated This wicked stretch off to the west

has now been eliminated

The only section built half straight was at mile sixty-seven It only went for about four miles when orders to turn were given Now four straight miles was a rarity well above the highways norm So they narrowed it up and made it rough so the standards would conform

Another aspect lost with time old timers had always related A mile post was posted every mile and all the stops were mileage stated You'll note I've referred to mileages its a habit I just can't shake You always knew just where you were and I remember every stake

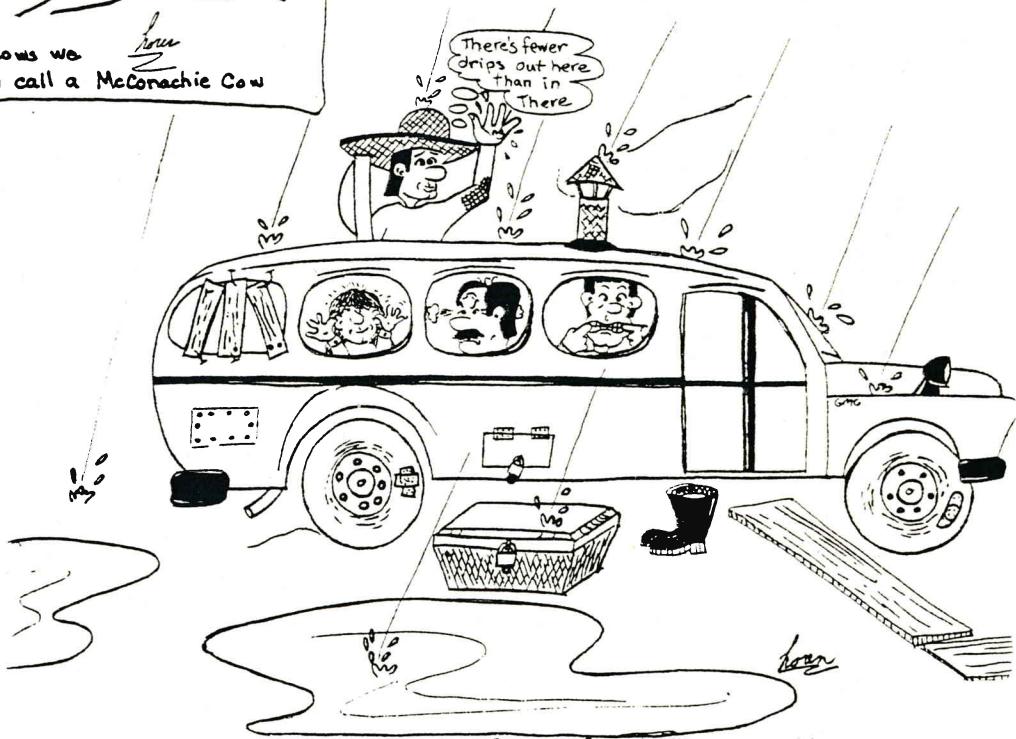
Like they didn't say Pink Mountain then they said one-forty-seven Or you didn't hunt at Prophet River you hunted at two-eleven There was only one official change all along the highways run The place they called Blueberry is now named Won-o-won

Now you say its a narrow winding road and I guess I agree that's so But its not as bad as it was before if you'd seen it years ago I was reminiscing while driving here and the way it oust to be I just think back to yesteryears Now, its wide and straight to me

Sharp corners, dust and flying stones was every drivers dread (I travelled the Alaska Highway- and lived) many bumper stickers read I do believe if you travel now to Alaska you'll arrive The percentages are more favorable and most travellers will survive



We conclude with a glimpse of pioneer agriculture, depicted in an amusing way by, Loren Sadlier, a young teenager who has brought his special talents to show the life and problems faced by pioneer farmers building a future in the McConachie Creek subdivision, near Fort Nelson.



Life at McConachie Creek for these fortunate farmers started in a bus

## ORIGINAL FILM OF ALASKA HIGHWAY AVAILABLE ON VIDEO

Mrs Z.H Duffy, Alaska, sent a copy of the video of the Alaska Highway made during construction, after reading about this project in the Whitehorse Star. She is willing to sell copies of the video. If you are interested in obtaining a copy you can call 774-6362 and speak to Verna Sellors.



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