

EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF S/SGT. ED HILL

Hazelton to Cape Caution

THE FORWARD

"This story will take the reader 1,000 miles zig zagging down the British Columbia coast but it will take you much further in emotional terms. I still can't talk of the Journey without becoming emotional. I still don't know if I have the words to properly convey the story. My attempt here will be a start.

On completing the Journey, some 2 or 3 days later, I had a woman somewhere ask me "What's next?" I had just told her some of the experiences I had had over the past month. My reply to her was "I guess I have to go back to the real world now!". She responded by saying "How do you know that wasn't the real world?" I was stopped in my tracks. What a wonderful thought. I hope that was the real world, that July of 1997. If that was the real world, if that is the place we are aiming for, what a lofty goal. It is a world of hard, rewarding work. It is a world of extreme elements, but it is also a world of intense emotion, honesty and friendship. It is a world of tolerance and strife but it has a foundation of a common goal, a goal of trying to understand each other. It was a world I'll try to visit again. I will predict here that Journeys '97 will some day be looked at as a turning point in Canadian History, a point when we, as society, began to change. Already we are being invited to talk to the native community, through Elijah Harper, to tell of what we achieved and how we did it. I know this is just a beginning. Already new Journeys are being discussed. Journeys '97 is a first, but certainly not a last. I have a difficult job here. In telling my story, one of 80 who were on the Journey, I want to leave you with some sense of what we saw and felt. I want to leave you with a desire to look for a similar experience.

Welcome reader. Welcome to Journeys '97. Welcome to "...the real world."

Hazelton To Terrace

The jet boat was in the middle of the river. The Skeena flows very fast and as such the jet boat had to push hard to maintain its position. It threw a rooster tail of perhaps 6 feet and was very evident in its efforts to maintain a position such that it could see all of us on shore and be prepared for the canoes when they left. Roy's canoe shoved in first to a roar from the crowd and pullers. He had the canoe adjust the trim in the quiet back eddy then, again to the cheer of the crowd he turned the canoe to ferry out to the centre of the river. The jet boat had moved upstream out of our sight and hearing. We were immersed in the moment. The canoe quickly made its way to the centre of the river and sat there with the pullers merely pulling hard enough to maintain position.

They didn't have to pull that hard it was very evident. The crowd ooo'd in awe of the

beauty and power of the image itself. That beautiful black canoe cut such a line and it stood strongly where only minutes ago a raging motor had roared to maintain the same position. We all knew right at that moment that these vessels were the right ones for the job.

Chris's canoe was next to leave and once he had adjusted the trim of the vessel and saluted the crowd he too made his way quickly to the centre of the river. The two canoes worked quietly together in their stately dance. It looked so easy. So beautiful.

Back to shore. Our boat, I call it our boat, left the shore to yet another cheer. Trim adjusted it pulled from the back eddy and made its way silently to the other two. There they were in perfect profile. The sun, the morning, the people. I quickly called to all the pullers to assemble to the downstream side of the crowd. All of us in the yellow jackets, together on the shore, to cheer them on their way. It would present a unified picture for them, and us all. It would look right. I doubt those in the canoe ever saw us. They must have been so high. I could barely see the scene through my tears welling up.

The three canoes sat for at least a minute. They faced upstream and were a picture to behold. A still picture. Then the Journey truly began. Like three jet planes in formation they began their show. Roy's canoe was first, at the far side to us. Roy pried the stern and the bow drew left. The bow of the canoe cut across the swift current and the canoe immediately peeled left. The remaining canoes still stood quietly facing upstream but Roy's was now speeding downstream. We could hear them screaming with delight and energy. The crowd yelled in response. Next Chris's canoe peeled away in perfect synchronization and followed Roy's. Another cheer from the pullers and another from the shore. Our canoe was left alone, but not for more than 5 seconds. Now it turned its bow to the power of the river and now it too was speeding downstream to a blend of cheers and tears from the crowd. All were taken with the beauty and power of the moment. It was over. The three canoes quickly turned into small silhouettes on the bright river reflecting the morning sun. They became a perfect painting for a few seconds and then they were gone. They rounded the corner in silence and the river was again alone with us. The crowd immediately turned and started to leave. We all had jobs to do, us pullers, and I turned to leave.

.....Later that day at Kitwanga "I donned my helmet, arm bands, gloves and boots. I was ready. There under the shady protection of the trees on the shore I found myself calming. I was slowing everything down. I was getting myself into control. I wanted to savor every second of this event. This was MY beginning. I wasn't excited. I was focused. Every sense was working. I smelled the smudge that was burning in a ceremony. I listened intently to the songs, chants and words being spoken by the native people. I was aware of the color of the moment and I heard the words "OK, lets lift her in.". I took the gunnel where I stood and I lifted "our" canoe. Once the bow hit the water we set the vessel down and began the smooth slide into the waiting river. Already I could feel its pull trying to steal our canoe from our grip. I got into my seat, made adjustments, got comfortable and looked up through my teary eyes. Here it was. I was there looking down at myself. What a moment. I had someone beside me, I think it was

Cliff. I told him to think about this, to remember the moment. It would be fleeting. Here one second, gone the next. I practiced what I preached and I can still put myself there under the shade of the shore trees at Kitwanga. I can still feel my relaxed anticipation of what was to come as we sat quietly in the back eddy. We were facing upstream waiting for the others. I was unaware of the crowd. I was alone. This beginning was mine.

"Paddles up!" John called the command and I choked at the emotion. What a moment. It was quick and fleeting. I had work to do. I raised my paddle ready to work.

"Take her away!" and my paddle dipped the water of the mighty Skeena. I pulled a shallow easy stroke and the canoe moved. I moved. The Journey began.

My paddle that day would consist of only a few very enjoyable hours. As we drifted down the river we couldn't enjoy the luxury of allowing the river to do all the work. On such a fast flowing river, if you allow the water to take you you could end up in parts of the river you don't want to be in. Chris, our river expert, had done a great job of looking ahead. We followed him as we approached narrow portions of the river. His canoe led us past swirls and boils and down rapids and white water. Never did I feel in danger or threatened. The Skeena river at this portion is a brown confusion of water movement. I had figured that to pull a canoe downstream would be an easy task when just the opposite is true.

At any time you can be pulling happily along only to have a boil show up in front of you. Immediately the canoe requires power and full speed ahead. That's our job, in the engine room. Depending where you are at any given time your paddle may grab "heavy water". Heavy water is water that is moving against your paddle faster than the normal flow of the river. It may be caused by a boil or a whirlpool. At such time your muscles are surprised by the immediate extra demand. At other times just the opposite will happen. Your paddle will be deep into the water but it will pull nothing. The water is moving with the paddle or even moving faster than the paddle. This confusion in the pulling stroke is very different on the river than most of the time on the ocean. It keeps your attention.

As we travel down the river I am aware of my senses. The scenery, in retrospect, passes all too fast. Snow capped mountains sit in judgement as we pass river mouths and valleys. We are a talkative bunch, all testing muscles that have been training for months. My shoulders are in pain, not from the pulling but rather from the tight wet suit. The restriction brings on pain almost immediately, as will the red serge in the future pulls. That pain passes within half an hour and I am able to enjoy the moments as they pass.

I'll never forget my first encounter on the river with an audience. As we quietly pulled downstream I could hear a drum I thought. A drum on the breeze. It disappeared but then came back on the next breeze even stronger. I began to listen to my imagination and found that the sound was in fact real. Where could a drum be coming from? When we had left Kitwanga we had almost immediately ended up in wilderness. The

drumming was now very distinct and I could see its origin. There, high on the shore to my left, "river left" they call it simply because you always refer to the river from a perspective of looking downstream, there was a native man in a blanket. He was surrounded by forest, no hint of a home or trail, he was just there in the wilderness. He was drumming as we passed and now I could hear his voice. He was singing and dancing in celebration of our Journey. It was like watching one of those Omni Max movies when someone passes left or right and you can hear the sound go with them. We saluted him with paddles held high then went back to our business. I could still hear his drum as we rounded the next bend. His image and voice there on that first day will remain with me for a long time.

Terrace to Prince Rupert

"As we pulled down the Skeena we raced with Roy's canoe, our first race of many on the Journey. Skookum Kalitan always liked to think it had the fastest crew in a race....."As they came pulling up behind us to our left we all agreed that we would quietly increase our pull, simply to stay a bit ahead of him. We did that and they had to pull harder to keep catching us. As they did, we'd pull just a little harder, so would they. What happened was inevitable. Roy ended up racing. He was yelling at his crew to pull harder and he was yelling out a pace. From our canoe we were pulling quietly until it became evident that the race was on. Then we started yelling and pulling. We exploded with power. Dave Klassen and I have been in competition together for years having curled together many times. I knew what to expect from him. Matt Vickers too is a determined man, possessing the same blood as his brother Roy. Cliff, John's brother in law, is a fit and determined marathon runner. I felt all of their determination as we lifted out of the water. We would pull ahead of Roy and would actually be creating separation between our two vessels, then we'd ease off. All the while Roy would be pushing his crew and yelling louder and louder. We'd wait for them to almost catch us and we'd explode again. With a gap again established we'd ease off and Roy would keep pushing his crew. We tired them out and called it off when we realized that he'd push them to the point of exhaustion or injury. We must have raced full out for over 2 miles. It was energizing and exhilarating and it bonded our crew. We were the fastest and we knew it. We would prove that a few times too over the Journey.

Prince Rupert and Port Simpson

....."Seven eagles were immediately visible. They circled and soared over the canoes and as we approached the end of the breakwater they followed us silently. They were in the same rhythm as we were. We were a part of their rhythm.

As we pulled through the water I was aware of our surroundings. I appreciated the moment. Already I was getting better at doing that. I had heeded the words of an elder when he told us that while the goal was important, the Journey was equally important. We were all told to be sure to savor the Journey as it happens. I was doing that as I listened to the paddles gulping the water. I was doing that as I watched the eagles and felt the air coolly touch my face. I was doing that as I heard the drums. Drums? I

snapped out of my hypnotic state. Had I heard drums. I couldn't hear them now and I asked Dave beside me. Did you hear the drums? He hadn't. Well I had.

We paddled a short distance further and I heard them again as a breeze from shore touched the canoe. "There they are again! Can you hear them?". He couldn't. Now I was straining to hear the drums. I knew they were there. And now Dave and the others could hear them. As we approached the open end of the breakwater everyone could hear them. They were still somewhat distant but we could all hear them. There were obviously more people waiting for us than just those few people we had seen on the dock. It wasn't just a few drums we were hearing, we were hearing DRUMS! It became louder and louder the closer we came to the end of the breakwater. We paddled on. Our rhythm was now a part of the eagles' lofty dance and the drums. We were all in this together in a perfect synchronization. We paddled on and John at the helm turned us around the breakwater. We could now see the ends of several fingers of docks, and the drumming became louder. Then, there they were. At least 100 drummers in full, colorful regalia, were waiting for us, and they were drumming. The sound we had heard on our approach was now hitting us. Not only could I hear the drums, I could actually feel the drums. They pounded at my chest, my lungs and my heart. The drums. The songs. The cheering. The power of it all. I didn't get to see much for the next few minutes. I had to trust the helmsman as we paddled in the last few feet. My eyes were completely welled with tears of pride, joy, wonder and appreciation.

We were at the dock. We had been given permission to come ashore and my eyes began to clear. I could see hundreds of people, all in regalia. They were smiling, happy faces, young and old. Some were crying with emotion, obviously even surpassing mine. What a moment in my life. What a moment in the life of the RCMP. What a moment in history.

The songs, welcomes and joy were overwhelming. We stood on the dock and followed as we were guided up the gangway to the land of Port Simpson. Ahead of us went drummers, dancers and singers. We, in our red serges, regalia and yellow coats followed in a state of awe. Behind us came more drummers, singers and dancers. The dirt street was lined with smiling villagers, most in regalia, all welcoming us. We walked for at least half a mile to a beautiful new hall in a parade of enthusiasm and energy. We could feel, all of us, just how special and significant this was. I remember Chris Cooper just looking at me and shaking his head in awe and disbelief. He has paddled canoes all over the world and never has he been treated and greeted in such fine fashion.

Prince Rupert to Kitkatla

...What I saw stunned me. I looked around the hall and realized that all tables were similar. There in this simple village of poverty and basic needs was luxury. Our table was adorned with a hand made embroidery table cloth. Each setting was of matched fine china. The colorful, floral design of the china was bordered in gold, real gold. The utensils were all gold. The table looked like some fine Victorian setting. I looked around the hall and saw many shocked faces. We were all just realizing what we were seeing.

Each table was festooned with the finest settings imaginable. At each table was a woman who owned the settings. They were there in pride and in welcome. They had guests and they were greeting them appropriately. As we sat I looked around our table. I saw awe and gaping mouths. As we were to learn on this Journey, each place we visited would have its own special hallmark. Each would leave us with something that we could use as a touchstone of memory in the future. Those tables of Kitkatla will always be set before us in my mind.

Sitting across from me at the table was Dominique Dray. She was one of the paddlers whom I admired. She worked the bow and was always strong and consistent. I admired her devotion to the project, her determination and her abilities. As I looked at her I realized she was crying, no she was sobbing. The impact of this welcome had hit her hard, right between the eyes. For complete strangers to be welcomed in such a trusting and demonstrative way is foreign to us. The magic of the moment wasn't lost to her and she was determined to keep it. She kept her journal in a small notebook, a good tactic in that she got to keep it with her. Through her tears she was writing, writing of the moment and of the emotion. These people touched our hearts and in our case, at that table on the stage, it was a golden touch. Dominique and I will always remember the table setting at Kitkatla.

.....Perhaps one of the most quoted facts of this trip happened that night in Kitkatla. In that village of so few people they held a blanket dance. I was up in the balcony with Blaine and Henny Hagedorn as it happened and we sat in emotional awe. The enthusiasm and emotion on the floor below us was evident. The dance went on and on and the blanket kept filling with money. By the time they were done and the money had been counted, VisionQuest had had over \$10,000.00 dropped into that blanket. Then the chief counsellor took the floor and as the chief he called an emergency meeting. All the counsellors came forward and they had a huddle there in the center of the gym. When that brief meeting broke the chief announced that council would match the donations thus bringing the total to over \$20,000.00. The cheering, tears and emotion that spilled forth at that announcement was yet another everlasting memory of our Journey.

Kitkatla in the Rain

...."We had slept for three and a half hours at Sam Lewis's home and we awoke to rain. Not just any rain. It was the kind of rain that comes in under your coat. It was coming sideways. The wind was up. The sky was grey and it held no promise. We were in for a hell of a day of paddling.

I got up and packed my sleeping bag. Walking through the village I knew today would be a test of stamina and willpower. Wind, and tide were going to work against us. The rain wouldn't slow us down but its cold touch can cool even the most resolved of determined spirits. I made my way the 1/2 mile to the dock and left my sleeping bag on board the Toucan. There in the rain was Frank Camp.

Frank was sitting in his open Zodiac. He was soaked and had to be cold but he greeted me with a quick, warm and friendly good morning. I asked where the hell he had been and he told me he'd slept in his tent at the end of the dock. The wind, driving rain and severe conditions had been too much for his gear. He had been soaked and cold all night. He had been feet away from the Toucan, the Therapy and the Western Spirit but had not uttered a word of complaint or asked for help. He had committed to do this Journey in support and had committed to be prepared to take care of himself. This very tough and quiet man had just spent a horrible night alone and was cheerful and bright at his first greeting of the day. I learned lessons from more than just the native people on this Journey.

I talked to Greg Grant about Frank and his problem. From that day forward on the Journey Frank slept on the Therapy with Greg and George.

We ended up staying the night again in Kitkatla. The weather dictated that.

Kitkatla to Kitkatla Summer Site

...."It began to rain. It rained hard with wind pushing the water into every available crack or crease. We were actually bailing the canoe at times because of the accumulation of water. Our Navarro rain gear was close at hand and it was used well that day. We just kept paddling. Mark and Dave provided some much needed humor and energy and we just kept paddling. There was nobody on shore to cheer us. We just kept paddling. Our destination was a wilderness site, nobody would be waiting to greet us or drum us in. We just kept paddling. The cloud and fog hid a lot of what beauty surely surrounded us. We just kept paddling.

It was time for lunch. In spite of all our gear we were soaked. We were soaked either from water that had leaked into the gear or from the sweat that becomes trapped inside. There were no beaches as such so we found a slope of slippery rocks encrusted with barnacles. There we pulled our canoe up and took our bag lunches in under the cedars overhanging the high water mark. We each found the driest wet place to sit. I had eaten but half a sandwich when I felt a sudden chill come over me and as I looked around I saw others in obvious discomfort. Some were shivering visibly. This stop under such adverse conditions was hurting us. Hypothermia was quickly taking a bite at us. We had to act quickly or we'd be in trouble. Back into the canoe we charged. We had to get active again or we'd suffer the ill effects of the damp cold. We'd eat as we paddled. We had to keep going as long as it rained. We had to keep going until it was time for our relief to take over. In minutes we were all warm again, glad to be back in the canoe. We just kept paddling.

...."With Roy's canoe now at camp we began the final stages of moving people, supplies and gear from the boats moored in the bay to the wilderness campsite we had established. As people were being ferried in I would take the zodiac into the rocks then, to keep the nose on the rocks while they off loaded, I'd leave the motor in gear. The forward motion would keep the bow snug to the rocks and people could move about

surer of foot and much safer. At some point I was asked to perform another duty. Another team member took over the zodiac and I went ashore. I told him of what I was doing to get people ashore and he took over.

It was some time later when I was again down at the water's edge as the zodiac came in. Randy had a load of people to come in. He brought the boat into the rock and people started to off load. Matt Vickers was first off and he immediately turned back to the boat to help others off. He was standing on slippery rocks with one hand back to the rock and the other outstretched to help people off. Some had already left and another puller now attempted to disembark. He left the zodiac on the right side of the vessel and as he did his knee hit the throttle throwing it full force ahead. In effect he had throttled the zodiac from standing still to full speed. The vessel jumped ahead and caught Matt in the chest. It threw him back against the rocks and barnacles. The motor was immediately put out of gear but the damage had been done. Matt lay moaning partly in the water with his back painfully twisted and jammed into rock and sharp barnacle. This was serious.

Kitkatla Summer Site to Hartley Bay

After an evening of celebrating at Hartley Bay we finally got to go to be at a relatively early hour....."We were getting to bed before 1:00AM but had agreed, in our attempts to be on time, that we would get up at 3:00AM. We had a long way to go tomorrow and wanted to actually be on the water by 4:00AM. That was fine, except for the fact that Scotty Morrison was sleeping in the same gymnasium. His snoring kept most of us awake for most of the night. Thereafter Scotty slept in the "Snoreatorium", that is, any room apart from the rest of us. I'll always remember lying there listening to Scotty frustrated at not getting to sleep then hearing David Payne get up with his sleeping bag and slap across the gym floor looking for a more quiet spot. A few minutes later I could hear David again wandering and muttering to himself as he looked for quiet sanctuary. In spite of my frustration at not getting any sleep, I lay in my bag and laughed and laughed. In all I think I managed a half hour of sleep. Then the lights came on. It was time to paddle again and it was my turn.

Hartley Bay to Klemtu

....."Dave Klassen's back was killing him on this day I believe. When Dave had signed on with the Journey I had been instrumental in touting him to John as a most valued participant. Dave was proving to be every bit of that. I had called Dave back though and spoken to him about his back. Some 20 years ago he had severely injured it in a duty related accident, that's another book in itself and the reader would do well to ask Dave how he hurt his back should you ever have the opportunity, and it had given him trouble ever since. He has combated the pain of his back by working out ever since. Dave assured me, as his sponsor so to speak, that he would be there to paddle and not once would he complain or miss a minute of paddling. He is a man of his word.

On this day, one of the longest for Dave and me, as we would paddle for hours, he would pull long and hard with the bunch of us. For my part I prefer to pull for half an

hour or so then I up my pull pressure to 100% for a time, perhaps 20 or 40 strokes. I find that it energizes me and wakes me up. I had actually developed the ability to close my eyes and almost fall asleep while I was pulling. This would happen particularly after lunch when the doldrums of a meal and being fatigued on top of it would put me on the nod. When I would up my rate I'd do so without any fanfare or announcement. I'd just pull harder. Others would notice and just keep pulling at their own rate, but you could actually feel the canoe up and move quicker even from one puller doing more work. Matt and Lloyd Gauthier sat behind Dave and me. They'd pick up on my pressure change and they'd quietly join in. I think Cliff, two seats ahead would also pick up on this and join in. He is a marathon runner and right through our training he and I have enjoyed each other's drive and determination. Cliff, the silent type, was an untouted plus in our canoe. Dave too wouldn't be left behind. The five of us would quietly go about our business and the canoe would benefit. Ultimately we would work this up to sets of 100 pulls at 100% pressure. It felt so good, both physically and mentally, to be able to achieve that level of fitness and with so little sleep. Whenever any one of us decided to up the rate, the others would quietly support.

Dave, however, did so at a price. As we would get into the longer days he'd start to feel the pain. He'd never miss a stroke and we'd pull sometimes for hours without a break but when we'd "let her run" he'd slouch over in his seat and grimace in pain. Today would be one of those days. I noticed Dave was hurting but he still kept pulling for what would turn out to be the longest day of our pulling Journey. I'll always remember Dave for today. I always remember and respect him. An all star if there ever was one.

..."All three of us were rewarded with perhaps the most beautiful part of the Journey to date. We paddled up Princess Royal Channel with its sloping mountains and forests of greens that only the gods could mix on their pallets. I was wishing I had my good camera and the time to use it. I could see paintings everywhere. At one point we came past a mountain that had several waterfalls pouring directly into the ocean. They didn't just quietly join the ocean from back in the trees, rather they spilled from 30 and 40 feet up and pounded ceremoniously directly into the salt water. At one such waterfall we were able to paddle directly up to where the falls hit the water. We could have gone directly under it but the force would have filled the canoe or tipped it instantaneously. We did, however, pull right up beside it and cool ourselves in the generous spray that it provided. As we all three played in the natural beauty of it all a pod of Killer Whales was seen heading towards us. We sat quietly at the shore as they surfaced, sprayed a fan of steam and gulped another lung full of air. It was like seeing a Robert Bateman painting come alive. They approached close enough that we could hear their rhythmic breathing as they surfaced and sounded but then they were gone. They had been coming right at us and we had hoped for some real closeup shots. I missed my camera again.

Within a minute they surfaced again, this time to the other side of us. They had simply swum right under us and surfaced on the other side. They maintained their course and rhythmic routine. The last we saw of them was the distant plume of steam as they rounded a point on the shore and went on their way.

We awoke from this dream to the delighted hoots and hollers of everyone. Not only were our bodies refreshed and cooled by the mists of the waterfalls, our spirits had been energized and uplifted by the mists of the Killer Whales as they had plied their way past us on their daily business. I savored the moment, enjoyed the time and allowed my mind to relax in the serenity of it all. We drifted in silence for a time, all appreciating who we were, where we were....."Paddles up!". The command given, we had to snap out of it. It was time to work again. We pulled away from that special place. I never looked back. I want the experience to be as I now have it burned in my mind. A special moment on our Journey.

Klemtu to Bella Bella

As I was on a zodiac as support this day...."I went out to the other zodiac along as escort and there were my buddies Mark and Dave. We put the engines on dead slow and held each other's boat together. We motored with the canoes like that for some time. All three of us managed to lie back in the hot sun and just enjoy the place and time. It was a wonderfully lazy time of laughter and friendship. It was a time that memories are made of.

"Pssh"

What was that? I lifted my head and looked over my shoulder to see the back of a dolphin sliding below the surface right beside my boat. Its steamy breath still hung in the air. Then there was another one, and another. There was another and more. There must have been about 5 or 6 of them and they were there to play. They circled our two boats, surfacing and breathing and watching us. I think they were enjoying us as much as we were them. They made for the bow and even at our slow pace they played right at the bow of the two boats. They are so fast that any photographs merely show a splash and perhaps a few inches of fin. So smooth, sleek and graceful are they that when they surface and dive again they barely leave a ripple on the glass of the channel we are in. Then they were gone. They were making for the Therapy, some 1/2 mile away. We could see them circling Greg's boat for about 5 minutes and then they disappeared to where ever dolphins go when you can't see them. This was more than magic. It was a blessing. It was more than any of us could expect or hope for.

Bella Bella - a Day Off

I'd worked in Bella Bella with Joy and the kids from 1979 to 1981. I am adopted there by the late Maggie Windsor and my name is Klakleeleekla....."We all ended up at Uncle Don's for a good visit and when they all left I took the opportunity to go and visit my adopted brother, Marshal Windsor. Marshal lives just down on the next street from Don and he's bed ridden. Marshal is dying of something, I'm not sure what, but he was glad to see me. I shook his hand with no grip at all as he looked so frail. His upper arms were skinnier than my small wrists. He spoke of having a potlatch this coming winter but I'll be surprised if the potlatch isn't for him. Marshal hasn't got too long for this world.

We had a good visit there alone. His wife Evelyn was in Owikeeno and I'd end up seeing her a few days later. As I was about to leave Marshal reached over onto a table and picked up an eagle's feather, a dark one. He told me that he'd watched an eagle fly over his house the other day and lose this feather. It had drifted down and landed on his porch and he had retrieved it. Eagle feathers are treasured and significant gifts among the native community and that is how he regarded this "coincidence". There's that word again. Marshal told me that the eagle had left him this gift but he didn't know why. It had only been a couple of days ago and now he knew why. He was to give it to me as protection on my Journey. I accepted the feather with pride and kept it in my journal book for the rest of the Journey. Not only was it protecting me but I wanted to protect it from harm as well.

I now have a government permit to own the feather and I have had a scabbard put on it. It hangs proudly in my home and shall remain there as a testament of the friendship I found in Bella Bella.

As I left Marshal I promised that when I paddled out the next morning, as we came by the gap in the houses so I could see his window, I'd wave my paddle at him to say goodbye and thank you. Marshal assured me he'd be watching. I left knowing full well this would be the last time I'd lay eyes on my adoptive brother, but I'd always have the eagle's gift that Marshal gave me. I'll always be able to remember Marshal.

Liz and Don had a big supper prepared for everyone and then even more people showed up. I'd guess that they fed 30 people that evening. They just kept coming and going. The VisionQuest crew sure got word of where the great meal was and showed up in force. It was gratifying to see them enjoy the hospitality of our friends. As I'd walk through the village I'd see members of our crew just walking happily on their own all about the village. They'd only been there a day and already they felt completely at home. I know some of them will return to Bella Bella someday.

Bella Bella to Namu

At Namu, in the driving rain, we found refuge in a net loft building. The caretaker took pity on us and opened it....."Our bedroom was an empty net loft, the building where fishermen would store their nets in the off season. It was a big, dark warehouse with three tiers of wooden shelving along each wall and rows of shelves down the center of the building. There were wooden pallets stacked along the walls and there was no electricity. The floors were cement and the building was ours for the night. What a great place. It was dry! Everyone made for the Western Spirit and their gear. It would be first at the scene to get the best "bunks". Some made beds up on the shelves. Others made their bunk in stored pleasure boats found in the building and others simply used the floor. I found a dry spot on the floor and put two wooden pallets together. On top of that I put my inflated thermarest and set out my sleeping bag. On ropes hanging from the ceiling I hung wet clothes to dry and my flashlight I set at the head of my bed. Even now in the late afternoon it was dark in this windowless quarantine. That was home for the night and we had it set up by 5:00PM. There was time to explore.

After a long, wet day of pulling and unpacking, it's time for bed....."Bed time and there are lots of flashlights in the net loft. We have one sink and one toilet for the 80 of us and its a hundred yard walk down the boardwalk. After brushing my teeth and washing my face I make my way back through the rain and climb into my DRY sleeping bag. For the first time today since we got off the Toucan, I'm dry. Even with all that has happened today, even with all that is playing in the back of my mind, I sleep quickly. We got to bed at about 11:00PM and were to be up at 7:00AM. My night in the concentration camp was a comfortable one. "Stalag Namu" and the "Net Loft Hotel" provided a far better option than the surf, rain and wind at Quay Bay.

Namu to Owikeeno

It was still pouring hard, sideways, in the morning. We needed something to lift our spirits. I had brought along a tape of bagpipes that I'd used only once before to awaken everyone. Today would be the day for the second awakening....."The rain was still hard and sideways as I awoke. A few other alarms went off and even fewer people arose with them. I got up almost immediately and raced down to the Toucan. There I rummaged through the storage area on the top deck where I had hidden the tape deck. Finding it I carefully negotiated the slippery dock as I ran back through the rain to the Net Loft Hotel. In the darkness of the building I found my way back to my bed roll and I located my head lamp flashlight. Next I floundered through my small dry bag and I found it, my bagpipe tape. What a perfect, hollow and echoing place, I'd wake them all with the pipes again. There hadn't been too many opportunities over the past two weeks but this was surely one. With headlamp guiding the way I fired up the machine and began my morning march. The sound of the pipes echoed in the huge building. It carried from one end to the other. I didn't need to march anywhere for everyone to hear them, but I marched. I covered every area where they were sleeping and I got a response, not always pleasant, but I got a response and soon they were all up. Heads came up from every nook and cranny. Sleepy eyes peered out from even the third level of the shelving. Never had this place heard such a glorious noise. Gary Hanney was hearing these for the first time. He had heard of the bagpipe alarm clock but now for the first time he was witnessing them. He was up and with camera in seconds and got the entire march on tape. No matter what wise words I utter in any interview, no matter what significant thing that may happen on this Journey, they'll all take a back seat to that little piece of footage. No matter what production is done of this Journey, that pipe march summed up a lot of things. It really did speak, in visual terms, about the dedication, sacrifice, humor and hardships of the trip. The images would turn out to be dark and wet in appearance yet through it all there was laughter and fun. It was a good way to begin what would be perhaps the most powerful day of the entire Journey for many of us.

Back in rain gear for yet another day, we all mustered at the breakfast line. On board the Therapy George and Greg were making pancakes. They insisted I stop and visit, I hadn't seen them much on the Journey and had never ridden on their boat. They fed me hot cakes, toast and jam and coffee. No lineup for me this morning. Joy and the other cooks were struggling with making hot cakes under the cover of the overhang. The long

drippy lineup was being extremely patient but the process was slow. Thank god there was coffee waiting for all of them. When they got to the end of the lineup they were greeted by the hotcakes, bacon and ham and more coffee. It speaks loudly of the type of people generally in the group when you consider the conditions of the last two days and nobody was bitching. Greg and George, on seeing how slow the lineup was, started making hotcakes on board their vessel. Every few minutes one of them would run up from the boat and drop another plate full on the platter. These two really were a very positive influence on the entire group. During even the toughest of times they always presented smiling faces and cheery dispositions.

We've just left in the driving rain. We've been forced to tow our canoes a part of the way as weather and circumstance have put us behind schedule and the people of Owikeeno are waiting. Three days earlier the determined people of Bella Bella had said that they were sending a canoe to join with VisionQuest. I was proud of my home village but hadn't seen their canoe until this morning....."We had gone only about 7 or 8 miles towards Rivers Inlet, Owikeeno is found a long way up that inlet at the very end where the Whonnock River empties into the ocean, when we came across the Bella Bella canoe. They were pulling up the coast heading for Rivers Inlet. They had left separately from us the day before. We hadn't seen them leave and never even knew for sure that they had gone. We had no idea of their intentions as far as I knew. Their real dugout, as opposed to our fiberglass version, was much slower. Ours weighs about 450 lbs empty, theirs weighs almost a ton and a half. Their canoe is manned by mostly young men and a few young women. They had no support vessel with them. They had spent the night at Quay Bay and they were soaked. Their tents, just like ours, had leaked. They had no proper gear. No benevolent company had sponsored them. They were a hodge podge of dripping, cold and shaking humanity. In the heavy rain of the morning their canoe was filling with water. Their tattered tarp that covered their provisions was leaking and their provisions were sopping. Their provisions consisted of things like chips, ketchup, salt and a few cans of food. They had little, if any water, and perhaps a few cans of pop, but they were going to make it to Owikeeno. Cecil Hill knew the real danger they were in. They were not going to make it to Owikeeno. They were even now in the first stages of hypothermia and didn't even know it. They would have to come with us. There was no room on the Western Spirit but they would still have to come with us.

The Bella Bellas were in great spirits. They were determined to go on, saying that the Creator would take care of them. Their optimism and genuine smiles through all of this told us just how important, spiritual and significant this trip was to them. They had said that they were joining VisionQuest three nights ago in Bella Bella and they had meant it. We would see their smiling dispositions shine through for the remainder of the Journey. If we hadn't grasped just how important our Journey was before this, their beaming faces dripping with rain, looking up from that wet canoe, told us in no uncertain terms. This Journey is about important things and these people recognize that. They are willing to be a part of it at any cost and they are happy to follow and participate in any way they can. Reluctantly they came aboard and their canoe was towed with us the rest of the way to Owikeeno. Once on board and dried, once they had a hot chocolate or coffee in their bellies their smiles grew even larger. They were going to make their first goal,

Owikeeno. Whenever we felt sorry for ourselves in the future paddles all we had to do was look at the Bella Bellas at the end of the day. They'd be there with their smiles and their ton and a half canoe. What did we have to be sorry about. As I talked on board with one of the women I asked how they thought they'd have made it to Owikeeno under such conditions. They were cold, sick and far behind schedule when we had found them. Surely this was stretching it, that point of the Creator going to take care of them and all. Her reply? "We're dry and warm now, and we're going to make it. The creator did his part." We both laughed. She laughed a knowing laugh, I laughed an embarrassed laugh of knowing she was right.

The Whonnock River at Rivers Inlet would prove to be one of the most severe pulling tests of the entire journey....."The Whonnock River joins the lake at Owikeeno to the ocean. It is about 4 miles long. Its waters are glacial cold and silty at this time of year and it is powerful. It flows like a mini version of the Thompson River at full flood. Perhaps 300 yards wide at its widest, it focuses its energy as it rushes to the ocean. Power boats work overtime just to ply its current. We would have a mile and a quarter of intense, dangerous pulling to make our way up the torrent. I knew what to expect, but I wasn't telling John. He would later admit that he hadn't realized what the river was like or perhaps he wouldn't have asked me to do this pull. While I had helmed the canoe before in practice, I had done so only in False Creek. Those calm, protected waters were no comparison to the Whonnock River. I had worked the Thompson River in practice only as a puller. From that seat I could feel the tenacious pull of the swirls and eddies of the river. From that seat I could feel the very real danger of such a place. From that seat I could observe the tactics of the helmsman and I could hear their instructions. Little did I know way back then that that would be my training. From theory to execution. A baptism of fire, or water I suppose. I was to helm the canoe up the Whonnock to greet my adopted family at Owikeeno. You bet I was ready. My determination, confidence and anticipation outweighed my fear and doubt.

"Yes, John! I'll do it. Thankyou for asking me."

I'd spend the rest of the day in deep anticipation. I spoke none of this to anyone. The Whonnock River was mine.

As we towed to the end of Rivers Inlet we veered to the left. There is a government wharf there sufficient to allow our canoes to stage and be loaded. All of us changed into red serge and regalia and Dwayne Walkus, Ted's brother came to us. He'd driven down the road from the village and would help to lead us in. No canoe in memory had come up the river. What had been done 80 or a hundred years ago had been lost to these people, but Dwayne knew the river and its personality. He could at least assist in providing local knowledge. Dwayne would situate himself in the bow of Roy's canoe. For the first and only time on the Journey, we wore life jackets over our serges on an approach to a village. The danger here was very real. Should a canoe tip in that river with our members in red serge, working blue pants and oxford shoes, there would be no time to frantically grope for flotation. The results would be swift and final. The occupants and contents of the canoes would be tossed and pulled every which way and quickly

dispersed downstream. Surely lives would be lost with no life vests on. There was no question or dispute. Everyone wore their PFD.

With the exception of Roy, Craig Peterson who would sit directly in front of me in the canoe that day, John Farrell, Dwayne and I, nobody in our three canoes had ever seen the Whonnock River before. They were wearing life vests because they had been told. The Bella Bella canoe, which followed us, probably held some who had seen the river but even most of them wouldn't know what they were in for.

Roy's canoe went first, then Chris and then ours. I told Chris I'd go where ever his ass went. While Roy was an ocean expert, far superior to anyone else in our canoes, Chris was the river expert. I'd keep the stern of this canoe in focus over the next 3/4 of an hour. Behind me followed the Bella Bella canoe. I told their skipper to just follow my lead. He didn't need to know that this was a first for me, that would have only complicated this already precarious situation. I'd just follow Chris, the expert, and they'd follow me. We'd just make it work.

Our procession pulled out from the dock and slowly passed the support vessels hovering in the bay. We headed close to the shore towards the opposite side of the head of the inlet. The shore is lined here with reeds and grasses in the shallows. Those reeds come to a bit of a point at close to the centre of the inlet. We rounded that point in the dark ocean waters and almost immediately the color of the water changed. The river water coming in is silted heavily so the water started becoming milky in color. On the ocean inlet we had felt no resistance but now as we turned left and followed the shore we could feel some resistance as the river flow, even out here, was significant. I was sweating in my serge, not just from the heat or the work I was doing at the helm, but also from the anticipation. We were being followed by a skiff and other smaller boats. On board were members of our group with their cameras and there was media. We were being taped for news and documentary purposes. Wouldn't a spill make great footage! I was determined that that footage would not be of the red coats in Skookum Kalitan.

I felt for the pullers in our canoe as we started to pull upstream. Those tight coats with life jackets cinched tight over them were so restrictive. We were going to need 100% here and we were already starting with 2 strikes against us. The pulling intensified as we followed Chris into the mouth of the river. What was that? Movement on my left. Others saw it too and yelled. The movement was a dark mound in the reeds and grasses, and then it stood. A grizzly bear that had been grazing in the estuary had been disturbed by our approach. He stood, arms outstretched, and gave a disgruntled look, first right then left. With little regard he dropped to all fours and his back could be seen sauntering back into the cool protection on the coastal forest. We pulled on a few more strokes and then another bear, this one darker, almost black, jogged into the cover. It was an exciting moment for all of us, little did I know how significant. Later talks with Roy and we'd decide that the "Owikeeno Welcome" would be the subject of the painting we would do together to commemorate this Journey.

Now the jostle of the river was becoming more serious. At the helm I couldn't take my eye off the bow. One second of distraction and the bow was caught by the force of the river and it would turn. With every stroke the river pushed back harder. I yelled for more power from the pullers and they responded. They knew, they could feel, the energy of the river. Chris's canoe was right there in front of us, where he went I went. Then he started to pull away on us. He was going more than twice as fast as we were up the shore. He had found a back eddy. A back eddy is formed when the river flow is diverted by an obstruction on the bank of the river. The water flows quickly past the point of land, the rock, or whatever the obstruction is, and then, to fill the gap behind it the water must turn and flow back upstream for a time along the shore. Eventually that water flowing upstream comes to the obstruction and is turned back out into the main flow of the river. It is these back eddies that we look for to manage such powerful water. We have to use the force of the river to our advantage.

Chris had found a back eddy and was pulling away on us. My pullers upped the power, they could see the reward ahead. We broke into the back eddy and we were actually being pulled upstream by the very river we were fighting. We caught up to Chris and we stopped paddling for a rest. It is amazing to sit in a canoe in an angry river and not paddle. There at your right side the river is passing you in a rage but under your canoe the water is calm. Only inches separate you from being swept downstream. Roy had made his way across the river already. I hadn't really seen him go as I was concentrating on my own problems. Now Chris called out his command and his canoe ventured out into the flow of the river. He "ferried" across like it was easy. His pullers worked hard but the effect was a just reward for their work.

A "ferry" is accomplished by angling your canoe into the swift flow such that the canoe acts almost like an airplane wing. The flow of the river pushes hard on the upstream side of the canoe, however, the downstream side has less water hitting it. This actually creates a high pressure zone on the upstream side and a low pressure zone on the downstream side of the canoe. As long as you are generating forward motion, the power of that motion and the power of the river work together and you actually shoot across the river in a surprisingly quick fashion. I have experienced this as a puller, now for the first time, I'll experience it as a helmsman. Remember what Chris has said "The angle is all important. Be sure you get the right angle!

As I yell for the crew to pull hard they respond and the bow peeks past the small point and the force of the river slams us hard. We are now full into the anger of the Whonnock and we are facing straight across the river, there is no angle. We are not sucking across the river like Chris had done. We are at right angles to the force of the flow of the river, a very dangerous position to be in, and we are going downstream fast.

"What the hell is the "right angle?" Those words are being screamed in my head.

"Come on guys. Give it! Hard!" I'm yelling out loud at the top of my lungs.

The shore is going past too fast. The back eddy on the other shore has Roy and Chris

in it. They are resting watching us speed downstream. I look quickly downstream to see what awaits me. All I see is swirling water and we're gaining speed, not going across the river, rather going downstream.

"Come on you bastards, PULL! - PULL! - PULL!" I'm screaming a cadence and my throat hurts.

I am prying on my stern trying to bring the bow upstream and it seems to be responding. The crew is working hard. The canoe starts to move across stream.

"Harder! PULL!"

I can hear them straining and pulling. The water of the river with its heavy silt is scratching at the bottom of the canoe. The fight is real. The winner can't be the river.

The bow broke into the last few feet of the back eddy and we were into calmer water. Now we had to pull hard just to get back to the others. We had lost a hundred yards in seconds. The group pulled against this milder current and we gained back the lost water. As we pulled in behind Chris he immediately pulled out and began his ferry across. I watched his angle and tried to learn. If only I had had some practice on the Thompson. We were tucked right in against the shore. The river afforded only inches of calm water in this back eddy so we actually had trees and branches in our face. This time I asked the bow people to help in drawing the bow into the angle. I realised I couldn't do this on my own. I don't remember who they were but this was their first time in the bow on a river like this too.

"Take her away!"

The river grabbed the bow in angry determination. The bow drew hard and I pried hard. The crew pulled hard. We were responding to the river with fearful determination of our own.

What a difference. We must have the right angle. We were actually moving upstream as we went. Roy and Chris were waiting for us and we were actually going to come in above them. I actually had to ease off on the pry to allow us to come in below them. We had it. We had found the angle. We had harnessed the power of the river and taken charge. We crossed the river in perhaps 2 minutes of hard pulling but it felt right. The back eddy that awaited us was a big and calm one. As we broke into it and pointed our bow upstream our entire crew cheered. They could feel that we had conquered. We knew what we were doing now. We'd beat the river. I hope you guys on the boats got that on tape. This stuff is fun. We turned for the first time on the river and cheered the Bella Bella canoe on to join us. This was the first time since we had hit the river that I had even thought of them. As I looked back at the scared and determined faces in their canoe I realized even more what we had just gone through. In watching them fight the battle of the crossing it was like watching a slow motion replay of our run. They pulled in behind us and all slumped in a moment of recuperation and relief. We weren't the only

ones feeling the stress of this river run. The toughest was yet to come.

Where was the village? I knew it was just about a mile and quarter up the river, but it felt like we'd come 5 miles. The village, on our left as we go up the river, would be just around that next bend up ahead. Roy was already gone and out of sight. What we saw next gave me concern. There was no back eddy to ply. We were going to have to put our nose out into the full force of the river and simply pull with brute strength against the full force of the river. That would have to be for about 350 yards. The river hissed and churned in anticipation of getting another shot at us. I could see her flex her muscles as the swirls and boils rippled up. This was going to be a battle. Though I was at the helm and willing to do that job, I really wished I was pulling. It was no shirking of responsibility, I just wanted to challenge the river with my pulling. Chris was gone. He and his crew round the corner and we were next in the line of challengers. I didn't see any red coats floating by, no debris from the other canoes so they must have made it. We're next. The river boiled and churned. It coiled, preparing to deliver a knockout blow.

"Give her shit!" My throat hurt again as I yelled above the white noise of the river all around us.

The canoe jumped forward in the back eddy and the nose poked into the full force of the river. I fought to bring the bow upstream. Our course would have to take us upstream right along the shore, straight into the fury and teeth of the river. I pried hard but got nowhere. The team was pulling, groaning, straining and yelling at each other. The first blow of this battle with the river, was delivered by the Whonnock. The bow of our canoe turned downstream and we were heading for the ocean. Our crew had had enough experience and training to know to lean right, otherwise we would have been in a capsize position. At least we had done that right. I was mad at the opponent and I was embarrassed. I quickly steered us into the back eddy but now we were facing downstream, the wrong way. The cameras rolled on. My crew slumped in either fatigue or sagging spirits. They weren't pleased with the results of round one either.

Luckily the back eddy was big enough to allow us to back the canoe into some reeds and shallow water. In attempting to bring the bow upstream though we managed to find water that was very shallow. Now we were high centered. Now the canoe was susceptible to any wrong move and it would tip. We shuffled and jockeyed, pried and pulled and managed to get free without our bow touching the flow of the river. Had it even poked into the river a few inches we would have all be thrown overboard. Now we were facing the right way again. Again we pulled to the top of the back eddy and rested for a minute. The river surged and tugged inches away from our gunnels. It was ready for round two. I asked the bow to be sure to draw the bow upstream this time rather than pull. All of the others would pull but the bow's job was to ensure that we pointed directly into the teeth of the flow.

"Let's do it!" I yelled.

We jumped ahead in the back eddy and I aimed the bow very close to the point. The

river was waiting. It punched hard but this time we responded as a team. The pullers pulled and the bow drew and I pried. We found ourselves in the full force of the river now but we were facing directly into its raging and angry face.

"PULL! - PULL! - PULL!" My throat was coarse and raw.

The river retaliated in surges and waves. Our canoe inched forward.

"Harder you bastards. PULL!"

Everyone was leaning into the job. The strain was visible. The team pulled and the canoe inched. The shore came by us in increments and every so often the river won, we'd drop back a few inches.

Now we could see the people of the village. Roy and Chris were already relaxed in a back eddy waiting for us. The sound of the river now took a back seat to the sound of the cheering people on shore. The other canoes were yelling and screaming encouragement. I was yelling orders intended to enrage my pullers. I wanted them mad and I wanted that anger to be focused at the river. We inched and pulled and earned every drop of water that passed under us.

We grappled just past the others and I was able to pry the bow into the calm water of the back eddy created by docks and logs. We were in calm water and I didn't need to tell the crew to stop. They slumped in their seats. Through eyes welled with tears I could see their fatigue.

"GREAT JOB! GOOD PULL! WHAT A CREW" Someone yelled.

It was me, but my voice was not one I recognized. I had done something to my chords on the way upstream. My voice had just about recovered from my yelling of encouragement at Kitsumkalum but now I had really done it. Over the 1/2 hour of intense work done by my crew, I had blown it again. I would never get my voice back until 2 weeks after the Journey had ended. The battle with the Whonnock River had taken my voice but that was all. The proud victory belonged to my crew.

Owikeeno Potlatch

At Owikeeno Roy Vickers and I stayed back for a day as the others pulled on to Open Bight. Roy and I were invited to stay for a Potlatch as Roy has blood relatives in the community and I am an adopted family member of the Windsor family. I was adopted by the late Maggie Windsor in 1981. My name given to me at that time is "Klakleeleekla" which means "If you come by my lodge I'll feed you".

....."One problem surfaced here. In all villages that we have visited we simply pull our canoes up onto shore for the welcome celebrations. We ensure that the canoe is well above the tide line and we leave it. Any belongings will be there when we come back.

There is no need for security or secreting of gear away in some hiding spot. Only when we reach Vancouver Island will such measures be necessary. When we came back to the canoes that morning Lloyd Norman's yellow VisionQuest coat was gone from under the seat where he had put it. Nothing else in the canoe was apparently touched or missing, only his yellow coat. We treasure those coats and it was a real loss to Lloyd. He never mentioned it at the time, not wanting to make a scene or embarrass the villagers. It was a day later that he actually told me about it, when we met out at Open Bight. I subsequently contacted Ted Walkus who searched the village for days. He checked at Bella Bella and there was just no trace of the coat. In those small villages there is no secret too small to be kept from everyone. If someone had that yellow coat, someone else would know about it and they'd be sure to tell someone else.

Ted told me of his theory. He said that there were so many grizzlies around this year that probably one of them took it. Ted told me to check, he'd bet that Lloyd had a chocolate bar or something in the pocket and that's what the bear would smell. He'd simply take it from under the seat and carry it up into the forest. There he could take his time tearing the coat apart and getting at his prize. Chances are the coat would never be seen again, unless some fashion conscious bear shows up in bright yellow. I asked Lloyd about the possibility of a chocolate bar being in his coat and his reply was in the affirmative. Most of us stashed food in the pockets of our gear simply for energy blasts when we need them paddling. Ted's explanation would become even more believable later that same day. We now were satisfied that the coat was gone and we knew where it was. We were all happy that Owikeeno had nothing to do with it.

Owikeeno to Open Bight

Roy and I were ferried the one hour trip out to Open Bight the next day. What took us one hour by power boat had apparently been quite a pull for the crew the day before. The reader will have to find reference to that day in the journal of one of the pullers who was in the canoe that day. Throughout the journey we'd experience the generosity of the native people. Owikeeno would be just another wonderful example....."The night before at the potlatch Ted had stood and asked the Owikeeno's for permission to fish in the morning. He wanted to send some of their sockeye out to the VisionQuest crew as a gift. The village had agreed publicly at the Potlatch. Ted had not been to bed. After the potlatch he had spent the night cleaning the hall, driving people home and visiting relatives. At 6:00AM he had gone out and set a net. Two hours later he had gone out and brought in 8 sockeye salmon. They were waiting for us in the dock. Our boat ride out to the rest was waiting and there on board was a fish box with 8 fresh, uncleaned salmon. One final gift from the village. Ted drove us through the village, made a stop to show us the Owikeeno canoe that was under repair and construction then it was down to the dock to the waiting boat.

At Open Bight I, and others, prepared the fish that had been given to us by the Owikeeno people..... I took one of the remaining 6 fish and cut one up in pieces for the fish chowder. The salmon each weighed about 5 lb. so they were substantial. The remaining 5 fish I wanted done native barbecue style. I solicited the help of Calvin

Siwastis, Lloyd Gauthier and Kelly Brown and we got cedar sticks and bark from the forest. Don Wilson had done this for me in the past and I was determined to cook this in such fashion around our fire.

Kelly and I fumbled with one fish and tried to stake it up prepared for the fireside. We managed but it sure looked like an amateur job. Kelly advised that Fran knew how to prepare the fish and she came over to help. In half an hour she had the remaining fish ready to go. They were staked and propped into the sand by the fire and I kept watch for the next 3/4 of an hour. One by one they were done to perfection. I'd simply lift them from the sand and put them on a platter and the group would come and pick at them. Everyone joined in, there was lots for everyone. Even the Bella Bellas agreed that we had done a good job. There was nothing left but skins by the time the Owikeeno gift had been devoured and lots of pictures had been taken to record the feast. Most had never seen, let alone eaten, fish prepared in that fashion.

Later that day a wind storm blew in. There was no room in the tents that night so my wife Joy and I were offered a bed on board the Toucan, a yacht owned by Blaine and Henny Hagedorn. It was accompanying us all the way from Prince Rupert to Victoria as a support vessel. With the wind and waves up that night it was quite a trip from the beach back to the Toucan....."The two of us slipped and groped along the rocks for one final time and with the ocean waves reaching for our feet we tumbled into the zodiac. It pulled away and bounced and snaked its way to the Western Spirit. There we bounced up and down and at each peak of a wave we handed or threw gear onto the deck for them to put away. We then bounced over to the Toucan where Blaine was holding onto railings waiting for us. He was going up and down and so were we, not always in sync. Rather than try to put Joy on the swim grid we agreed, through yelling back and forth over the wind, that it would be best for her to go over the side of the boat when the waves would allow it. The zodiac poised itself and a wave presented the railing of the Toucan. Joy stretched and reached and grabbed. She was committed to the maneuver. As she took hold the wave lifting the zodiac dropped and there was Joy dangling over the turbulent ocean. Blaine was reaching and grappling and Joy was holding on tight. Her legs were flailing in her attempt to gain the deck of the Toucan. There was a lot of yelling of instructions and directions and after about 20 seconds of frantic wrestling, Joy's butt disappeared over the side of the Toucan. She had made it. My turn was next and I managed the move without such dramatics. The zodiac left us on board the heaving Toucan.

Cape Caution

Today was yet another severe test of our pulling skill, stamina and determination..... Now this was business. This was pulling business. Nothing else in the world mattered to me, or to any of us. The swells were bigger than anything we had ever seen so far. The point of land that we knew was Cape Caution seemed to be getting no closer. As we peaked on each wave I would check again and again. It didn't look to me like we were making any progress but my experience told me that we were, perhaps slow, but we were making progress. We pulled on and on. There was no stopping. If the canoe lost

forward motion it would be at the mercy of the swells.

Now as we dropped into the troughs we lost sight of everything. We couldn't see our zodiac escorts. We couldn't see the land or Cape Caution. We couldn't see the Toucan, Therapy or the Western Spirit and even the 50 foot high Coast Guard ship, the Gordon Reid, was completely gone from sight. I concentrated on my stroke making it deep and powerful. I concentrated on the timing. If ever technique and fitness were important now was the time.

When we were in the troughs I saw only water on all sides and the backs of the pullers ahead of me. I don't remember sounds only intensity. As we rolled over the crests of the swells I could see Cape Caution, no closer, and I could see the big support vessels. They were dancing up, down, sideways. Only time for a quick glance, back to pulling then down into a trough again. You had the sensation of sliding both up and down the waves and you wondered at times if you were going ahead or backwards. Just keep pulling. Eyes straight ahead and keep pulling.

Mark dropped his head and stopped pulling. He was being sick. Sea sickness had grabbed him. He wore wrist bands to fight it and I believe he had even taken a Gravol that day but it still got him. He was retching and dry heaving but little was coming up. He'd paddle again for a few strokes then stop and wretch again. The canoe kept its crazy motion and Mark kept getting sick.

As we would hit the crest I'd look out to see everyone else's position. It was on one such crest that I saw the Therapy about a quarter mile off to the open ocean side. There on the top deck was the silhouette of Lee MacKenzie, the TV personality from CHEK TV. She was holding onto the railing and bent over the side. She obviously had George with her and even from that far off I could see her reaching and retching with her own sea sickness. That would go on for the next two hours. Every time we'd crest there would be Lee puking, or trying to puke. When we'd be down in the trough there was Mark heaving and retching. Just keep pulling. Don't stop. We need forward motion.

Perhaps an hour and a half into the ordeal Dave slumped over in his seat beside me. Was he sick too? No, his back had given out. We normally paddled on one side only, rarely changing simply because of Dave's back. He found that pulling on the right side was far easier on his back than on the left. This was different though. All of the bobbing, twisting and turning had taken its toll on his back. His face contorted with pain, I could hear him groaning with the intensity of it. I asked if he was OK. He simply nodded, sat up and began pulling again. That happened several times over the next hour or so. Just keep pulling. No time to rest. No time to stop.

At one point Dave and I took particular note of the swells knowing full well that in the future there would be those who would doubt us or accuse us of exaggerating. We both measured the waves relative to our own vessel and us in and we both agreed that at the peak of this assault on Cape Caution the waves we were in were at 20 feet.

Those on Roy's boat would later say that they were in 15 foot swells. Chris's boat would say they were more like 18 feet. The fact is that they were both accurate. As the waves get closer to shore, where we were, they stand up. Eventually they break. We were at the point, before they broke, where they were standing almost vertical. I'll always regret that my waterproof Instamatic camera was out of film at that time. My quick photograph would have verified my next story.

At the peak of the battle the waves were coming at us so steep and vertical that we had to change our pulling stroke. I'll always have the picture seared into my mind as the waves would come at us from the right side. They would stand up towering above our heads and they'd be like a wall. At times Dave was putting his paddle into the water shoulder high, at right angles to the canoe. I, on the left side, was reaching down below the canoe and getting mostly air. We'd rise up to a crest and be on top of the world then drop to the depths again in the next second. Lee was still puking. Mark was still retching and Dave was in severe pain. I wasn't tired any more. We needed some humor in this situation. I spoke up.

"Everybody hold the boat, I'm going to stand up and take a picture." I yelled above the noise.

The immediate and impulsive reply from all was less than friendly. It was downright rude. Then they all realized they'd been had and laughed through their labors.

Just keep pulling. Can't stop. Two hours have passed. Just keep pulling.

We were to later learn that the skipper of the Gordon Reid, Captain Anthony Keil, was at all times watching us from 50 feet up in the bridge. The off duty crew was with him and several times heard him express fear and concern for us. He'd never seen anything like this before and in fact he had ordered the rescue zodiac to be at the ready as he was convinced that we were going over several times.

Cape Caution was now beside us, directly to the left. We pulled for another 20 minutes of up and down and the canoe was steered to the left. We were now heading with the waves. We were surfing the waves as we headed in an inlet. We had done it. We had rounded Cape Caution, not on a calm day of little challenge. We had tackled it at a less than ideal time and we had beaten it. The wind and surf going with us now, the sound diminished. As if the monster had been tamed, our job was easier. When we realized where we were, what we had done, we screamed and yelled. I hurt my throat again but it didn't matter. What a thrill. Chris Cooper would later tell us that he was fearful during the rounding of the Cape. He feels that the canoes were tested to their outside limit. I feel we were, and we passed.