

IN SEARCH OF
CLEAN AIR AND CLEAR WATER

THE OREMUS FAMILY DOES THEIR THING

June 1971

Vern and Dee
Kevin and Shelly

Since Vern had been attending summer school for the last three summers in order to complete his Master's Degree, the family decided it was time for a nice vacation. As we are an outdoor-loving group, it was decided to make a wilderness canoe trip in Canada for at least two weeks.

Of first importance, obviously, was a canoe. Vern started construction on a 16-foot wood and canvas canoe just after Christmas, and finished it three days before we were ready to leave.

Our good friends Larry and Carolyn Kingry, from Portland, heard about our plans during a weekend visit to Eugene and asked to go along. They, too, are canoe enthusiasts and good people, so we were glad to make it a "sixsome." Besides, they could carry one of our kids in their canoe as a passenger! After we informed them of this, they were still excited about going, which proves that along with being good people, they are also a little crazy!!

Dee and Carolyn spent several days planning our menus and deciding who would take what, while Larry and Vern field-tested their fishing tackle on the McKenzie. All food and gear must be packed in waterproof bags; and to fit six people and 14 days worth of food, fishing tackle, gear, tents, and sleeping bags into two small canoes seemed to be an impossible task. In fact, we were so rushed for time as our departure date drew near that we didn't even try to pack the canoe at home, but just loaded up the car, put the canoe on the top, and prayed all the way to Canada that things would fit.

We actually had no specific place in mind to visit at first, but one evening while looking at a British Columbia map, we noticed a chain of lakes in the Bowron Lake Provincial Park which looked like just what we wanted. Upon investigating further, we found it to be a perfect canoe trek -- 70 to 80 miles of waterway, including lakes and rivers, with a minimum of portages. What interested us most was the lakes are in a large circle, enabling one to go completely around the chain without having to backtrack on the return part of the trip.

Bowron Lake Provincial Park is located 500 miles above the Canadian border and 70 miles east of Quesnel. Upon writing to a lodge on Bowron Lake (the take-off point and, hopefully, the finishing point), we were informed the 70 miles from Quesnel to the lake was by way of a well graveled road. Ha Ha!! It was well graveled before a forest fire, three solid weeks of rain, and miles of road construction!

To follow is an informal account of our adventures, taken from our daily diary.

Wednesday, June 16, 1971

Thought we were never going to arrive at the end of the 70 miles of gravel and dirt road which was full of chuck holes almost big enough to make our Volkswagen Squareback disappear. Just before coming to Bowron Lodge, a timber wolf ran across the road just in front of our car. This started our list of wildlife out with a bang. We arrived at Bowron Lake about 3:00 p.m., and Larry and Carolyn had arrived only $\frac{1}{2}$ hour ahead of us. The Lodge informs us it has been raining for three solid weeks here. It is not raining at the present, but is cloudy. There is a park campgrounds just a mile from the Lodge, and we will spend the night there. During "Happy Hour" we decided to fly girls and kids into Indianpoint Lake so they will miss the first 2 portages which total $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles through muddy, marshy type trails (due to the large amount of rainfall recently). The guys will take one canoe and go by themselves, and the float plane will make two trips carrying 2 people at a time, plus all our gear and the other canoe, for \$25.00 per family. The kids are delighted with the idea of having a plane ride.

Thursday, June 17th

The weather is beautiful! Larry and Vern dropped the families off at Becker's Lodge to eat breakfast and to wait for the plane, and they started their journey with the one canoe, walking from Bowron Lake to Kibbee Lake, paddling across Kibbee Lake and making another portage to Indianpoint Lake, paddling part way across Indianpoint Lake to the spot where the plane was to land. The portage trails were somewhat muddy, but flat and easy going (at least without having to carry any gear). The plane arrived at Indianpoint in about 5 minutes, and it took Vern and Larry $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours. After the 6 of us met, we loaded gear and people in the canoes (everything and everyone fits!!!) and started off. We paddled across the rest of Indianpoint Lake to our first real portage which is one mile to Issac Lake. It took us four trips each to get canoes and gear across the portage. Then Kevin missed his coat and thought he left it at the beginning of the portage, so he and Vern made another trip back, but couldn't find the coat. With aching backs we loaded up and paddled to a camp on Wolverine River where it enters Issac Lake, set up camp, ate dinner, and went to bed.

Friday, June 18th

We awoke with a few sore muscles, but not really as bad as we thought (Dee's exercise class must have done more good than she realized). It is another beautiful sunny day. The gigantic green mountains with snow covered peaks surrounding us are breathtaking. More beautiful than any pictures of Canada we have ever seen.

It took Carolyn and Dee quite a while to cook pancakes, bacon and eggs this morning with our one little frying pan, and it also took a while to wash dishes, heating just one frying pan of water at a time. By the time we finished cleaning up from breakfast, it was lunchtime!

Even though the sun is hot, the water is icy cold (from those snow covered peaks). Larry took off on foot this morning to fish Wolverine River, and soon returned, soaking wet from head to foot (he fell off

a log). The kids, however, couldn't be convinced the water was so cold, as they decided to go swimming. Kevin went in up to his neck with his clothes on and Shelly stripped to her panties and waded. They played in the water for a good hour.

While the men were fishing and the kids playing, the squaws washed clothes in the lake. Around noon we went out on the lake in the canoes to sun ourselves. Vern and the kids fished while Mama paddled. Got back and ate lunch around 3:00 p.m., then took naps. Vern insists everyone eat a lot at every meal so there will be less weight for the next portage!

Saturday, June 19th

At 3:30 a.m. Dee informs Vern there is an animal rubbing noses with Kevin through the tent. Vern reluctantly peered out of the tent with the flashlight. He was afraid to look to the left for fear something would attack from the right, and afraid to look to the right for fear something would attack from the left!! (We had been warned about bears and instructed that all food must be tied up in trees each night.) Alas, only 3 huge porcupines checking our camp.

What a day this turned out to be. We broke camp and started out at 10:30, only to be forced in by wind and "high seas" at 12:00. We wandered back into the woods and hacked a camp out of the brush. The moss and needles are over a foot deep here, and all kinds of ferns and vegetation abound. We had soup for lunch and about 4:00 started out again. Paddled until about 7:00 p.m., when we found a camp at Betty Wendall Creek. We just beached the canoes and got out when instantly and without any warning, a terrific wind storm hit us. We fairly flew getting the tents up and piling brush around them. It blew and rained for about 15 minutes and then cleared up and was beautiful again. Larry and Vern went fishing and finally figured out how to catch 'em. Vern caught a 3 lb. and an 8 lb. lake trout and Larry got a 3 pounder. Being good fellows, they gave the two small ones to some less fortunate fishermen and brought the large one home to be eaten for breakfast.

The canoe performs very well and it seems we have forgotten nothing. Dee has a sore hand (pulled muscle) from paddling 8 miles against the wind, and Vern's shoulders are sore, but it's sure fun! The kids are doing great.

Sunday, June 20th

We are still in camp. Just after breakfast the wind came up again and the lake became rough. We are stormbound, but hope it calms down by late afternoon. No rain yet. For breakfast we had all the fish we could eat, hot chocolate, cookies, and a short snort of Loganberry-Blackberry Brandy, which tasted terrible when we left, but is getting better all the time! Lots of moose tracks and droppings here, but no sign of one in the flesh. Saw a martin last night.

At 3:30 the wind died down and we decided to leave. It is about 8 miles to the end of Isaac Lake and we hope to make it today. As soon as we

started out, the wind came up again, but we kept going. It is really tough paddling in rough water against a strong wind. Kevin helped Vern paddle for the first hour or so, as Dee's hand still hurt. The wind died down about 8:30 and we finally arrived at the end of the lake about 9:00 p.m. It stays light until 10:30, so we were okay for setting up camp, eating and also had just enough time for Larry to catch another 3 lb. lake trout for breakfast.

Tomorrow we run the Isaac River which should be fun as it starts out with a sharp right turn in fast water. We will then portage around some rapids and a waterfall. We are camped right at the base of ten snow-capped peaks, all over 8,000 feet high. An unbelievable sight.

Monday, June 21st

We arose at a late hour again--around 9:30--and had breakfast. This is a very fine, clean camp and the park patrol has even built a couple of benches around the fire, and we found a grill which we set up on our rock fire pit that helped tremendously in expediting the cooking of breakfast--we could use more pans instead of just our one skillet. We also had the pleasure of an "outhouse" and it was brand new and clean.

While we were eating breakfast, several canoes came in and prepared to shoot the "chute" (even one kayak). We watched six of them go and carefully took notes as to when and how to make the sharp right turn. We broke camp about noon and had no trouble with the chute. After the chute we hit some fast water and took in a little water (in fact Shelly got a bath which she didn't care for, as it was freezing cold--the water that is--the weather is beautiful). We went a short distance and then had to portage around the foaming "Cascades" (very, very rough water). The portage wasn't bad, but the mosquitoes were. If it hadn't been for our super-good repellent, they would have carried us off alive!! Kingry's forgot their shovel and had to go back to the beginning of the portage again, otherwise we made this portage in 2 trips each. Our supplies are getting down, making it a lot easier on the portages. We got started again in the canoe for a short distance and then had to portage around log jams and falls. This portage wasn't too long, but was sure rough, especially for the guys carrying the canoes. It started out with a steep uphill grade and ended with a steep downhill grade. We then put the canoes into McLeary Lake. This was a small calm lake, and at the end it narrowed into the Cariboo River which was quite a change of pace. We were coming down out of the high country, and with the river's current, we didn't have to paddle as vigorously. We saw several ducks and also came upon a grizzly bear eating some leaves along the river's edge. He took one look at us and took off. The way we look and no doubt smell by this time, we didn't blame him!! Cariboo River flowed into Lanezi Lake which is another long lake. We went about 1/3 the length and stopped at a campsite. There is a shelter cabin here and the Canadian couple, who we meet up with every once in a while, have occupied the cabin. He said (with his thick Canadian accent) they took it as they needed a "damn good bath" and to wash clothes. We had a nice large campsite with good river water on one side of us (Turner Creek). Since we had a late breakfast and had only taken time to eat our trail snacks for lunch, we were all very hungry. We had a delicious dinner

of freeze-dried hamburger patties in mushroom gravy, mashed potatoes, and chocolate pudding. It tasted almost as good to us as a steak dinner.

The fellows went fishing after dinner, but decided there were no fish in this lake. Carolyn and Dee played Scribbage by the campfire.

Tuesday, June 22nd

Vern and Dee got up early (7:30 a.m.) so we could occupy the cabin when our Canadian friends departed. We had hopes of heating lots of water on the stove so everyone could have a bath and we could wash clothes. However, after seeing the beautiful day and the calm waters, we decided it best to surge ahead. We left about 10:00 and stopped at a point near the end of the lake for lunch. We ate french bread, sausage and cheese. Lanezi Lake narrows into Sandy Lake. We paddled across this lake and hit the Cariboo River again. The country is still very beautiful--very green with thick underbrush. We keep looking for bear, but haven't seen any more.

From the Cariboo River we take a little side trip into Unna Lake which is suppose to be good fishing. We arrived about 3:30, found a campsite and had just started to set up camp when we heard the rolling of thunder and the crackling of lightning. It had been so warm and pleasant all day (we had even shed our shirts and blouses while paddling across the lakes and down the river), and Carolyn and Dee had visions of getting that bath and doing some wash as soon as camp was set up, as the lakes in this lower country are fairly warm. However as soon as we got the tents up, the rains came. We have been so fortunate to have had $5\frac{1}{2}$ days of gorgeous weather that we can't complain. There is an old shelter here which looked pretty good to us as soon as the storm hit.

The fellows are checking out the bottoms of their canoes to make sure all is still in order, and Carolyn and Dee write in their trip diaries and read. The kids are playing cards. For dinner we had freeze-dried chicken stew and pudding. The guys went fishing (when the storm died down a little) and Carolyn and Dee finally got their sponge baths and shaved their legs (ohh, how nice!). About 8:00 p.m. the kids spotted a large mule doe coming into camp. She wandered around looking for food for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour or more, coming within about 4 feet of us, very unconcerned. Vern came home with a 3 lb. lake trout. Went to bed at 11:00.

Wednesday, June 23rd

It rained most of the night. When we first woke up around 8:00, the weather looked all clear, even saw the sun; then before we could get up, the rain and wind came again, so we stayed in bed until 10:00. It continued to rain off and on. Breakfast (fish, pancakes and Tang) wasn't over until 12:00 noon.

It continued to shower off and on, so we fooled around in the shelter, snoozing, playing Scribbage, washing clothes, reading. The kids and fellows went across the lake fishing and also hiked up a rough trail to the Cariboo Falls which was a spectacular sight. They caught one rainbow trout which we had for dinner, along with freeze-dried beef hash, freeze-

dried chili, instant mashed potatoes, gravy, and freeze-dried blueberry cobbler. The wind was too strong to go fishing again after dinner, so we just fooled around inside the shelter until 10:30 and went to bed. Larry and Vern said a fond goodbye to the brandy and promptly voted it the most necessary provision of the trip. Had much wind and rain during the night--in fact Dee several times expected to open her eyes and find that the tent had blown away!

Thursday, June 24th

Arose at 6:30 to break camp so we could get started while the water was calm. We wanted a quick breakfast, so we had Tang and toasted English muffins with cheese on them. We left Unna Lake at 8:00 and paddled back up the Cariboo River and lined the canoe (walked the mid-channel, pulling the canoe behind with a rope) through Three Mile Creek. This creek was full of beaver dams and every pot hole had from six to a dozen large white fish in it. We tried to hook one for Shelly to reel in, but they were shy after having us wade over the top of them. Unna Lake to Babcock Lake via Three Mile Creek took us only $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Babcock was a small lake and we paddled it with ease, although watching the clouds build behind us with an anxious eye. From Babcock to Skoi Lake there is a short portage of only 200 yards. Even so, the canoe doesn't get any lighter! It's our last portage and everyone is glad. Actually the fun of portaging left us the first 15 minutes of the trip!

From Skoi Lake we followed a narrow canal into the Spectacle Lakes. This is one of the longer lakes, so naturally this is where the weather caught up with us. We fairly flew the length of Spectacle and Swan Lakes. The wind was at our backs for the first time and the waves were building. We were actually surfing on the swells, and to turn sideways to the wind would have meant a bath for everyone. We stopped for lunch between Spectacle and Swan Lakes and were nearly blown away trying to launch the canoes again. We finally managed to run directly back into the wind and then swung around fast and ran around the point and out into Swan Lake with only minor dampness upon our persons. The girls were a bit nervous, but the obvious skill and daring of the two Captains brought all through in good shape. Alas, we had just turned the corner into Swan Lake when Vern notices his socks still back at the camp site where they were hung on a tree to dry. Oh well, who needs socks when you are ankle deep in water!

We finally saw our first moose on Swan Island. A big black bull, but he didn't stay around long. We landed at the head of the Bowron River to check the map and Larry shipped about 3 gallons of water into his back pockets (the canoe stopped on the bank, but the breakers kept coming in!). We built a fire, popped some Jiffy-Pop popcorn and rested while waiting for the breakers to calm down. We were so close to home we could almost smell the steaks broiling, so decided to push on. We entered the Bowron River about 4:00 p.m. and Bowron Lake about 5:00. Here we saw two cow moose feeding, and managed to get some good pictures of them. The water was really getting rough, but we pressed on, and with the wind at our backs, there was no real danger. Larry made the mistake of running down the lake on the wrong side and when he crossed over to the landing, things got pretty wet. Both canoes landed at 6:20 p.m., and we were all tired and glad to be back.

Two hours later, after a stiff drink, hot shower, and good steak dinner, we were planning our next trip.

