

MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH – Tenth Edition – April 20, 2003

Created by Sherron Jones sherronjones@shaw.ca Happy Easter !!!

Thankyou to everyone who has provided material for this issue.

No ordinary GI

Submitted by Les McLaughlin

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Years ago I travelled by flat-bottomed river boat and canoe from Whitehorse to Dawson in the company of a legendary Yukoner. As he loaded up his green home made craft that warm August day on the shores of Lake Lebarge, G. I. Cameron belied his eighty years. He looked like a young whippersnapper getting ready for his first trip down the river to the Klondike.

In fact, Cam had made this voyage so often he could do it with his green bandanna covering his eyes. His travelling companion was an equally experienced river traveller, Charlie Taylor, whose company Taylor and Drury, had for many years operated boats to deliver goods to their many stores on the rivers of the Yukon. Charlie and Cam were best friends.

Cam lived at Fort Selkirk in the 30s and 40s when the town was a bustling place. The times were fascinating back then for the young RCMP constable. As we motored down the river, Cam told many thrilling tales. Such as the days when the river boats would have to reverse the paddle to stop in mid stream so they could allow literally thousands of caribou to swim across the river in front of them.

He described how an RCMP constable had many other related duties . . . such as that of the dentist, pulling abscessed teeth with rusty old pliers . . . or that of the doctor, dreaming up concoctions for every kind of real or perceived ailment . . . or that of the priest, giving the last rites and then officiating at burial services.

Cam recalled 1936, an unforgettable year when the first SS Klondike lost steering power near Eagle Rock Bluff. The boat was carrying a load of passengers and a lot of freight to Dawson. When the steering was lost, the steamer hit the bank on one side of the river. A few passengers jumped off. It careened into the centre of the river and headed backwards toward the other side smashing the paddlewheel in the process. More passengers jumped off. Freight was washed overboard.

The boat continued its merry uncontrolled trip for about three miles down the river before coming to rest on a sandbar. Cam recalled that when he arrived on the scene from his post at Fort Selkirk, passengers were lined up on both sides of the bank for miles. Goods that could float did; bobbing up and down in the water on their merry way to Alaska and beyond.

He told me that for years after he would find stuff along the river bank like sacks of flour hard as concrete, but very useable when chipped off and mixed with

water. The Klondike was abandoned on that sand bar where you can still see parts of it lying to this day.

Or at least you could in 1980.

G. I. was born Gordon Irwin Cameron in Quebec. He was transferred to the Yukon in 1925 during his fifth year with the Mounties. Before joining the RCMP, he had served as a cadet in the Canadian Armed Forces. He worked three years with the Mounties in Dawson City before resigning to get married to his beloved wife of many years, Martha.

When he rejoined the RCMP in 1935, they posted him to Fort Selkirk. Cam and Martha Cameron were pillars of the tiny river community and their daughter, Ione Cameron, now Yukon Senator Ione Christensen, was born there and has many a priceless story to tell of her younger years as a child of the river. G.I. Cameron retired from the RCMP in 1949 and went on to work for the territorial government in the Fish and Wildlife branch, a natural stop for this seasoned veteran with his storehouse of Yukon knowledge.

I recall many a blustery, frigid Yukon day at the dog races during the Sourdough Rendezvous when Cam was the official starter. Though on in years, he stood like a beacon in the cold until the last dog team left the starting gate. Then he'd parade into the heated shack behind the White Pass station, brew some coffee and wait for hours until the teams returned.

In his 95th year, he took part in the RCMP centennial celebrations marking one hundred years of the force in the Yukon. In a photo featuring all the young Mounties in their freshly pressed serge, Cam did not look out of place. In fact, he looked as though he could easily mush a dog team down the river to his dear home in Fort Selkirk.

G. I. Cameron passed away in 1996 leaving behind a legacy of nobility and grace seldom equaled in the annals of great Northern characters

How it All Started

By Joyce Yardley

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(Ten-mile Ranch)

When I first saw Ten-Mile Ranch in 1945, it was owned by a man by the name of Ernie Butterfield. We were living in Carcross at the time, and made the approximately 14 mile trip down Tagish Lake on a sunny day in the late spring, in our "Clinker- built" 18 ft. lifeboat from one of the old paddlewheelers.)

Ernie was doing his laundry, close to the wharf where we docked our boat. He was sitting on a stool under the big cottonwood tree, which stood just a few feet from the beach, leaning over a galvanized washtub, and scrubbing away on a wooden scrub-board.

Gordon (Yardley) had known and visited Ernie for some time during the years he worked on the "S.S. Tutshi."

During the course of our conversation, Ernie told us that he had decided to sell the ranch to a man named Jock Milne. He said he was getting on in years and that the work was becoming too hard for him. I could read the disappointment on Gordon's face. After a pleasant visit over coffee and bannock with home-made raspberry jam, we head back home, but somehow I knew we would be back before long.

Much of our days at 10-Mile is recorded in my book, "Crazy Cooks and Gold Miners," So I'll try not to repeat myself, too many times.

In the early days of the Gold Rush of 1898, there was a lot of traffic on Tagish Lake, between Carcross and Atlin, B.C., which was having a mining boom of its own. And one of the stops along the way, especially for winter travel, was Ten-Mile Ranch. There was a roadhouse there for passengers and drivers of the horse-drawn sleighs; a huge barn for shelter of the horses; and a good supply of hay. The lake was the only road to Atlin.

The next time I saw the ranch was after Gordon had negotiated a deal with Jock to buy it from him.

Jock was living there at that time, with his very attractive First Nations wife, "Daisy," and their little son. He was the most spoiled two-year old I had ever seen. He was sitting on the wooden floor of the little cabin, yelling at his Dad to give him raisins. Jock put them in a dish, which the kid promptly dumped on the floor and screamed for some cookies. He got the cookies, but yelled again, indicating that he wanted them in the other dish. So his Dad put them in the other dish. This went on and on until, finally, he was distracted by the cat, and we had some peace and quiet for a while.

Jock told us that Daisy had left for Teslin, where her folks lived, and she wasn't coming back unless Jock sold the place and got out. Shortly after that they split up and went their separate ways.

In later years Jock often came to work for us. He helped with the butchering of the cattle that we ran on the meadows, and also with the haying.

One of the meadows on the land we bought was called, at that time, "the School Meadow." It produced a lot of good hay, besides providing wonderful grazing for the beef cattle we raised. That meadow came by its name when Ernie Butterfield supplied hay to the Indian Residential School in Carcross. Evidently in those days the School must have had its own beef cattle. I think they owned the meadow, at that time, which is now the "Game Farm" just out of Carcross, on the road to Whitehorse.

There were actually three meadows on the land that we bought from Jock, (400 acres in all). Of course we had to lease it at first until we were finally able to obtain title to the

land a few years later. It had been crown-deeded land, which had originally been owned by two sisters, who lived in England.

We had a good life there. We were truly pioneering, as we practically lived off the land. We had our own milk, and made butter and cottage cheese. We tore down the old barn that had been there from the days of '98. It made a wonderful location for our vegetable garden, and we had lettuce weighing 4 pound each, Cabbage, 10 pound each; besides carrots, turnips, potatoes, brussel sprouts etc. We built a root cellar under the tool shed, and our veggies lasted until Christmas time. That, along with all the fresh lake trout, grouse, moose meat, plus choice cuts from our own beef cattle, and jams and jellies from berries picked on the site; well, we lived like kings.

The first year we were there, there was no road at all. We had to come and go by boat. At times during the winter, we were totally isolated. We had no phone, but we had propane light, a little radio that worked with the battery from a car, and lots and lots of firewood. For Xmas we had wild roast goose, and I remember how good it tasted, along with wild cranberry sauce. We never even thought or worried about our kids getting sick, and they never did. In that healthy environment how could they?

The second year, Gordon punched a road through to the Tagish road with his little D-4 cat. (By co-incidence it was just 10 Miles long!) From then on, it was fairly easy to come and go to town with our jeep, although we did have our unique and bizarre adventures along the way. (see "Crazy Cooks and Gold Miners")

Even in those days, there was no road to Atlin, and mail was still being hauled by cat-train over the ice from Carcross. The drivers, one of them a man by the name of Tish Evans, used to drop by for lunch quite often. And there were no houses or buildings along the road from Carcross to Tagish. No California Beach in those days!

I taught our daughter, Norma, at home by correspondence for the first two years, and when our sons came along we moved between the ranch and our home in Carcross so they could go to school there. We built corrals and a barn in Carcross, down the beach, so we could keep our brood cows there for the winter. By then we had butchered the bulk of them, for the season, and sold the beef.

We kept the ranch at Ten-Mile until 1960, when we sold it to Dave Harder, and his wife and my good friend, Carolee. I believe they had many experiences similar to ours in the years they spent there, although unfortunately, we almost lost track of each other during the years we spent running our lodge at Dezadeash Lake, subsequently becoming gold miners on our own claims in Atlin, B.C. and Dawson City area for almost 20 years. Eventually retiring in Nanaimo, B.C.

Many years later and rivers of water having passed under the bridge, I was talking to my daughter, Norma, over the phone, from Nanaimo, B.C. where I was now living. She casually told me that they'd been to 10-Mile Ranch for dinner the night before.

"Surely you don't mean our old ranch?" I asked her. "Yes," she said, "They take bus tours in there now and it's very popular. Wonderful food, expensive, mind you, but worth it!"

"B-b-but you mean there's a good road to it now?" I stammered, amazed.
"Oh, has been for ages. They have built a fabulous Lodge there, and tourist cabins." People love to go and rent a boat, and fish, or just for dinner sometimes.

I should have known...I mean it was bound to happen. But somehow I had the strangest feeling. I had never thought of our isolated ranch any other way than it was back then. I felt a tinge of sadness that no one else would ever again experience it the way we had - and a hurt feeling that strangers were violating a part of my past... stupid, unreasonable feelings... that they probably would never even *believe* the history of the place, and could never share my memories of it. How could anyone know that Gordon was the first to ever build a road into Ten Mile? I wanted it never to change, never to lose the peacefulness that I noticed there the very first time we landed our boat at the wharf. Talking it over later with my daughter on the phone, she said,

"Don't worry, Mom. Lot's of people will know. They sell your book there at the Lodge!"

Well, I'll have to admit that made me feel a little better. Later came a kind of relief in knowing that "our ranch" was not abandoned, to be forgotten and neglected.

By Joyce Yardley

P.S. According to his wishes, we scattered Gordon's ashes across from 10-Mile Ranch, where he used to go fishing for lake trout for the "S.S. Tutshi" as it passed our ranch on the way to Atlin every day in summer.

Two years later, my new husband Fred Horn and I visited the beautiful new lodge there, and saw for ourselves the incredible changes that have been made.

Gordon McIntyre has issued a challenge to those of you who lived in Mayo in 1941.



Gordon took this picture in front of the school in 1941. It includes his students plus some of their siblings. He thought that many of the Yukoners on the e-mail list could find themselves in the picture. If need be he will identify each at a later date. – Ruth McIntyre
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I'm going to attach a photo of the Capitols softball team, ca. 1954 or '55.
Names (from my notes on the back in about 1958) are:

BACK ROW - Sam McClimon, Jim Smith, Joe Bodnar, Ross Craig, John Erickson,
Art Colson, Frank --?, & George Kolkind.

FRONT ROW: Norm Smith, Garth Langford, Scotty Munro, Ken Kolkind, Wally
Choptain & Bud Harrison. Batboy- Ralph Lortie

You will see some of the same names as on the '54 Merchants. Please ask your
readers to verify names.

Keep up the great work. Ralph Lortie rlortie001@sympatico.ca

Here is the story:

Les

Robert Service

Submitted by Les McLaughlin

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If ever a Canadian deserved the epithet "great," it is Sam McGee. The same Sam who grumbled incessantly about the cursed cold that got right hold and chilled him clean to the bone. The same Sam who longed for the land where the cotton blooms and blows. The same Sam who was cremated on the marge of Lake Lebarge only to rise from the ashes in solitary splendour and exclaim for all the world to hear: "It's the first time I've been warm!"

Now Sam McGee wasn't from Tennessee. He was from Peterborough. Yep, Ontario. The real McGee lived most of his colourful life travelling throughout Canada and the U.S. looking for yellow metal. Gold! However, gold wasn't easy to find. Most who looked for it found little, or none.

When Sam McGee from Peterborough arrived in the Yukon in 1899, the great gold rush was over. Any ground worth owning in the fabulously rich Klondike valley was taken. Still, the Yukon was the place for people looking for work during the depression ridden years at the turn of the last century. And Sam could work. He decided to stay around Whitehorse, a tiny transportation town of four hundred people, about five hundred river miles south of Dawson City.

Young Sam set down roots. He built a one-room cabin and went about looking for copper ore in the rich mineral belt that runs for endless miles through the hills above Whitehorse. But, as with gold, others had already staked the best copper ground. In 1902, Sam McGee formed a partnership with William Grainger, one of the big copper stakeholders in the region.

Sam was also an accomplished carpenter. At the turn of the century there was a minor stampede to a silver strike on the shores of Kluane Lake, the largest in the Yukon. Sam went along for the ride. He built a roadhouse half way between Silver City and Whitehorse at a place called Canyon City. For this he was called the Roadhouse King.

He was also a bridge builder in the days when wooden trestle bridges were a thing of beauty. Sam was a quiet, unassuming man. Not one to brag, boast or drink too much as others of his era in the wild and woolly Yukon were prone to do. His income wasn't much, but it was enough to keep a balanced account in the Bank of Commerce in Whitehorse.

It was here in this two-story clapboard building on the corner of Second Avenue and Main Street that Sam's life would take a dramatic turn; so dramatic that he would become one of the most famous characters in Canadian history. It all started with the arrival in 1904 of Bob Service, a young bank clerk who was posted to the Whitehorse branch from Vancouver.

Young Bob was a quiet sort; a bit of a loner actually. He didn't drink or smoke. He preferred long lonely walks through the bush to the rowdy night life in the local saloons where bad whiskey and stale beer were the beverages of choice there being no other choice.

Bob enjoyed his work as a bean counter and pencil pusher in the Bank. However, what he really wanted was to be a writer. When Service was six years old back in 1880, he wrote his first verse and recited it for his maiden aunts in Scotland.

"God Bless the cakes and bless the ham, Bless the cheese and cold boiled ham, Bless the scones Aunt Jenny makes, and save us all from bellyaches, Amen".

Since his college days in Glasgow in the early 1890s, he had dreamed of writing verse like Kipling and Burns. Young Robert, as they knew him in Scotland, loved to recite their poems. Sometimes he'd sing them while he played his beat up old banjo. In the remote Yukon however, his chances of becoming a writer were as distant as those influential publishing houses in far off Toronto and New York.

Still, life could be worse. Since he emigrated to Canada in 1894, it had often been. Bob knew poverty. Apart for some backbreaking jobs on Vancouver Island, Seattle and San Francisco, mostly doing farm labour, he was unemployed. He even rode the rails with the hobos for a time. When he applied for a job in the Bank of Commerce in Vancouver in 1902, he was stoned cold broke.

With his transfer to Whitehorse, he counted himself among the lucky. The bank job was steady. His room and board was provided and worldly possessions were something the frugal Scot could do without.

And maybe, just maybe he could soak up enough remnant stories from the days of the Klondike Gold Rush to do a little writing on the side. Whitehorse was a small town. The kind of town where everyone knew your name and your business. Soon Bob's flair for reciting Kipling's Gunga Dun got him invited to various social gatherings as a sort of wandering minstrel.

Elmer White, the editor of the Whitehorse Star, was a bit of a nosy chap. He had to be. He wrote a column called The Stroller, a gossip review that spared no one if they were caught doing something he could make fun of. A big gruff American, White once wrote a letter to his nephew in Florida who had asked for advice on how to become a journalist.

"In the first place Walter, the newspaper profession in a sense is the ruination of all who engage in it as no other calling gives so much insight into human nature. No one my dear nephew who would succeed as a newspaperman, will ever allow sympathy or sentiment to interfere with the publication of news.

If it comes to your attention that your beloved pastor or Sunday school teacher was seen emerging from the back window of the house of a parishioner who is away from town on business at 2am, do not allow his second calling to prevent the publication of the story. If he has no respect for his calling, why should you have?"

On a bitter cold day in the winter of 1905-06, Elmer White was doing a little business in the bank. Bob Service, with his usual accomplished penmanship, was dutiful entering his deposits in the bank's ledger. Then, as he watched Service neatly mark down the numbers, White suggested that while his recitations of Kipling and Burns were good entertainment for the Women's Auxiliary social teas, perhaps he should branch out a bit, write something a little gutsier, something with a flair about the wild frontier of real Yukon life.

That night Bob Service wrote his first Yukon ballad called THE SHOOTING OF DAN MCGREW. When it was finished, he stuffed it away in a drawer in his little room above the bank. The poem wasn't bad thought Bob, but it really didn't have the flair he was seeking. A few weeks later, he was asked to recite at the Women's Auxiliary monthly tea. He considered giving them the tale of Dan McGrew, but then, on rereading the work, decided it was too racy for the ears of the Whitehorse upper class. Gunga Dun would have to do.

The winter weeks rolled by, Stroller White made his bank deposits, as did Sam McGee. Bob Service marked the figures in the bank ledger. Then, one evening in 1906, with the endless Yukon winter hanging over the tiny, snowbound town, Bob Service paid a visit to a lady friend whom he admired. To his utter dismay bordering on contempt, a raucous party was in full swing in her clapboard house. It wasn't so much the party that annoyed him, but the fact that he was not invited while others of a lesser moral upbringing were.

His lady friend invited him in. Reluctantly, he entered. The room was filled with cigar smoke and reeked of booze. Nothing offended Bob Service more. He stayed just long enough to listen as a big, fat man from Dawson City, clutching a foul-smelling cigar, told a story.

Bob was thunderstruck. When the fat man finished, Service quickly left the boozy party. As he headed straight to his spotless room on the second floor of the Bank of Commerce, his mind was seething with fanciful images. Feverishly through the night he wrote, stopping only once to check the spelling of a name in the bank ledger.

He knew the name Sam McGee well. Yet he had to be certain of the spelling. Instinctively he knew that he had stumbled upon a treasure of nuggets underneath all the muck and bedrock of frontier Yukon life. This was paydirt. This was his future. As dusk turned to dawn, Bob Service reread his poem. It was done, complete, not a word could be changed.

He put the ballad away in the drawer, walked downstairs, and opened the doors to the Bank. All day, as customers made their deposits and withdrawals, the efficient teller was in a daze. His night had been without sleep. The ballad raced through his mind. A line, the first line in the story, kept repeating itself, over and over.

"There are strange things done in the midnight sun." It was perfect. But the second verse! What would his friend Sam think of it?

"Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee, where the cotton blooms and blows. After all, by now Sam was a seasoned Yukon veteran. The cold didn't bother him and he certainly wasn't from Tennessee. Well, as long as the poem was tucked away in the drawer, Sam McGee would never know.

The winter came to a blissful end. The summer sun bathed the Yukon in almost constant light. Tourists arrived on the same tiny train that had brought the young bank clerk to the Yukon two years earlier. Bob Service continued to take his long, lonely walks through the endless bush.

He continued to write little stories as Elmer White, the newspaper editor, had suggested. The fall, with its brilliant colours of orange and yellow, cast a pleasant glow on the surrounding hills. Soon, all too soon, the white land was again locked tight as a drum. Life in the Yukon had come full circle.

Bob Service entertained the ladies with Gunga Dun. Stroller White wrote about the north-end ladies of the night. Sam McGee dug the surrounding hills for copper. And then a most peculiar thing occurred. The lady Service had admired suggested that he send his little book of poems to a printer in Toronto and give them out as Christmas gifts. That, thought the frugal Scot, was as bad an idea as he had ever heard.

But then, the vanity in him, the writer's vanity, rose up and said: "Why not?"

Why not indeed! The bank had just given him a Christmas bonus. It was his right to spend it as he wished. The poems, ten in total including The Cremation of Sam McGee, joined other parcels and letters on board the White Pass mail train, en route to a printing firm in Toronto. Included was payment of one hundred dollars for printing one hundred books.

Bob Service fully expected to receive his little books in due course and to give them to friends as an appreciation of their business in the bank. He was after all loyal to the Bank that had treated him with respect when he was down and out in Vancouver.

However, the books did not arrive. Instead, in the mail there came, not the books, but a contract. A royalty contract. A ten percent royalty on all the books the printing firm could sell. A stunned Bob Service told Stroller White. He told his lady friend. He told other customers in the bank but was reluctant to tell Sam McGee.

A year later, in 1908, when he was transferred from the Bank of Commerce in Whitehorse to its main Yukon branch in Dawson City, Bob Service, Robert Service, was famous. His little book of verse had sold five thousand copies. Everyone in Canada now knew Sam McGee.

"Til I came to the Marge of Lake Lebarge and a derelict there lay;
It was jammed in the ice but I saw in a trice it was called the "Alice May."
And I looked at it, and I thought a bit, and I looked at my frozen chum;
Then "Here," says I, with a sudden cry, "is my crematorium."

The publishers were clamoured for more. And much, much more would come. A full book of poems called Songs of a Sourdough, another called Ballads of a Cheechako, and

a third titled Rhymes of a Rolling Stone. All from the mighty pen of the loyal bank clerk, Robert William Service.

Service could barely keep track of his royalty payments. He would ride the rails no more. When he left the Yukon in 1912, eight years after his unnoticed arrival, he was a world-renowned writer as famous as Kipling and Burns. When he died in Lancieux France on September 11th, 1958, at age eight-four he was the richest poet in the world.

And what of the people who so influenced the stunning poetic career of this shy bank clerk?

Stroller White left the Yukon in 1916 for southern Alaska and was elected to the territorial House of Representatives, serving as Speaker for one term.

When he died in 1930, he was publisher of The Strollers Weekly in Juneau. The lady friend who suggested to Service that he publish his poems remains unknown.

And Sam McGee in 1909, he was a pallbearer at the funeral of his friend William Granger, who died trying to rescue two miners who had been overcome by fumes in the shaft of his Copper mine near Whitehorse. That same year, Sam moved to Montana still looking for copper, or gold or any metal that would bring a buck on the open market.

He finally settled in Beiseker, Alberta, a little farming community about forty miles from Calgary. He returned to the Yukon occasionally. On one visit, he brought an urn of ashes that he said were his. He had retrieved them himself from the boiler of the Alice May, the beached steamer on the Marge of Lake Lebarge where Bob Service said he was cremated.

Did he hate the cursed cold? No said Sam, he loved it. That is why he stayed ten years in the Yukon. Did he ever live in Tennessee where the cotton blooms and blows? No, said Sam. And what did he think of Bob Service?

"You could trust Bob Service," said Sam. "He was a good writer. He kept neat ledgers."

MORE ROBERT SERVICE

Some time ago Les McLaughlin forwarded me the web address for another article on the life of Robert Service. I have just now made it through article online, it is really interesting and includes photos of Service, his wife and even his granddaughter and more. See the URL below.

From Les:

Also the most recent edition of Beaver Magazine has a long story about Robert Service by a friend of mine, Robert Stewart.

It is at: <http://www.historysociety.ca/english/thebeaver/features/fe03/serv01.html>

SAM MCGEE TURNS UP IN ALBERTA TOWN

Jim Dokken just forwarded an article, which was in the April 4, 2003 edition of the Calgary Herald under the above title. It is available in the archive of the newspaper online at: <http://www.canada.com/calgary/calgaryherald/archives/story.asp?id=BC1B8161-8AF6-4857-AC5B-01618108D962>

The information in the article was obtained from descendants of Sam McGee, and it is well worth reading. I would copy and paste it here, but I don't want to infringe on copyright law. I wrote and asked for permission, but have not heard back. For those who will not be able to access the website above, Sam McGee is buried in the Levelland Cemetery near Beiseker, Alberta. The article indicated Robert Service and Sam McGee were friends.

STORY SECTION from Donna Clayson – Story Editor ykdogteam@telus.net
This weeks theme Animal Stories

THE DYING WOLF

By Don Frizzell frizzell@polarcom.com

A French fellow, by the name of George was working for the bridge building crew I believe around Trutch on the Alaska Highway in 1943 or 1944. One day he was out quite late scouting for timber. Built a small fire and had his meal. Decided to set up camp early so got his shelter up and was drinking his tea just at twilight. He was sitting with legs crossed and his back up against a tree using his backpack as a cushion. He was thinking about the land and the beautiful country and hadn't moved for a long time (I'm sure you know what deep in thought thinking about the north is like). At any rate he spotted movement out of the corner of his eye and also not moving about 30 feet away was a very old gray wolf and very skinny. Without moving he looked around for more wolves and saw none. He spoke very gently looking the wolf in the eye. The wolf dropped down to her belly and very slowly crawled to him with her ears right back. I remember George said the wolf looked humiliated or pleading. At any rate she came right to him, put her head on his leg. He gently petted her head and neck ever so slowly. The wolf closed her eyes and died 5 minutes later. The only explanation that George could offer was that the wolf knew it was dying, and did not want to die alone regardless of the consequence. Other than skinny he saw no visual sign of what was wrong. He said her teeth were in fair shape.

As I remember it, this was his own story and not something he read in a book. George was a very strong Quebec Catholic, never married, lived in a small house in Dawson Creek and walked to work at Ft. St. John Lumber. He worked there as a welder. I feel certain this was a true story. I heard the story around 1957 and lost all track of George

but he must have died years ago. This is the story as I remember it and he never told me any other stories

GRIZZLY!

By Don Frizzell frizzell@polarcom.com

Phil Temple was out prospecting one day and did not have his rifle - He said it wasn't far from camp and one of the few times he didn't have his gun. Anyway he came over a small rise at the same time as a Grizzly came up the other side. They met face to face about 30 feet apart - maybe more. The Griz stood up and roared at him and shook his head back and forth. Phil says the spit was flying from the bears' mouth in all directions. He didn't know what to do, and he was some scared and all the bear stories he heard flashed through his mind, none of which helped. He started to swear at the bear and threaten it as loud as he possibly could and held his ground. The louder the bear roared, the louder he hollered and waved his arms. He said he was on the 5th round of using the same cuss words when the bear finally got back on all fours and slowly walked away, watching him and stopping every five feet.

MOOSE STORY

By Donna Clayson ykdogteam@telus.net

I was 16 years old. Dad wanted to know if I was interested in taking a night off from babysitting and go scout out some moose trails. We would scout the trails then determine which one would be good for getting our winter meat from. We had a ½ ton pick-up with a canopy on it and drove it into a moose pasture and parked. It was a very large pasture, probably around 30-40 acres. We parked in the middle of it. Dad had been teaching me how to call a moose using a shoulder blade from a rabbit. I couldn't seem to get the hang of it. Anyway, dad grabbed his 30-30 and told me to wait at the truck, as he wouldn't be long. I quickly got bored and saw that shoulder blade just begging me to practice with it, however, dad had made me promise not to touch it while he was gone. As the moose were running he was afraid I would accidentally figure it out and have a mad moose come after me. I eyed that blade and found the temptation too much. What was the chance of me finally "catching on"? No matter how much I tried I just couldn't "get it".

I picked it up and walked over to a lone tree close by and played around with it. Shortly I heard loud grunting in the trees. Then it sounded like a freight train coming through the bush. I looked up and there was the biggest bull moose with the largest antlers I've ever seen steaming straight at me! I ran for the driver's side of the truck and got to it just in time. The moose slammed into the passenger door and the truck lifted up on two wheels. I looked through the driver's side door window and saw the moose backing up then

snorting. He ran at the truck again and just before he hit the door I saw his eyes. They were red and now I believe the saying “red eyes” when someone is mad. Again, he hit the door and, again the truck lifted on two wheels, only a little higher. I backed away from the truck thinking it was going to come right over and land on me. I was so scared. I truly felt I had met my maker! Facing a grizzly face-to-face was tamer than this!

I heard a gunshot and the moose ran off from the direction he had come. Dad was on his way back when he heard the commotion.

The truck was very badly damaged from the passenger door to the back wheel well. It took me many, many, many months of babysitting to pay for the truck and a lesson learned!

MOOSE TAKE DOWN BY TIMBER WOLVES

By Donna Clayson ykdogteam@telus.net

When I had my dog team they needed to exercise all the time. I took out 4 dogs (Siberian Huskies – not all purebred) onto the Yukon River near Teslin, Yukon. We were going along quite well when the dogs started balking and not wanting to go ahead. After a couple of miles I stopped and put in my ice hook. The dogs all sat on their haunches and stared straight ahead, their hackles up and ears pointed forward. I grabbed my binoculars out of the sack on the sled and looked down the ice. What I saw was truly amazing! A huge bull moose was running onto the ice from the bush with a pack of timber wolves chasing him. The northern timber wolf can reach up to 250 lbs. Two from the pack took after his rear and 3 more went after his neck (near the bell). The rest sat back on shore. I watched the entire thing and was in awe at how cruel nature is but, still, how beautiful. I wasn't nervous until I saw them divide the carcass and run with it. The others then joined in. My team was quiet the entire time and when I yelled “Gee” (go right) and “lets go home” they ran as if their life depended on it. Too bad I wasn't in a race I'm sure I would have won!

Something this magnificent is truly a rare opportunity to witness and I feel honored to have been in the right place at the right time.

Used with permission by Cooper Langford, Uphere Magazine

DEATH BECOMES HIM

There's no sense pussyfooting around the subject. The lounge at Whitehorse's Capital Hotel has a dead cat on the premises. Lounge manager Jonas Smith says the mummified

cat, now on permanent display, is causing a stir. The puss was found below the flooring when the hotel was renovated last summer to make way for an expansion to the bar.

The feline met his end in a crawlspace more than 50 years ago during an earlier round of construction. “There was no way in or out of the spot where they found him,” says Smith. “He must have crawled in there and accidentally been boarded in.” The cat likely died of dehydration. Sealed off in the cold dry space, on gravel and away from the elements, he became mummified.

As the guardian spirit of mouse deterrence, nobody had the heart to throw out his earthy remains. For a few months after the discovery, the feline resided in a plastic bag in the boiler room. Patrons kept asking to take a peek. Eventually, hotel staff decided to put him on display; tastefully, if possible.

He now lies, Snow White-style on a purple velvet bed underneath a glass-topped cabinet sunk into the bar. “The irony of people raising their glasses over a cat who died of thirst is not lost,” says Smith.

So far, none of the patrons minds the odd décor touch. Some folks are hoping the cat might come to rival the Sourtoe of Dawson City as a bar attraction. (At Dawson’s Downtown Hotel, a dried human toe kept at the bar is placed in a tumbler of spirits and, for bragging rights, brave patrons swill the hooch in one gulp and let the toe touch their lips.) While no part of the Capital Cat will be used to garnish a drink, he has inspired a cocktail.

From the Editor:

Talked to Jonas Smith via telephone April 18, 2003. I wanted to know what the reaction has been like since he first started to display the cat a week before Sourdough Rendezvous. He indicated that the cat is more popular with the older folks. The younger generation isn’t too sure about it. Also, a new drink (a shot) has been created called “Petrified Pussy” and the following poem goes along with it. You say the poem and drink the shot over the cat in the display case” according to Rob who tends bar at the Capital Hotel:

The Ballad of the Capital Cat

There once was a cat in need of a nap
One cold winter night I recall,
But locked was the door so under the floor
Of the Capital Hotel he did crawl.
To his dismay the trip was one way
And he found himself trapped underground,
But even worse was his unquenchable thirst
For above he heard naught but the sound
Of whiskey and spirits and liquor and beer-it
Was really not all that polite.
For decades untold he lay thirsty and cold

While with wet whistles folks drank in delight.
Like a mummy entombed or on an island marooned,
He withered to just skin and bone
'Til hence came the day he was found where he lay
By a carpenter who said with a moan,
"What a terrible curse to die of such thirst
So close yet so far from the take."
So to honor the dead the carpenter said
"Won't you join me in drink for his sake?"
And thus goes the fable of the cat in the table
And how he got to where he's at.
So take a moment to think whilst enjoying your drink
And raise your glass high to the cat.

Jonas Smith, February, 2003

The Capital Cat

In the summer of 2002, the Capital Hotel Lounge was expanded into the lower section of the bar where hotel guest rooms were once located. During the renovation process, construction workers found the exceptionally well-preserved remains of a domestic cat beneath the floorboards. That section of the building, a former Army warehouse vacated after the completion of the Alaska Highway, was added on to the existing hotel in 1946, and it is therefore believed that the cat lay there untouched for 56 years.

The crawlspace, sealed entirely from the elements, provided an excellent environment for preservation, maintaining a relatively constant temperature and humidity. The Yukon's cool, arid climate and apparent lack of bacteria present allowed the body to dehydrate to its current state you see today. Recognizing the rare and unique nature of this curiosity, the cat was set aside for possible historical interests.

Temporarily relegated to the hotel boiler room, whispers became rumor and word of the cat spread as more and more people crept into the bowels of the hotel for a glimpse of this macabre yet fascinating peculiarity. Subsequent to consultation with experts in preservation, archeology and taxidermy, and after growing public interest, it was decided that the cat be put on permanent public display for all to marvel.

Jonas Smith

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE LIST

- Hi Sherron, I have another request to be added to your mailing list for the "Moccasin Telegraph. This time it's from folks still living in the Yukon. I'm not sure how long they have lived there but I do know they lived there twice. I don't remember what year they left Whitehorse initially, but they came back in the mid 70's and you know them from

Marsh Lake - **Perry and Marcy Savoie**. They were almost your neighbours at Marsh Lake (in the summers mainly). Some years ago, the Savoies sold their home in Whitehorse and moved to Marsh Lake full-time. We have been friends for almost 25 years and just last week they were here in Keremeos visiting us. I showed them the 8th edition of the Moccasin Telegraph and gave them your newest mailing list. They enjoyed reading both very much and were surprised to see some of the names on the list. They were even more surprised to see names on the list that they weren't even aware had left the Yukon. Their E-mail address is pmsavoie@marshlake.polarcom.com

- Hope you have a great week-end in Osoyoos - we were there with **Savoies** last week-end and everything was in bloom - lovely!!! All the best. - **Rosemary Locke**

P.S. At the same time **Savoies** were here we had another couple of Yukoners dropped in for a couple of days so had a mini Yukoners reunion here in Keremeos.

- Hi Sherron, I have read in the *Vancouver Yukoners' Association* newsletter that you have started a listing of all former Yukoners and that you have a newsletter called the **Moccasin Telegraph**. I would very much like to be part of your listing and to receive issues of the **Moccasin Telegraph**. Here's a short bio of me. I was born in Dawson City in 1944 but never lived there. My parents lived in Mayo and I came to be born in Dawson because the hospital in Mayo was closed during WWII. From the time I was about 3 until I was 9 my family lived 26 miles down the Stewart River at ...what else....26 Mile! My father had wood contracts to supply the riverboats so that is why we lived at that location. After the boats stopped running we remained at 26 Mile for a couple of years and my father ran a sawmill. We then moved to Mayo (except for 6 months when we were in BC) and from then until I graduated from high school in 1963 I lived in Mayo. After school and during the summers while I attend school in Mayo I worked for **Charles Taylor** at the local Taylor & Drury Store. For three summers while I attended UBC, I worked at Elsa for United Keno Hill Mines. Nineteen sixty-six was the last summer I spent in Mayo. I have been back for several visits, most notably to attend the school reunion in 1991. I am planning to return for a visit during Mayo's centenary celebration this summer. **My parents** retired and moved to Whitehorse in 1977. They had the privilege of being **Mr. & Mrs. Yukon** in 1977. I visited them yearly until my mother's death in 1998 at age 80. My father lived until 1999 and died in Whitehorse at the age of 91. I retired in May 2001 from The University of BC human Resources Department after 31 years of service and am thoroughly enjoying my retirement. My wife **Vera** (who is a Vancouverite) and I live in New Westminster. We have 3 grown and married children, two sons and a daughter. We have one grand daughter who is just 8 months old. Please let me know if there is any cost to be on your list or to receive your newsletters. I would also like to receive any back issues you may have, if that is possible. Thanks. Looking forward to hearing from you. - **Harvey Burian** #40 - 323 Governors Court New Westminster, B. C. V3L 5S6 Canada Voice: 604-520-1619 FAX: 604-520-1649 E-Mail: hburian@telus.net

Thanks very much. I'm sure **Henry and Alice** will remember me and my parents, **Renny and Mary Burian - Harvey**

- Hi Sherron, You wrote: I work part time for another ex-Yukoner **Keith Franklin**. Keith has a small Monument business and we do headstones for this area, Prince George and Whitehorse. I do the computer (CAD) design of the headstone, which drafts the drawing into a printed paper copy and then when the customer has approved the layout I cut the rubber stencil which is computer generated and I glue the stencil to the polished headstone and pull off the rubber in the areas to be sandblasted. Keith does the sandblasting, painting and delivery.

- The company you work for wouldn't happen to be Valley Monuments, would it? If so you probably designed the headstones for both my mom and dad as I had **Bob Armstrong** (new deceased) order my mother's in 1998 and then **Glenda Miles** (Bob's daughter) order my father's in 2000, both from Valley. They are on their graves in Grey Mountain Cemetery in Whitehorse.

I'm enjoying the writings and have already heard from Henry Breaden, who I have known since I was a baby. I knew his dad "**Spot Cash**" **Breaden** as well. We actually lived for a time in one of the houses where Henry's mom and dad had lived in Mayo. - **Harvey Burian**

- Yes Sir, I did your parents headstones. **Bob Armstrong** was in visiting at Valley Monuments one day and made some comment about sales and I asked him if he would sell for us up there. I am sure you have noticed **Glenda** is now in Edmonton and on the list.
- **Don Sipple** sells for us now in Whse. Yes, whenever I get a new name from a Mayoite I send it to **Henry**. He is really good at getting in touch with folks and he remembers when god was born. **Fred Aylwin** was also born up there and he lives here in Vernon. Did you know him at all? His parents lived next door to us on Alsek Rd. **George and Emelia**. **Fred's** brother **Ken** is also just north of Vernon in Armstrong. **Lyn Bleiler** is on the list and very helpful with Mayo 'stuff', as is **Gordon McIntyre** who taught school to **Henry**. Hope you continue to enjoy the 'memories'. - Sherron

(Henry thought I meant he was old. I really meant he has an excellent memory.)

- Thanks, Sherron, **Don Sippel** is married to my cousin **Penny (Collins)**. My Aunt **Martha Collins** (who lived in Dawson and Whitehorse for many years) is now living in Keremeos. I don't think I have met **Fred Aylwin**. I knew his dad **George** as he worked for Taylor & Drury and used to come to Mayo on occasion. **McIntyres** were good friends of my parents and are of us too. **Gordon** used to take all the school photos. **Ruth** was a teacher, although I never had her. I went to school with **Lowell Bleiler** and have known him and his family since we were kids. We just got together last month with them and a few others to celebrate Lowell's 60th. Guess this is enough reminiscing for one day! Thanks for the memories! – **Harvey Burian**
- Hello Sherron! I started getting copies of the M.T. about 2 weeks ago, from my sister **Diane King**. This is a great idea, and you are doing a fantastic job! My name is **Larry Bidlake**. I was born in Mayo in 1940, and moved to Whitehorse with my father and mother (**Geoff and Mary Bidlake**) in 1941 or 1942. Took all my schooling in Whitehorse. Went to the U of Alaska (Fairbanks) in 1958 (played hockey with several Yukon boys) and graduated in 1964. Left the Yukon in June 1965 for Manitoba and a job as a government wildlife biologist, from which I retired in 2001. Still living in Manitoba (Brandon) with wife **Pat** (we married in 1967); daughter **Jennifer Bidlake-Schroeder** is married and living in Calgary, son **Geoff** and wife and baby are in Sooke BC. We just returned from attending the 75th Vancouver Yukoners Reunion -- a great event! Almost half of my 1958 graduating class were there -- **Bob Campbell, Don Murray, Jeff Lerner, Al**

Garneau, Dawn Bethune, Hope Mast, Anne Dugas, and Maxine Fromme.

Many others of my generation and older -- a lot of fun but too short a time to visit with everyone properly! Please put our names on your list. Our email is bidlake@mb.sympatico.ca and our phone is 204-727-5481. If you like, we can send you more biographical info about me (growing up in Whitehorse) and/or my parents; some of my father's photo collection of the riverboats and life in the Yukon (1930's and 40's) are in the Yukon Archives. We would welcome a visit from any Yukoners travelling along the Trans Canada Highway. You're doing a great job!! Best regards -- Larry Bidlake

- I am writing for **Gary Ireland**, who would like to be added to your newsletter list via e-mail. He does NOT use a computer, but is willing to have me be the go-between for him. We live in Aspen Grove, BC, having moved here from Whitehorse in the fall of 1993. Gary's former wife Dawn is deceased. He retired from YTG in 1989, and loves the "leisure" life of retired folks! He belongs to the Yukon Mainliners group, which meets twice a year in usually Kelowna or Vernon, BC. Thanks for putting him on your list. *Suzy*

- Dear Sherron; I don't think we have met but this morning I went over to see **Gordon and Ruth McIntyre** for a visit and catch up on the news. They told me about the e-mail addresses and loaned me a copy of the Moccasin Telegraph. I came right home and read it from front to back I would like to have my name put on the list my e-mail add. is wallingham@klondiker.com I was born in Dawson City and grew up in Mayo and we moved to Whitehorse in 1988 and am now retired my husband **Dick and I** operated the Chateau Mayo Hotel for a good many years and raised our three children in Mayo **Elaine, Sam, and Walter**. My address in Whitehorse is: **Maggie Wallingham (Wood** Father **Sam** and mother **Rose**) #12 Alsek Rd. Whitehorse Y.T. Y1A3J8

- Now I will try and get in touch with Sandy and see if I can get copies of the telegraph that I have missed keep up the good work this is all to exciting. I knew **Sandy** and her parents in Mayo she was just a wee girl and I baby-sat her while the next sibling was arriving Thanks again you have made my day as it happens to be my birthday today Regards **Maggie**.

- Hi Sherron: Sorry about my not so speedy reply. I was in Whitehorse the better part of 40 years. Worked for CNT, later to become Northwestel for 34 years. I do remember your husbands name connected with Wpass, but can't put a face to it. My wife **Marion** was only in the Yukon for about 6 years prior to our retirement in 1995. She worked for YTG,

NWT and Anton Champion. Don't think she's interested in being involved; however she would likely know many people. Sounds like a good project you have taken on. – **Al Ashby**

- Would you please add me to your mailing list for the Mocassin Telegraph.
HAYES, Arlene (LELIEVRE) Daughter of **Bunny and Alice Lelievre** Born in Dawson and lived there until 1952 when the family moved to Whitehorse. Lived and attended school in Whitehorse. Moved to the outside world in 1960. I have always been proud to say I was born and lived in the Yukon Currently living in Calgary and now consider this home as have been here since 1973. Still working for the Federal Government. E-mail address is arlenehayes@shaw.ca Phone number is 403-253-6915 Thank you very much for creating this website. - **Arlene Hayes**

- *Hello there: I just received a message from Mag Wallingham telling me all about your e-mail. My name is Mary (Andison) Laing, I now reside in Calgary. I was born in Mayo Yukon in 1937 and resided there till 1980. I am now retired from the work world and do a fair amount of e-mailing. Looking forward to hearing from you. My e-mail address is ethel@telusplanet.net or I also have hotmail dog_angus@hotmail.com Sincerely Mary Laing*

Hello Sherron & Donna;

Thank you for the great issues. They are of immense interest.

I would be most likely considered a young pup in the group at 23 years of age. My family came up (My parents & me - only child) in 1992 and staked our claim. My father started a business promptly upon arriving to town, eloquently named Last Frontier Sportscards and Comics (1992-1995), dealing in various collectibles.

I consider myself a Robert Service and Yukon enthusiast, collecting everything related to our beautiful Territory in sight. I have amassed a varied and eclectic collection that I think may be of interest to yourself or your viewers. My most recent entrepreneurial venture was of my father's influence when I owned and operated Grizzly Collectibles off of Main Street from 1997-2000. This is what started my quest of collecting all Yukon related memorabilia. Jim and I seem to have at least 1 thing in common, we have an addiction to collecting.

I thought it might be neat to send you an image every week or so to do what you wish with it. Feel free to add them to your photo album. If you would like me to stop, please feel free to let me know. I noticed some discussion around various businesses & significant dates in history. Thought it would make things interesting to add images to the discussions. Let me know what you think.

I thought I'd start off with a photo related to Aileen Dobrovitz's story, "Mayo's coldest day" (02/03/1947). As well as some I thought may be of interest. They are older and titled "Yukon Automobiles" (Undated) and "Automobile Party on Yukon River" (04/1908). Enjoy, and remember, I have endless empherma.

Cheers, Samson

YOUR HELP NEEDED

Hi Sherron:

We really enjoy reading about the old days that we spent in the Yukon. I was Manager of T & D in Mayo and also worked in the local hospital. Fire Chief for a while too. We were wondering if any of the former residents of the Yukon would know where the following people are?

- Shirley Taylor, Husband Bert. Lived in Mayo before 1955
- Tom and Ann Prangle Mayo before 1955, was Manager of T & D for a while and also Fire Chief, believe they went to the Island.

- George Smashnuk Placer Miner also believe he moved to the Island.

Please reply to gbnewsham@silk.net Thanks. **Gerald & Beulah Newsham.**

Hi Sherron: Thanks for your note. Yes **Harvey (Burian)** has been in touch with us down through the years. We left Mayo in 1962 and before that time Harvey did work with me at T & D's, as I was manager there for Charlie Taylor. I talked him into contacting you, as his Dad was well known in the steamboat days of Mayo having put up wood along the way for the steamboats. They returned to Whitehorse with sacks of ore from Elsa and Keno. The roads had been opened up before we arrived in 1952, and trucks were then used.

Thanks for all the good info, it sure brings back to mind all the things we went through in the Yukon. - **Gerald & Beulah Newsham**

Looking for the e-mail address of Betty Mackie

Dear Sherron,

If possible, please send me the Email address for Betty Mackie. You may include my Email address in your listings.

I am living in Moose Jaw, Sk.. I lived for a short time (three months or so, in '55) in Mayo, and, the best part of two years (1955-57) in Dawson City. I visited Dawson while on a bus tour in 1998. Then, I went on my own last August 2002. I took slides to the Museum for copying, and, took in the Centennials of Dawson and St. Paul's.

I use a computer at a Senior's Centre downtown. A friend suggested I get a disc to put everything on. I don't use Outlook Express. I will look forward to more Moccassin Express editions.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Emily Stillwell eistillwell@hotmail.com

I am unable to help Emily as the address we have for Betty Mackie on our e-mail list has been changed and she has not yet advised of her new address. If anyone is in contact with Betty who lives in Victoria, please give her Emily's address. – Sherron

A Thankyou Note with News from the North

Dear Sherron, Again I want to thank you for all your hard work in keeping everyone updated. You are an angel and I appreciate all you do.

We also have a motorhome, and hope to go to Skagway for Easter. Of course it is still frozen into the ground. The snow is finally melting here, but still freezes at night. The days are sunny and gets up to +4 or 5C, so no complaints at the moment, just a lot of impatient Yukoners wishing there was some fire in the ground or some signs of buds on the trees etc.

I just noticed that you are heading for Osoyoos. That is one place that we are interested in as a possible retirement place, so fess up, is it an OK place to live?

Bye for now - Mavis Larkin

Happy Easter and hope you have fun camping Mavis. We were rained out of Osoyoos last Sunday. For a desert like climate the rain washed the golfers off the golf course and the campers scampered home.

FOR PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF THE MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH

Please contact Sandy Campbell northernlyght@shaw.ca

To date **nine previous editions of the Moccasin Telegraph** have been produced, along with four special editions. One titled Sternwheelers on the Yukon River, one Basketball in the 50's, Fifty-six years ago the world looked at Snag and Camp Takhini. For the time being I will send out copies of the Special Editions after each dozen or so new people sign on.

Sandy Campbell has kindly agreed to send out copies of the earlier editions of the regular Moccasin Telegraph upon request. Please be specific as to which editions you are requesting.

Sandy is a working girl and will get to the requests at her earliest convenience.

Contact Sandy at northernlyght@shaw.ca

DATES TO REMEMBER

Mayo 100th Anniversary Celebrations – June 3 – July 1 -

http://www.yukonweb.com/community/mayo100/calendar_of_events.html

Okangan Yukoners' Picnic – June 22, 2003 - Summerland Orn. Gardens - Larry Chalmers
larryjoanchalmers@telus.net (ed. 6)

Island Yukoners' Picnic - August 16 – Nanoose, St. Mary's Hall - contact Stan Hegstrom
seaair@bcsupernet.com (details to come)

YXYCP Reunion - September 26 – 28 – Parksville, Bayside – contact Pat Besier
jpbesier@seaside.net (see edition 5)