

The Westend Weekly

Bringing Communities Together



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Wind, cold, rain no match for this adventurous pair!



Careful planning is involved in packing the equipment. Janet paddles in the lead.



It takes more than one trip to traverse the portages. Mike nimbly carries the canoe.

by Michael C. Riley

Twenty two years ago, in the summer of 1987, my wife Janet and I embarked on a canoe trip from our camp on Middle Island, Lake of the Woods with the objective of paddling the fur trader's canoe route to Montreal. Fur traders, chasing fur pelts for the people of Europe, opened up Canada hundreds of years ago. A few hundred years is not long in geological time so the route from Lake of the Woods to Montreal is virtually the same as it was 300 years ago. The portages between lakes and over heights of land are still there, blazed by native peoples thousands of years ago, used by the fur traders hundreds of years ago, and now used by recreational boaters and fishermen. The trip took us two summers, 72 days, and 82 portages and we finished in Ottawa, not Montreal, but it was a memorable experience and has given us treasured memories. Those memories are of the many lakes and rivers we travelled, some still relatively untouched by human civilization. The north shore of Lake Superior and the lakes between Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake in Northwest Ontario are the places we remembered most.

Last month, we decided to relive some of these memories and, now in our sixties, to see if we could still do it. We left the same cottage on Middle Island with the objective of paddling to Fort Frances and back. We set aside three weeks for the trip, allowing for bad weather, bad winds, and weak bodies.

It is an unusual trip for a couple of sixty-somethings to attempt but we had told friends and family that we were going to do it, so off we went, leaving our dock on a windy, blustery day in early June. Our plan included travel in remote lakes, many portages in which we would have to carry the canoe and all our gear, and camping along the way.

Can you remember the northern Ontario weather in early June this year? It was cold, rainy, and windy, seemingly wrong for a canoe trip. For us however, it turned out almost perfectly because the most important thing when you are paddling a canoe is the wind. It was with us almost all the way. We kept dry and warm and loons and songbirds soothed us at sunrise so it was easy to forget the weather.

We left Lake of the Woods by portaging around a dam at the Dogpaw Reserve into Dogpaw Lake where we camped for the second night. Now into real wilderness away from houses and cottages we became aware of the fact we were really on our own. If you look at a topographical map of this area, you can guess where the portages between lakes should be by looking for the shortest distance between the lakes. They are almost always there. We often thought of the first explorers in this area, who found their way by experimentation and memory, without the benefit of maps or GPS. We used paper topographical charts of the area available from the Ontario Ministry of Natural

Resources. We carried a GPS but did not use it.

The largest lake we had to cross was Kakagi (Crow) Lake and the northwest wind was with us as we travelled to the southeast. If the wind had been in the opposite direction, we would have been pinned down reading books in our tent. With the wind, we literally sailed along using a tent flysheet as our sail.

Three portages and two lakes later were on an abandoned logging road near Sandhill Lake and about as far from civilization we would get. Nearing the height of land, one more portage would take us into the Rainy Lake drainage system. On the small radio we carry we heard we were in for a record cold June 5 night. The forecast was right and in the morning, there was frost on the tent. With five layers of clothing on we set out in the morning. At least our packs were lighter now; we were wearing all our clothes!

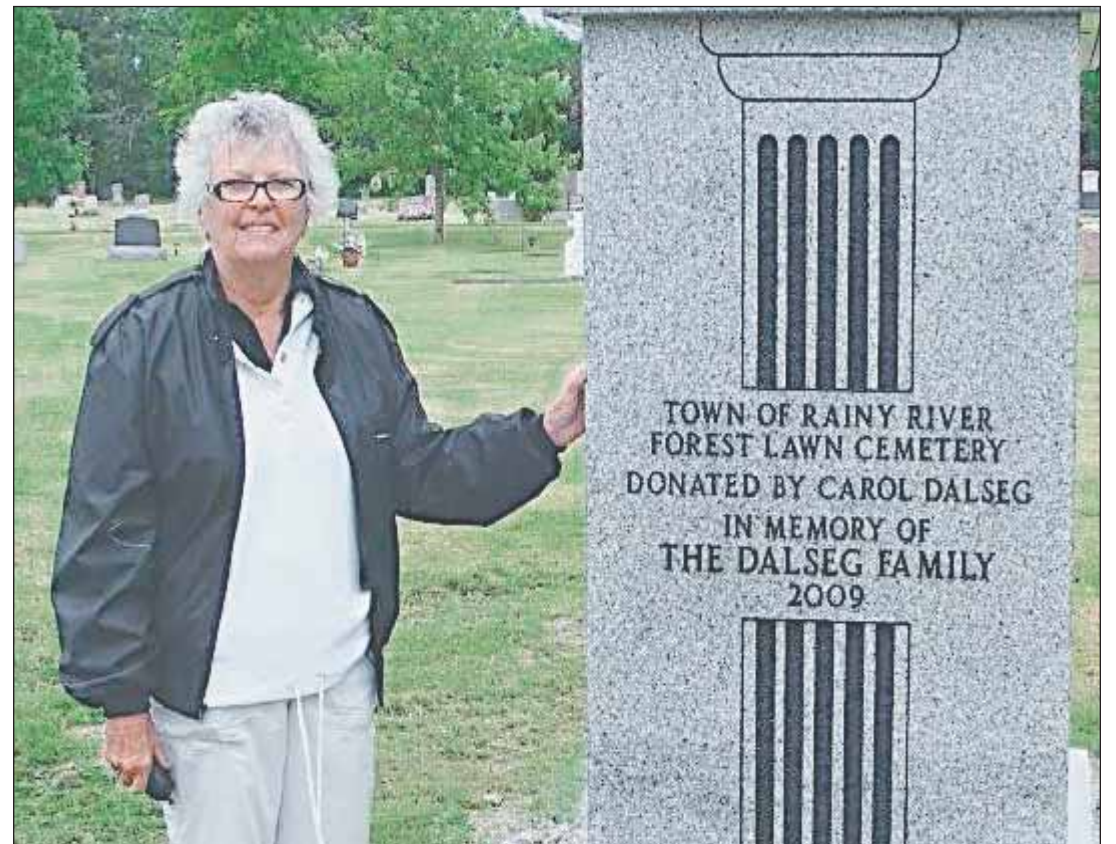
All our portages were double portages, carrying the canoe and one pack first, and then coming back for the second two packs. I grew to love the walk back with no load, enjoying the walk through the woods and sometimes stopping to watch the beautiful waterfalls along the way.

Janet is the best camper in the world. She plans the meals and prepares and packs the food for a two-week trip, knowing that we probably will be able to re-supply before that but preparing for the worst. The food is simple and easy to prepare. We carry only a one burner stove powered by camping gas, a couple of pots, a frying pan, two plates, two forks a spoon and our Swiss army knives. We have pasta, canned meat, and fish, and we prepare bannock as we go. We use lots of peanut butter, Cheese Whiz, and canned Klick, things we don't eat at home but which taste great when we are tired and hungry and don't feel like preparing anything. We are very careful not to leave odours that might attract bears. We burn all burnable garbage in our campfire, even the steel cans before we crush them. It's amazing how little garbage you produce when you have to carry it out!

A few more lakes, some of them unnamed, and others with very descriptive names like Loonhaunt and Jackfish and we were in Lake Despair. We had fun trying to imagine how this

Please see Canoe Trip pg. 2

Rainy River receives an extremely generous gift



Carol Dalseg Peterson stands next to the beautiful addition to the Rainy River Cemetery which she donated to the town in honour of her family.



by Marlene Deschamps

Carol Dalseg Peterson lives in the Morson area, but was born in Rainy River. Family members such as her beloved grandparents Paul and Bricken Dalseg, her parents, her brother and other relatives are buried at the Rainy River Cemetery. Carol decided that she would

memorialize her family by donating a Columbarium to the Town of Rainy River.

The beautiful granite structure was unveiled on Thursday, July 9th. There are 40 niches and each can hold 2 urns.

Carol, along with Ken Noble, has worked very hard since October of 2008 when they pre-

sented the idea to Mayor and Council.

Carol said Ken worked with Brunet Monuments in Winnipeg and they did a great job. Total cost of the Columbarium was \$25,000. The only request made by Carol, after paying for this beautiful and serene addition to the Cemetery was to hold three niches for herself and her family members.

Carol felt this would be a tribute to those in her family who went before her and, since many people are opting for cremation today, it fit in with her plans to make this donation.

This is also a generous donation to the Town of Rainy River because they are the ones who will have added income from the sale of the niches. People who would like to purchase a niche can contact the Town in order to make arrangements for selection and costs.

Other communities that have erected columbarium's in their cemeteries found they were sold out of the niches in short order, so people might want to consider this if they choose cremation over burial.

A big thank you goes out to Carol for the generosity she has shown to the community she was born in.

RR Daze Boat Races



Rainy River's Railroad Daze celebration is the biggest town event of the summer and visitors from far and near gather to take part. This year there were dances, performances by musicians and a comedian, baseball tournament, parade and lots of great fun for the kids. One of the highlights of the weekend is the cardboard boat race in which participants have to build their own vessel and then race to win. There's tons of cheering and laughter as the paddlers struggle to stay afloat to the finish.

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