

TRAVEL LOG

David Small

Tue 30 May Day 01.

Prepared and broke camp. Put-in is just below the Robert Service Campground at the old water taxi site on the left bank. I use the 1:250000 map. 60 42 02"N 135 02 06 W.

1410 Launch. Some surprising rocks and whirlpools are here at White Horse Rapids, since we are over the head of navigation. Cyclists and anglers along the bank hail me and convey well wishes.

1915 Pass confluence of Takhini River.

1930 Encounter a floatplane taxiing on river. Pilot said he observed Lake Laberge yesterday. It is open and free of ice!

2215 Camp 2, 60 55 29"N 135 06 16"W, on right bank in a grassy area. Popular lore is that there are no bears on the left bank of this stretch.

Wed 31 May Day 02.

Looks like a sunny day.

1118 Launch and off. Transit various bends, take the river's new course through the old log barricade, and continue through many islands and detached sandbanks.

1315 Enter Lake Laberge. I must row steadily as there is no current. Stay on right side of lake in case a wind picks up. Sure enough, in the late afternoon a strong wind - gusting over 20 knots from the North makes such waves that progress is no longer possible.

1900 Camp 3, 61 05 32"N 135 04 36"W, on a lousy long stony beach. Setup tent and pack gear. Wind is very strong with light rain through sun-breaks. Got the boat above surf line but cannot carry it because of the wind. Whitecaps on lake very impressive and sudden.

Thur 01 June Day 03.

1025 Launch. Proceed slowly as Lake Laberge has no current. Meet five Swiss paddlers, one of whom (Martin), caught a 75cm! trout in the Takhini River. They report the ice moved out early morning of 30 May, due to rainfall.

2004 Camp 4, 61 16 40"N 135 13 20"W, comfortable promontory with grass, pea gravel and two moss benches. Good view of small-detached island across lake. Burned some trash in an existing fire site.

Fri 02 June Day 04.

Light pelting rain. High overcast.

1111 Away we go. Calm as a reflecting pool. I encounter the same five Swiss paddlers. Soon it is warm enough to be shirtless. In early afternoon, at 1400 a high wave pattern and whitecaps force a 20-minute wait on the beach. Continue towards Yukon River entrance.

1700 Enter Yukon River at north end of Lake Laberge. By 1730 all visual trace of the lake is far behind. The swift river displays its banks. Saw a cow moose and calf standing at waters edge. The cow grunted in warning as we rush past 20 feet away. Pass "U.S." bend and at 2200 stop and inspect 17 Mile Wood Camp.

2230 Camp 4, 61 33 49"N 135 06 30"W, on the mossy peak of a gravel bar. I had an absolutely wonderful time today on the swift river. Hauled out on a snow bank!

Sat 03 June Day 05.

Looks like a good day.

0856 Away we go.

1230 Teslin River confluence. Continuing on I pass the site of Hootalinqa and see, fleetingly, remains of old river steamers and derelict cabins. After about 1400, the weather started to become quite cold with rain, wet snow and hail tormenting me in between sun breaks. This continued all afternoon. I am very happy to stay warm and dry in my new Gore-Tex parky & trousers - as if sitting by the fireside, great gear.

1750 Cassiar Bar - not at all pretentious. Noted many of the benches in this area are very narrow with steep inclines leading to the sharply incised river course. Most of the south side benches carry a 1? or 2? foot overburden of snow. Not many attractive campsites.

1914 Big Salmon River confluence.

2000 Camp 5, 61 55 03"N 134 56 14"W, on a sandy bank across from a prominent earth rampart. Three miles up from Big Salmon. North bank, very nice.

Sun 04 June Day 06.

A nice clear blue morning.

0949 Launch. Swift moving river, the high bench obscures mountains.

1225 Byer's Camp on right bank.

1637 Little Salmon River confluence, followed by the abandoned settlement of Little Salmon. I observe a roadway, several power lines and a graveyard.

1845 A motorboat-up bound. Noted several put in sites along river. The weather Changeable - shirtless and hatless to full suit up and back again. I must have changed my gear 15 times.

2041 Camp 6, 62 03 58"N 136 01 56"W, an indifferent but convenient shallow grassy ledge on the right bank. I am about 7 miles east of Carmacks, 12 river miles.

Mon 05 June Day 07.

A clear blue sky. River up 12" with debris.

0957 Underway.

1322 Pass under bridge.

1335 Land at Carmacks. The settlement is prominently situated on left bank on an inside bend. A small inclined launch ramp is near campground. Safe water is available at campground. I did some light shopping at the general store.

1450 Depart Carmacks.

I see other paddlers as I near Five Finger Rapids near Coal Mine. They are in a two seat Klepper, moving quickly. I don a one-piece Mustang Suit and life jacket. Tie everything tightly and keep to the right channel.

1837 Transit Five Finger Rapids, right channel. An eventless and strait forward passage - it is important to go STRAIT THROUGH THE RIGHT CHANNEL and avoid the very strong countercurrent at the right shore.

1950 Transit Rink Rapids. KEEP TO THE EXTREME RIGHT SHORE. The further down the river you go, the more obvious the safe area becomes. My complete transit finished in reflective smooth water - because I kept to an oars span of the right bank.

2205 Camp 7, 62 20 49"N 136 29 09"W, on a sandy flat bench island just above Yukon Crossing. There is few campsites available right below the rapids and I spotted this one late. It has several very old fire pits. Minor mosquito nuisance. Seventeen river miles to Minto. Generally, a sunny warm day in 60F range with little wind.

Tue 06 June Day 08.

Warm and calm, with high cirrus clouds. River level down 6".

1033 Launch and away!

1355 McCabe Creek - passed on right. See a black sow bear on right bank with two or three cubs. Photographed.

1505 Minto on our right.

Later see a sow grizzly with one cub romping on shore. She has a multicolored coat with a dark ?saddle? on her back.

1748 Hellsgate Rapid - actually very mild ripples. I kept to the left and noted large stones placed as markers for navigable channel limits.

1914 Pelly River confluence. This opens suddenly and the significance of the dark butte becomes apparent - it can be seen a great distance. The large butte is the cutting edge of the Pelly River. At the confluence, currents are very swift and the river suddenly very wide in an incised channel with few minor gravel bars. I rush headlong in the swift current to Fort Selkirk.

1930 Fort Selkirk on left bank and easily seen. Some motor craft in evidence but no paddlers to be seen. It is hard to find a reasonable campsite and I scout several islands - a difficult search with the sun low in my eyes.

2130 Camp 8, 62 49 20"N 137 38 09"W, on a high bench in front of an island. Very steep bank but good flat raised area - complete with two campfire rings next to where the tent would go! I forgot to mention that I saw a moose in the Ingersoll Islands as I went by - sure glad I did not take a short cut and surprise him! The weather was mostly clear, warming to 70 or 80F so I went shirtless. Now looking at a gibbous moon, listening to mosquitoes. Noted a 15 knot easterly wind since noon. Took my long johns off today.

Wed 07 June Day 09.

Mostly overcast this morning - 6 oktas.

1005 Launch.

1400 Selwyn River site to left.

1656 Britannia Creek site to left.

This area is very difficult to visually navigate due to recurring similarities between the bends, mountains, and streams. I missed Coffee Creek somehow but saw several bald eagles. Looking hard for a campsite but the ground offers only low muddy benches and thickets.

2130 Kirkman Creek site to left.

I have scouted six islands and made several ferries across river, only to find bad campsites. The low sun and late hour make distant evaluation difficult. 2330 Camp 9, 63 02 42"N 139 30 52"W, a very low spit on an island head. Not safe but it will have to do. Easterly winds, mostly sunny, a rain shower and late clearing.

Thur 08 June Day 10.

Dawns high-scattered clouds - 3 oktas, overcast, and 55F.

1020 Off and away!

1220 White River confluence. The great amount of sand and silt in the water makes a hissing noise on the inflated raft hull.

1445 Stewart Island and the confluence with Stewart River Delta. A few structures are at the site on the right side, with signs reading, "Burkes Store?". One building is being consumed by the river's cut bank. A small low flying airplane, shining in the noonday sun like a huge dragonfly, responded to my wave with wing wobbles. Photos.

1820 Sixtymile River confluence to left, Ogilvie site to right.

2030 Camp 10, 63 44 06"N 139 42 44"W, on the end of a very small island - a high sandy bench with many little plants. Took a cold bath in the Yukon. A few rain sprinkles. I had light winds and 70% sun during the journey.

Fri 09 June Day 11.

Bright sun, 3 oktas, overcast this morning. The river is rising evidenced by both the shoreline and the many floating logs. I attribute this to snowmelt in high mountains. Estimate 1' rise in 24 hours.

0935 Launch. A north wind from noon on. Lots of walking rainstorms and sunny spells.

1530 Dawson. Tie up at city float, what a mistake! I should have gone across the river to West Dawson where the campgrounds and paddlers were. The River is too strong to ferry over. I should have known this. I purchased supplies in Dawson.

1636 Out. Raining.

1820 Thane Creek at right.

1930 Camp 11, 64 15 36"N 139 45 38"W, nearly the last island for 20 miles. I wish to go on but there will be no campsites. It is about 40 miles to Alaska frontier.

Sat 10 June Day 12.

River up 1?, blue sky and hot sun.

1042 Underway.

1456 Fortymile River put-in road on left. Have seen many groups of campers situated on poor campsites.

1507 Fortymile River confluence to left. Numerous structures near confluence. Thunder and rainstorm over hills. Poplar, Cottonwood and Salix seed blowing in the air. Strong smell of wood smoke.

2131 Frontier USA/Canada (Canada time). Experience strong headwinds and sudden rain showers. Change datum on GPS to USA "1927 North American Datum?". Shift all clocks back one hour to conform to Alaska Time.

2031 Transit international boundary USA/Canada (USA time).

2245 Eagle. Land at "Public Boat Landing". This is the wrong place to land! The boat landing is posted "No camping" and there is no alternative spot to camp on this end of town. The proper place to land and camp for paddlers is on the down river end of town. Beyond the sheet piling at city front and just before the great stone bluff, there is a wooded section with many campsites. It is locally known as Mission Camp. Land at the cat-cut in the bank, 64 47 33"N 141 12 06"W or 100 feet downstream in a still water slough. Lower water conditions may allow the sandbar to show. Much heavy ice remains at river's edge during and after passing Eagle. Evening very cold.

Sun 11 June Day 13.

A very interesting day visiting Eagle. Observed many historical Alaska artifacts and records. Grocery shopped. Visited with Mark, Helen, and David who live in a tent with their seven children.

1435 Underway.

1901 Tatonduk River confluence.

2030 Camp 13, 65 04 03"N 141 21 30"W, an indifferent camp at the end of a large island.

Mon 12 June Day 14.

314 miles to Beaver, about 120 to Circle.

1015 Shove off. Beautiful wide river, swift current and high mountains. This is the Yukon Charley Rivers National Preserve.

1721 Nation River confluence.

1910 Lightning storm with violent winds and cold rain.

1920 Camp 14, 65 20 35"N 142 42 03"W, on the end of an island. Good camp.

Tue 13 June Day 15.

Mostly clear and cool with high clouds. River steady at high water. Distant thunder.

1207 Launch.

Passed but did not observe Charley River confluence.

1405 Coal Creek confluence to left. Cold wind, thunder and hailstones pelt me so hard my hands ache. This continues for about 4 hours. I often turn and run with my back to it so I can see. No ready landing on this stretch of river. Scout three islands settle on one for camp. It is a bit low and boggy but more thunderheads press a decision so at?

2130 Camp 15, 65 42 40"N 144 04 20"W, on the end of an island which was heavily scoured by ice at breakup. I am 7.5 miles from Circle and see lots of smoke, is there a fire at Circle?

Wed 14 June Day 16.

76 miles to Porcupine River confluence.

1120 Underway.

1200 Took left hand slough to Circle.

1300 Circle. The settlement is prominent on the left bank with good landing and a long sheet-piling rampart.

Position at boat ramp is 65 49 30?N 144 03 26"W. Natives on the rampart want to buy my whiskey (I have none). Purchased some coarse supplies, get water at washeteria, stamps at post office.

1440 Depart.

Encounter many squalls and violent wind bursts. Several thunderstorm cells are moving in the vicinity. This is part of the typical daily weather cycle of the Yukon flats, which starts at Circle.

1915 Camp 16, 66 04 36"N 144 21 11"W, the end of a brushy island. Noted the very swift current - over 10 knots!

Put up the tent quickly in the wind.

2000 Started to rain.

Thu 15 June Day 17.

Southwest wind 20 knots, gusting 30. River up 10" since last night.

1400 Wind stops a slow drizzle starts. Overcast.

1727 First sun break.

Fri 16 June Day 18.

1015 Underway.

1300 Sun breaking through.

1700 Sky now clear. At about this point we cross the Arctic Circle. See conspicuous settlement of Fort Yukon on right.

2000 Landing Fort Yukon. Landing flooded. Used the Yutana Barge Ramp.

Camp 17, 66 34 16?N 145 17 03?W.

Sat 17 June Day 19.

Water very high, it has risen 2? in 2 days.

1029 Underway.

Porcupine River confluence is among the river braids to the right. See very few possible campsites. River still rising and much driftwood in water.

2000 Camp 18, 66 26 30"N 146 54 32"W. On a large flat pea-gravel bank, about 3? up. The folds of many low rolling blue hills are showing to our west and south. I have crossed the Arctic Circle again.

Sun 18 June Day 20.

River up 3? this morning. The hills are far more apparent this morning. Beaver is at about longitude 147 24?W and 15 river miles.

1021 Underway.

1400 Beaver slough.

1410 Beaver, land at 66 21 31"N 147 23 25"W. Beaver is not easy to see before the slough. Be sure to KEEP TO THE RIGHT. Collect safe water. Store not open today.

1500 Underway. No accessible camps available due to high water. Many active mosquitoes. Continue rowing all night.

Mon 19 June Day 21.

0812 Stevens Village. Camp 19, 66 00 10"N 149 04 49"W. Stevens Village is not easy to see. Do not miss the turn to the right at the SLOUGH, WHICH is the entrance to the village. River now full of driftwood and rising slightly. I used the laundry, shower, store, and overhaul equipment. In beautiful conditions, it took 22 hours to travel the last 100 miles.

Tue 20 June Day 22.

Repack much of outfit.

1119 Underway.

1315 Wind then rain. Suit up!

1415 Leave the Yukon Flats at the valley entrance, the river now follows clearly incised banks with wooded hills on both sides. The water is quite turbulent here.

1515 After the first bend the scene is absolutely beautiful, the sun sparkles on the water like diamonds. I keep to the right after seeing the bridge and pipeline and follow the shore closely to spot a landing.

1800 Land about a ? mile above the bridge at a safe location, which turns out to be a hovercraft landing spot. This area is Posted ?No Trespassing?, which I discovered while scouting. I found the proper landing at high water (now) is located at the landing ramp on right bank and downstream from the bridge. This landing has a concrete deck. Do not confuse this landing with the first, loose surface ramp. The proper ramp position is 65 52 50"N 149 43 23"W.

Not easy to see and scouting is necessary. The current is quite strong. A good bench for camp 20 is immediately above and downstream of the ramp. A spectacular view of the Yukon River and bridge. This "Room at the top" has the best camp view yet.

2015 Establish Camp 20.

Today is the last day of spring. I have traveled an unbelievable 1,012 miles since leaving Whitehorse 22 days ago, moving grandly on the back of this huge brown beast.

Wed 21 June Day 23.

Today is the first day of summer. Sixty-five miles to Rampart, 75 more to Tanana. I will have a camp day at Yukon Bridge and overhaul my outfit. State of river; high. Cresting now at Eagle and predicted to crest here July 1. Much boat activity here. Met Tim and Tayma of Yookene Spirit a tourist excursion boat. They provided a lot of information about the river and the river delta. Tayma generously gave me her can of Bag Balm for my blistered hands. Thank you Tayma!

Thu 22 June Day 24.

A bright sunny morning.

0935 Underway

Pass Ray River confluence, to right.

1435 Pass Hess Creek, to left.

1830 Pass settlement of Rampart, conspicuous on the left of the bend. I did not stop at Rampart. Scout for camp.

2200 Camp 21, left bank. 65 29 16"N 150 34 57"W

Fri 23 June Day 25.

About 60 miles to Tanana.

1054 Underway.

The riverbank, while open at Rampart, closes after about 20 miles.

1400 Transit the rapids.

There are as many as a dozen fish wheels in operation. In addition, there are many fish camps and much boat activity. A visiting boatman said I was the first paddler of the year. Generally, visitors can stop at fish camps and it is possible to negotiate for fresh fish on the spot. I found the boatmen very knowledgeable, friendly and helpful.

A floatplane was visible on the right bank of the rapids. The water is smooth if you stay in the middle to start and then go to the left at the left bend. The day is calm, sunny and cloudless. I have seen no ice since the flats but many snow patches are visible in shaded hilly areas.

1900 Pass Sixteenmile Island. At lower river levels, this is a great place to camp. There is an Indian spirit camp at the downstream end. This year I did not stop. There is a light haze and wind from down river.

2105 Land and scout for camp at Tanana.

2305 Camp 22, Tanana Campground. 65 10 21"N 152 05 57"W. Tanana is a friendly and well supplied river settlement and sits prominent on the right bank. With the current high water conditions, the best stop is at the designated campground located next to the very large and interesting fishwheel operations area. It has an easy clear landing. There are benches, fire pits, an outhouse and lots of mosquito activity.

Sat 24 June Day 26.

Dawns hot, cloudless and calm. Tanana is mile 1152. A 130 more miles to Ruby and 58 to Galena. Galena is situated at the 2/3 point along the length of the Yukon River. Now my raft, tent and outfit are full of crawly bugs of all descriptions.

1450 Put in. There are racing motorboats on the river. The race runs to Galena. Six hydroplane boats are competing. There is a Bible Camp, which may serve as a campsite of necessity in these high water conditions. A passing boatman mentioned this. The smoke from two wildfires is visible.

2300 Camp 23, 65 08 50"N 153 17 58"W. in the trees on the left bank of Cronin Island. There is heavy smoke from the wildfires. A moose grunting at the boat landing awakened me. He splashed in and swam away.

Sun 25 June Day 27.

Very, very smoky, lots of boat traffic. Forty-one miles to Kokrines, sixty-six miles to Ruby. These high camps find the folding shovel very useful for clearing. Be sure to bring a sharp one! The river has risen about 8". South wind 10 Knots.

1054 Launch.

Very clear, high thin clouds followed by rain. Clearing and start of winds driving up river at over 20 knots. 1630 Forced landing due to waves caused by high winds. I am on the right bank and note much driftwood in the water indicating a rise in water level. Observed a fine grassy green bank with trees and a good landing called the "Kokrines Hills Bible Camp" which is on the right bank in the lee of Chokoyik Island. The Bible Camp is prominent and displays a U.S. flag on pole.

1930 Re-launch since conditions have improved.

2030 Land and scout for camp.

2100 Camp 24, 65 02 27"N 154 00 32"W, this is a high camp with bad access but a good grass boat ledge. Broke the rifle sling while scouting (I have had it since Cape Town, Africa and it has served me well).

2200 Wind has stopped

Mon 26 June Day 28.

This morning the up-river wind is strong battering at the trees. High thin clouds. Wait for improvement. River height steady. Noted a few logs, no smaller driftwood.

1505 Underway. Conditions slightly improved. Later, winds lighten to 10 MPS upstream.

2100 Kokrines to the right. Passed this modest group of cabins nearly hidden by trees. I did not land at Kokrines nor did I see any boats or landing place. It is very hazy - visibility diminished perhaps due to a distant fire. Sky completely overcast. After Kokrines, on the long stretch to Ruby, the river speeds up.

Tue 27 June Day 29.

?continuing night trip to Ruby.

0225 See the lights of Ruby at the bend.

0325 Land and scout camp at Ruby.

0415 Camp 25, 24 44 29"N 155 29 15"W, on a grassy patch immediately upriver from the sawmill. Ruby is easily visible on the left. THE CURRENT IS VERY STRONG HERE SO KEEP BOAT TO LEFT WHILE STILL WELL UPSTREAM.

1200 Now calm.

1605 Clearing trend from south. Wind 15 knots starts upriver.

Wed 28 June Day 30.

Morning overcast and cool. Wind SW 5.

1041 Underway.

Wind shifted to west. A lot of smoky haze. The sky cleared completely from NW at 1400.

2140 Land at Galena, scout. Camp 26, 64 44 29°N 156 51 57°W (at a field near boat ramp). It was a cold day, wore full suit. Water jugs leaking must add caps or tape shut water jug openings.

Thur 29 June Day 31.

Collected safe water and did some shopping in Galena. Many generous people offered rides and local information. It is cool - about 50F, with light airs, the river is down a little.

1300 Underway.

2100 Camp 27, 64 51 28°N 157 38 56°W on Megotsol Island. A narrow slough near Koyukuk just fits the raft. A high camp on Sphagnum Moss in the trees. River down - maybe 1?. Saw the Yutana Barge going upstream at 2115.

Fri 30 June Day 32.

Calm, clear and cool this morning. Camp 27 is right across from Koyukuk Mountain.

1135 Underway.

At the bend, we see a new island (not on the map!). Logs and driftwood.

1550 Nulato. I did not stop at Nulato.

2040 Camp 28, 64 31 45°N 158 25 39°W, on a grassy flat knoll - a former fish camp - dry and flat at any river condition. Tremendous amount of motorboat traffic.

Sat 01 July Day 33.

The river is down 10? since last night.

1045 Underway. An overcast sky moving from the west. Winds at 10 knots. No logs or driftwood visible.

1545 Very strong winds and gusts over 20 knots cause high breaking waves - seek the shore on 2 occasions near Four Mile Fish Camp located near bluffs on the right above Kaltag. Noted tracks (bear or wolf?) here.

1815 Kaltag. Land at western boat ramp, near river. Camp 29, 64 19 56°N 158 43 21°W. Residents of Kaltag report that the area is subject to very strong wind drafts due to proximity to ocean weather (30 miles to the west) and flat area known as the Kaltag Portage located between the settlement of Unalakleet on Norton Sound and Kaltag. The river continues to fall.

Sun 02 July Day 34.

4 oktas overcast. River dropped 1? last night.

0937 Underway. Various winds mostly from upstream. Increasing overcast from west, rain showers late. Fully overcast by 1900. Chatted with white people on a commercial fishing boat that came up river from the sea.

2210 Camp 30, 63 50 10°N 159 12 53°W, on a grass bench at cliff's base.

Mon 03 July Day 35.

7 oktas, overcast and cool. Sky clearing from south. Wind south 8 knots. River down 6? from last night.

1111 Underway. The terrain is rounded and hilly on the right with low headlands and islands to the left.

2305 Camp 31, 63 18 47°N 159 40 15°W, on a vegetated rocky incline. I have noticed fish jumping in the river several times. Not much boat traffic as I transit on a 140-mile stretch of no settlements between Kaltag and Grayling. This is also a traditional division between the Indian and Eskimo people. On the AM radio, a weak station from Nome is heard.

Tue 04 July Day 36.

7 oktas, overcast, wind north 5. Cool and damp. River has dropped 12? since last night. The river is now typically 3? to 4? below vegetation.

1022 Underway. The overcast blows off from the north by noon, and then covers the sky from the south by 1400. Light airs from upriver. As I pass south of 63 degrees, I note the bluffs more clearly define the river and Grayling settlement can be seen at 1715.

1845 Grayling. The settlement is a modest group of about 15 structures visible from the river on the right side and easily approached. Many boats drawn up on a broad approachable landing suggest a larger community in a vegetated area. I did not stop at Grayling. A new sandbar island is in mid-channel 4 miles south of Grayling - not on the map. The small sandbars on the map are actually mid-size islands boasting stands of trees. Very prominent

bluffs overlook river edge from right, at first, they are broken rock with slides, and then they become solid with sheer walls over 200' high. The approach to Anvik is very confusing as the map does not reflect the many sloughs and bars which are between the village and river. Very few of the structures are visible from the water, due to the communities flight from floodwaters. Another cause for my difficult approach was the twilight visibility at midnight. Entering channel after channel I kept to the right and headed south, east, or with the current. A morale booster during this confusing search was the sound of Fourth of July fireworks in the general direction of my travel. Where am I?

Wed 05 July Day 37.

After 2 hours in sloughs, I see Anvik 0100. Land at Anvik and scout.

0130 Camp 32, 62 39 25?N 160 12 08?W, above the modest Anvik boat landing below the little bridge on a grassy flat. Nice! Anvik marks mile 1,596 on the Yukon River - more that ? of the way to the Bering Sea. Hands are painful due to upwind rowing for several days. Have made much use of Bag Balm. Many boats here use marine VHF - communicate on CH 68. The river is now 3? to 4? higher than usual. Residents report they receive hourly weather reports on FM entertainment radio (I do not have FM). Two AM stations are audible, one very weak; the other is KNOM - Nome. At Anvik, I noted a number of two story houses and steeper pitched roofs. Most boats display a VHF antenna. Residents report that in the Yukon Delta there is a lot of wind action on the river due to a lack of trees after St. Marys. Forty-six miles to Holy Cross, 80 to Russian Mission. Renee is the shopkeeper here. KNOM, Nome AM radio reports weather, both marine and Alaska hourly, with updates at 0400 and 2200.

Thur 06 July Day 38.

4 oktas, morning sky overcast, wind south near calm. River dropped another 1?.

1142 Underway.

1907 Yutana barge bound upriver passes our port side. Further, pass the delta confluence of Koserefski River. The strong upriver winds diminish to calm at 2200.

Fri 07 July Day 39.

0115 Land Holy Cross, a very muddy landing site recently visited by barge and heavy forklift trucks. As I paddled by the bluffs to the landing, I experienced very strong counter currents. Camp 33, 62 12 17?N 159 45 47?W, the only dry flat spot is this landing, with many mosquitoes. Nome AM radio very faint due to hills. The wind starts at 1000 and lasts ?til 2200. Today is full overcast and windy. Low hills create a geographic wind. I observed a down bound barge discharge cargo on beach at Holy Cross.

Sat 08 July Day 40.

River is down 3?. Rain at 0400.

1140 Launch. Overcast skies, some rain with wind, clearing late to 4 oktas.

2145 Camp 34, Paimuit. 61 57 52?N 160 14 25?W, a tough and muddy campsite in the still water slough near Paimuit.

Sun 09 July Day 41.

0500 Rain starts.

0900 Still raining.

Awful weather all day. Winds and overcast. Paimuit is an unoccupied and posted fish camp, which is deserted except for a small graveyard prominent on a hill. No facilities available.

Mon 10 July Day 42.

0700 Fog.

Paimuit fronts on a system of low hills, which encourage geographic induced winds. In the early afternoon met four fishermen in two boats who warned me about serious bear problems in the area. Bears reportedly robbing fishermen?s nets and driving people from the area. Immediately after, four black bears came to my campsite. They left slowly after seeing me! Packed gear and tent immediately, rifle in easy reach.

1720 Launch.

2300 Land. Camp 35, 61 57 29?N 160 46 23?W, a very wet sand ledge near Pearl Island at Tucker Slough confluence.

Tue 11 July Day 43.

A moose burped, grunted and bathed all night at this camp. Dawn was clear and calm.

0816 Launch. Various light airs, very clear and hot, about 85F.

1455 Russian Mission. Camp 36 (position withheld). Made small purchases in the store, could not use the washeteria since it was accessible only by key. Noted the boats are larger in this area and have I.D. numbers. The common pilothouse feature is no longer being used. My camp was tormented by a horde of 6-10 children. At midnight, they stoned my tent and took my boots. Residents helped me report this incident to the VPSO, a Sgt. Simeon Askoak who rose out of bed to assist me at my tent site. My boots were recovered but had been slashed with a tool. I have withheld the coordinates of Russian Mission, as I do not feel visitors or camps would be secure.

Wed 12 July Day 44.

It is 62 miles to Fortuna Ledge and a blue-sky morning. Glad to depart.

0945 Launch. Experience some geographical winds and a very swift current. Noted a lot of driftwood - is the river rising? Traffic of six or eight boats.

2050 Land - camp 37, 61 43 23?N 161 57 33?W, under a steeply inclined rock ledge. The AM radio is good and loud.

Thur 13 July Day 45.

High overcast, much driftwood in river.

1003 Launch.

1330 Marshall, is a settlement prominent on right bank of Poulos Slough. I took the slough due to prevailing wind and weather. Rain started early in the afternoon. I never saw the settlement Pilot Village.

1820 Rejoin Yukon confluence.

2040 Land. Camp 38, 61 59 53?N 162 36 09?W. I spent a very wet evening. A dark and wet surfaced island.

Fri 14 July Day 46.

Rain and high winds 15-20 knots cause waves. South wind. Camp day today. Very wet and muddy. Damp in tent.

Sat 15 July Day 47.

Rain and high winds, 20+ continues. Camp day again. Now it is wet in tent.

Sun 16 July Day 48.

Rain and high winds 15-20 knots, slight improvement. Very wet in tent. My sleeping bag and clothing are soaked.

1730 Yutana Barge up bound.

Mon 17 July Day 49.

Very dark with rain.

1240 Underway in a lull. Around Dogtooth Bend, it is a very shallow 6'. The wind works on open water and generates a significant wave pattern. The map is in error - no island at the turn. I pass the river confluence and stroke under the bluffs to the settlement.

1940 Land. Pilot Station. Camp 39, 61 56 24?N 162 52 21?W. Pilot Station is clearly visible on right bank of river; many boats are docked in a Stillwater slough at upriver end of settlement. I used a tiny island, at the entrance to the slough (at high water), as my campsite. It is both level and convenient. The single store does not open until 0900. There is no washeteria but safe water is available to the public. Pilot Station has an airfield, contrary to the map.

Tue 18 July Day 50.

A windy day. Due to the weather, I took the west slough route past Goose Island. The slough is the usual motor route. After the slough ends, the stretch to the mouth of Andreofsky River has very high waves. A DANGEROUS AREA. The slow moving waters of Andreofsky River are clear. Winds upriver 15 knots.

1955 Pitkas Point. Camp 40, 62 01 50?N 163 16 33?W. From the mouth of Andreofski River, the shore is girdled with a beach of black pea gravel with a modest incline. Some areas on the approach to Pitkas Point have a strong counter current. Pitkas Point has no store but a very good washeteria. A loose surface road to Saint Marys / Andreofski (5 mi.) and to Mountain Village (18mi) connects the settlement. There is a very good store at Saint Marys.

Wed 19 July Day 51.

Observe Yutana Barge up bound early AM. Wind east and increasing 20+. Heavy rain and active surf on beach. Met Sandra, a resident at fish camp. She offered to drive me to Saint Marys since she had business at the store. Very nice.

Thur 20 July Day 52.

First visit with paddlers - 2 more in canoe from Minnesota; my first meeting with travelers since I left Canada.

1330 Launch. Downstream gusting winds, rain, sun breaks but with a fair current.

1900 Mountain Village Camp 41, 62 05 09?N 163 41 59?W. I went to the store and found upon my return 20 minutes later, that someone had opened my pack. Nothing missing but an unsettling experience. Noted good radio reception from Nome (KNOM).

Fri 21 July Day 53.

A sunny calm dawn, 2 oktas overcast. River continues down 2?.

0905 Launch. I made an error due to map on section of slough passes. Took the long route, 7 ? hours exiting on the Yukon at Patsy's Cabin. A long uneventful row to ferry across Yukon to western shore, settled conditions.

2230 Land camp 42, 62 24 22?N 163 52 11?W, a muddy ledge on an access slough. Soon a boat with four Emmonak men stopped to talk, told me I was on the ?Eskimo Highway? and spoke of favorable weather report (NW winds) on TV weather. Offered me a fresh shot rabbit.

Sat 22 July Day 54.

Dawns calm. 6 oktas, overcast.

0830 Launch.

1030 Transit ?Head of Passes?. We are on the left, as we should be to take the south arm. The islands on the right are very difficult to gauge progress by since their tangents cannot be seen and the passes between them are not visible from this side.

1200 Lat. by GPS 62 32 18?N.

1300 Cabin on the river.

1400 Lat. by GPS 62 37 18?N.

1500 Position 62 39 55?N 164 07 03?W. Note: dozens of sandbars, both bald and vegetated, close to shore on river's edge. Not on map.

1530 At bend, decide to ferry over to other side. Very bad wave action and strong current on far side near the long sand island. No shelter at island due to cut bank height, so I row along at very edge with one oar in the bulrushes. West wind now 20+. Sunny with clouds, now 4 oktas. Fortunately, spot a narrow 40? beach and land. A VERY DANGEROUS CROSSING - sharp seas roll high and break white.

1700 Land camp 43, 62 42 46?N 164 41 48?W, good spot for tent on flat elevated grass ledge.

Sun 23 July Day 55.

Much rain, wind gusting over 20 knots, high waves. A camp day. Note river is tidal. BE ESPECIALLY ATTENTIVE ABOUT SECURING BOAT.

Mon 24 July Day 56.

Clear and cold. 40F. Visibility 8 miles.

0805 Launch. Winds become stronger - more than 15 knots from the west. Made two dashes to the bank for shelter with difficulty due to a lee shore high cut bank encumbered with many logs and broken wood.

1320 Kwiguk Arm (right turn) the settlement of Emmonak is visible at this point.

1355 Emmonak fuel ramp. Debark, scout riverfront, and discover camp of Susan and Eric on Emmonak Beach at slough near culvert. They have also transited the river's length.

1700 Camp 44, 62 46 35?N 164 31 27?W, village children present as usual.

Tue 25 July Day 57.

Cool, overcast, winds west and northwest. Arrange with Henry Johnson (?Howie?) for a pickup at mouth of Yukon, in Bering Sea. Pickup point is the east shore of unnamed island. Mrs. Johnson baked cookies for my trip!

Due to local tide and wind conditions, I planned:

- Depart after 2200 for calmest wind conditions.
- Unload raft and travel lightweight.
- Note the river is tidal by water height but current does not reverse.
- The tide is Diurnal (2 high, 2 low daily with 1 tide higher than the other).
- There is a navigation beacon - a bright flashing light - clearly visible on the island. USCG maintains it.
- Howie charged \$25.
- The large island mapped at the reversing bend is not there now.
- Because of west wind, I will favor the right bank as far as reversing bend, and then shift to left.

Current along the left bank leads straight to island shore.

2250 Underway.

Wed 26 July Day 58.

Visibility bad at night. I recommend a flashlight after 12 July. Howie went on to the island and lit a bonfire to warm up - a great second beacon. Steady stroking against a rising west wind.

0333 Land on island - arrive at Bering Sea.

Site 45, 62 48 10?N 164 50 55?W. Howie?s boat has enough room for the raft to be lashed on bow. Howie wishes to use this opportunity to hunt the traditional Eskimo quarry: Beluga Whale and Bearded Seal. Howie and his crew, Richard Levi, displayed the traditional harpoons used in hunting, and a pair of small caliber rifles used to harvest. We went to many areas in the delta, finally returning to Emmonak.

0615 Return Emmonak. I had gathered sample vials of water in the Bering Sea and noted it was not salty due to the Yukon River?s great power.

Thu 27 July.

Wind to NW 15 and 20, temperature 37F this morning. Overcast. Some rain, some sun. It has snowed in Barrow. Grant Air flight to Anchorage is \$300. Met Philip again ? a local resident. The settlement of Emmonak is well supplied and is the Yukon Delta air transport center.

Fri 28 July.

Morning rain and overcast. I visited Philip and enjoyed some moose stew. Shipped out three parcels by post.

Sat 29 July.

I confirmed my flight. I depart Monday morning. Evaluated the consumption of food as follows:

45 cans Spam - lasted to Pilot Station - 17 July 49th day.

72 packs ramen ? 4 left at Emmonak.

1 gal. rice ? 1 qt. left at Emmonak.

15 cans sardines ? 11 cans left at Emmonak.

4 jars instant coffee ? ? jar left at Emmonak.

2 gal. kerosene ? 2.5 qt. left at Emmonak.

In addition, I consumed about three boxes of Pilot Bread per week. Pilot Bread was available in most settlements. Occasionally I purchase fresh supplies and particularly remember a single onion purchased in Circle for \$1.37. Sometimes chocolate bars are available.