

## PREFACE

I FIRST MET OLAF HANSON when he called at my home in Nipawin, Saskatchewan. He began by introducing himself, then said he had read my books *North to Cree Lake* and *Face the North Wind* and wished to meet their author. During the visit, he told me he had asked his truck driver to stop here on their way from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan to Flin Flon, Manitoba, where Hanson had contracted to do some blasting on the claim of a hard-rock country prospector.

Hanson at that time was well past eighty. When I asked him why he chose to continue working with explosives at such an advanced age, he answered simply, "They tell me reliable people for this work are hard to come by these days."

I was aware that during our visit Hanson had been scrutinizing me thoroughly.

I heard nothing from him until one evening more than two years later. My telephone rang, and Olaf Hanson was on the line. He wanted to know if I would write his life story. He had put together a collection of notes and it was all ready for re-writing.

After I had several meetings with Hanson and read his notes, I was convinced that he did indeed have a story to tell. In fact, he is unique among the few whites who were the real roving pioneers in the northern

Olaf Hanson and his second  
wife, Margaret.

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wilderness before the coming of civilization and modern technology.

In Hanson's notes there are few complaints about the intense cold of mid-winter or the flies, mosquitoes, stifling heat and humidity while packing freight on the portages in summer. In person, his face is remarkably smooth and unmarked, and there is no apparent damage to his short but still stocky frame.

An iron-legged and eagle-eyed individual, he could find his way through the unmapped wilderness alone and afoot, without a compass, in all kinds of weather, in any season by day and, occasionally, at night—if necessary.

While Hanson spent many a long period in the wilderness, he has a great interest in people, and anytime he returned and found himself among people he became the instigator and the centre of activity. He possesses unusual drive even today. His willingness to help others has been so well documented in his notes that the reader begins to take this virtue for granted.

Although he has made a host of friends throughout the north country of Manitoba and Saskatchewan during his travels, he still possesses the ability to make new friends.

*A. L. Karras*  
Nipawin, Saskatchewan  
July 10, 1981

Olaf Hanson and his second wife, Margaret, lived in retirement in an area overlooking the North Saskatchewan River in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, until Mr. Hanson's death in 1981.