

EPILOGUE

IN THE YEARS THAT I prospected, I often located valuable mineral deposits. I never did find a deposit large enough to warrant a mining development. I kept searching for the bonanza that might be just over the next hill. If it was not there, I would then look on the other side of a muskeg where I might find traces of copper or silver or other minerals. This gave me the drive to continue until the summer season ended. All winter I was planning on going further north next summer as surely there was a rich mine there waiting to be found.

When I first got interested in prospecting, back in 1933, I met an old trapper and prospector at Beaver Lake. We were watching two other prospectors who were loading their two canoes with groceries and equipment to go to the Churchill River to look for minerals. Before they left my old companion offered this free advice:

“Boys,” he said, “Why don’t you stay right in this area and look under your feet instead of walking over mines to look for mines that are far away?”

At that time, we all had a good laugh at his remark but now I know it was most true advice. In that very same area where this advice had been offered, three producing mines were later found. My old friend did not live to see them in a region where he had trapped and prospected for many years.

At the time of writing, we are just beginning to locate the mining wealth of northern Saskatchewan. This is buried by muskeg and lake and overburden. With the advanced techniques of locating minerals, and transportation by air and by road on Highway 106 and Number 2, it is relatively easy to get to mineral country and to prospect.



Anyone who is interested in prospecting has the opportunity to do so, even if he or she is just spending a few days on vacation. Anyone can take a light canoe, tent and camping outfit, and supply of groceries, to gain access to the wilderness where an undiscovered mine surely exists. Plan your load so that there is no unnecessary weight and be prepared to pack from lake to lake. There are prospectors who travel alone but my advice is to travel with one or two others, one of whom should be experienced in such a venture. If there are three in the party, take another small canoe and a small outboard motor to tow it. Plan your journey by taking reliable maps for the area you intend to cover. For anyone who loves the outdoors, it could be a wonderful experience.

From the beginning of my travels in the wilderness until 1934, we had no aerial topographical maps. Our maps of those early times showed only the main rivers and the large lakes. To locate small lakes, I followed small creeks. These creeks would lead me to these small lakes and to larger creeks. I found creeks that ended in vast floating bogs. Sometimes, in spring and summer, I located lakes on a calm evening or early morning by listening to the call of loons. I found several lakes in my time by just following the sound overland. Lakes could also be located by climbing a high hill or a tall tree to sight a lake many miles away. We located lakes for trapping muskrat, beaver, and mink in that manner.

Nowadays, when we go north, we gather our outfit and maps, board a plane which puts us down on some small remote lake where there is a good camping place along with a small canoe so we can get around. We leave word with the pilot when he is to return to take us back or on to another location. Then we set up our tent and in a short time, we may be eating fresh-caught fish with our first meal. After a good dinner, we can unfold our maps and locate lakes by the dozen in only a few minutes.

The arrival of modern day maps ended the climbing of trees and hills and listening to the loons as methods of finding lakes.

During the early 1930s while I lived in the Pelican Narrows country, I was among the natives. All our neighbours were native trappers. I enjoyed their company and they were wonderful friends. Any time there was any interesting news, it was brought by those who came to visit. We

**One of Olaf Hanson's proudest
moments, at his very own roadside
historical marker near Gillingham Lake,
September 17, 1975.**

called it “the moccasin telegraph” in those days. I was always welcome at their homes and they were likewise welcome at our camp. I never locked my cabin door and I never had anything stolen. Any time we met while travelling, we stopped to make a cup of tea. If I had lunch, I divided it with them, as they did if I had none. We had a lot of fun around a cozy camp fire while sitting on our loaded toboggans with our moccasined feet on a bed of spruce boughs to keep our footwear dry. They always had a nickname for certain individuals, a nickname that stays with the person all his life. Here are a few examples—one chap they called “Pe Peto” which meant “Much Smoke” for that man seemed to always be smoking; another was “Min Sap We” meaning “Jam,” an item the chap loved to eat; another was “Ki Kiki Magees” meaning “Has nothing—is very poor.” I once had a fisherman working for me who let his beard grow. His name was Gerald but the natives dubbed him “Mistawan” meaning “Whiskers.”

About forty per cent of these people spoke English. Therefore, I had to learn the Cree language. I managed to learn enough to understand what they were asking me and I did manage to keep a conversation going. They became immensely entertained when I got so I could tell them stories in Cree but I never mastered the language altogether.

I have a lot of good memories of the natives and I miss their friendship and sense of humour.

As far back as I can remember, I always liked people. No one, regardless of his race, colour, nationality, or creed was a stranger for very long. It was a great pleasure to meet people and to learn of their problems and become their friend. Today, it is a great pleasure indeed to meet any of these people once again as old friends.

End of the Trail