

BRITISH COLUMBIA CANADA – AUG/SEP 2003

BY Percy Brewington

1.1 General

This year we were in quest of Steve's Mountain Goat. Of course we had the same goal last year; however, we spent the first part of that hunt seeking elk (which we did not find) and by the time we focused on Billies, the snow had set in and shut that off Wonderful trip, but no trophies of any species.

Some research by Steve indicated that northern British Columbia was the right place and Safari's Ltd. was the right outfitter. I am not a mountain climber, so decided I would not hunt this year but do a little fishing.

Past experience had told us to avoid Vancouver as the point of entry into Canada but a little study told us to try again

1.2 Location

The Safari's Ltd. location is remote and located on the Stikine Plateau between the Coastal Mountains and the Rocky Mountains. It is about a thousand miles north of Seattle. The craggy mountains reach up to 7000'. The elevation at the main lodge at Turnagain is 3500'.

British Columbia continues to require superlatives for its beauty, every area we have hunted in is exceptional and each has its own standout features. The Stikine Plateau has more glaciers and snowfields than we have seen before and that includes Glacier Park.

Our campsite was on Glacial Lake and it could have been the Alps. The white capped peaks reflect on the deep blue waters of the lake below. The surrounding

Day 2:

Smithers to Dease Lake (2 hours)

Dease Lake to Turnagain Lake (40 minutes)

Turnagain to Glacial Lake (20 minutes air, 6 hours/horse)

Northern Thunderbird flies to Dease Lake 3 times a week. It takes 2 hours unless non-scheduled stops have been arranged at one or two gold mine camps.

Dease Lake to Turnagain was on a Beaver float plane. (Dehaviland stopped making "Beavers" in the 60's. Of the 1600 made, 1300 are still in operation. A reliable plane that is much sought after.)

I was fortunate to fly from Turnagain to Glacial on Safari's Cessna float plane, while Steve rode a horse for 6 hours.

HUNTING:

We were scheduled to hunt out of our base camp for 8 days and then reverse our itinerary to get home.

1.4 Safari's Ltd.

The area is about 49 square miles and located on the West side of the Rocky Mountain chain in northern British Columbia.

We were the second of two goat/sheep and caribou hunts that BC Safari's offered this year. Following our hunt, they will have 3 moose/caribou hunts. They have a limited number of grizzly tags, and wolves may be taken during any hunt.

It turned out that there were 4 hunting parties out during our 10-day trip.

1 Steve for goat

Gene Overton guided Steve, Quinton was
wrangler #2 Jesse Smith for sheep

Keith Connors, guide and
wrangler #3 Bryan (Texas) for
sheep

Jason - guide, Silas -
outfitter #4 Fairbanks
Contractor for sheep

Allen - guide, Ray - wrangler

All the hunters had wolf and caribou tags. Bryan was the only hunter not to fill his primary tag, but he did get a Woodland Caribou and a wolf Everyone went home happy.

People
people

Glacial Lake Camp

Keith Conners - Keith is a hard working, intelligent, Irish Catholic who obviously knows how to have fun. He has been president of the "Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia" which is important to the hunting interests in British Columbia and their clientele. He and his partner Shawn acquired this area last year and formed "The Safari's Ltd." He previously had a lease further south in British Columbia. He served a lot of roles in our trip: chief administrator, guide, wrangler, cook, handyman, coordinator, pilot, etc. He is a good pilot and flies the Safari's Ltd. Cessna float plane.

Gene Overton - Gene is a fine gentleman who guided Steve and took good care of all of us at the Glacial Lake camp. He is 67 years old and held this hunting lease many years ago. That is when the Lodge at Turnagain Lake was built. It only took 8 days to erect it (after the timbers, etc. were skinned of bark). Gene has a farm in the southern part of the Yukon and operated and repaired heavy equipment during the construction of the Alcan Highway. To me, he is a true pioneer, valuing everything and seeking the practical use for everything from a piece of discarded wire to a 32-ton jade boulder. He bulldozed the jade up during the highway construction and managed to haul it to his front yard. Selling it years later provided for his daughter's education. She now works for the Ministry of Transportation and Highways and had a principal role in the reworking of the highways and access walks at Smithers. One of his sons has worked his way from equipment operator to management with the Caterpillar Company. He is proud of his children, his wife, and his farm.

Gene worked with Quinton, our inexperienced wrangler, to teach him the basics in

handling horses and wrangling and to help him overcome being overwhelmed by his first real experience with a camp full of strangers.

He guided Steve to find his mountain goat trophy one day and to get it the next. Pretty effective.

Gene a humble, honest gentleman made our trip successful and very satisfying.

Quinton - Quinton is 21 years old and had just finished Wranglers School and this was his first experience, as a wrangler, and at first it obviously overwhelmed him. It also appeared that he had little experience with horses and was not comfortable with them.

Gene Overton took special time to help him. I fished some with Quinton and he was obviously more comfortable one-on-one than with a camp full. Both Gene and Keith helped him in this regard. It must have worked, Keith surprised him by keeping him on for the next hunt.

Jesse Smith - Jesse, probably in his early forties, had returned to Safari's Ltd. after an unsuccessful hunt last year. He got a ram on this trip. Jesse has a 400 acre rice farm north of San Francisco and is obviously a moving force in the Falls River "Co-op" which successfully markets a pre-cooked rice. He had been a mechanic in the "Bay Area" for several years and a few years ago decided he wanted to do something else. He is a bachelor and seems to be enjoying life. It was a pleasure to hunt with him.

Camp 2

Bryan - Bryan is from Houston and fits the bill for a Texan. He is tall, slim, has a broad smile, and is in the oil business. He is married with children. He, too, hunted unsuccessfully with Safari's Ltd. last year. He left early last year since he had not gotten in shape for the riding, hiking, and camping. He had a more successful trip this year. He also made a good traveling companion.

Jason - Guide for Bryan.

Silas - Wrangler with Bryan. Silas was at Dease Lake when we first arrived there. He had a little 3-month-old baby girl in the crook of his arm. He and his girlfriend's. Silas, probably in his 20's, also guides for fly fishing. He recently had his picture, with a trophy fish, on the cover of a major sporting magazine. Silas hopes

to have his own Guide Service some day. His father is a Guide. I fished, very little, with Silas on Turnagain Lake. Didn't catch anything.

Camp 3

Fairbanks Hunter - Can't remember his name, but he was the character of the crowd. He is a Building Contractor in Fairbanks where they have only 4 months suitable for outside construction. He is a short, lean guy in his forties with a mustache and big smile. Quite a talker. In the winter he "runs" about 50 miles of "Trap Lines" to get money to support his hunting. He drove his ³/₄-ton pickup from Fairbanks to Dease Lake for this hunt. A 20-hour drive. He got his ram early hunting out of Turnagain and was anxious to get back to Dease Lake to start the drive back to Fairbanks. He was a very entertaining guy, and I wish we had had time to hear more of his tales.

Allen - Guide

Ray - Wrangler. Ray is a young man who looked good in his full black beard. As it turned out, he has a BS in some kind of Genetics. He also had recently returned from Bosnia and was glad to get back to North America "where the women don't have mustaches".

Horses

Horses are important in this type hunting. Not only for riding, but for packing in food and gear, and for packing out trophies and meat.

Not being a horseman, and preferring float planes for access, I was happy to have had only two "saddle ups" and one short ride. To me one of the most important

functions of horses on this trip was to wear tingling bells for my musical wake up in the morning and peaceful retirement at night.

Names given horses are usually interesting and often have sprung from some reasonable, if not apparent, inspiration.

These are the names of our Glacial Lake Horses:

Bay - Big Bay Mare with Blaze and Swollen Right Rear Allain

- Big Bay Gelding

Buckshot - White Gelding, DD Brand Right Shoulder Bingo

- Sorrel Gelding, DD Brand Right Shoulder Banjo - Small

black dun Mare

Mav - Big black Gelding white blaze

Johnnie - Sorrel Gelding with short red mane

Simba - Sorrel Gelding with blond mane and tail

Captain - Small red Gelding

Shawnee - Black/Grey Mare - Big

Sweetheart - Big Sorrel Mare with scar over eye and short tail Willy -

Black/Brown Gelding

Whitey - White Gelding with pink nose/eyes

Voo Doo - (Description vanished)

Bo - Small black Gelding

Brutus - Big Bay Gelding - white on left cheek

Day 1
Smithers

Thursday, August 28

Surprising

I met Steve at his house at 5:00 a.m. We covered a lot of ground today; Knoxville to Atlanta (30 minutes), Atlanta to Vancouver (5 hours), and Vancouver to Smithers (2 hours). The flights were smooth. Vancouver always seems to be a choke point since you have to go through Customs, pick up bags, check in with a new airline, and go through security again. Checking a rifle adds to the procedure. The activities are spread across an attractive, but widely dispersed terminal. Vancouver is a major international airport and also provides connections to cruise ships. All of this provides for great people watching: all nationalities, all standards and styles of dress, all ages and all degrees of anxiety from mothers traveling with small children and tight connections to old folks blissfully following a tour director. Steve and I

fell somewhere between, we did have a close connection, but he knew all the steps and locations and confidently took the lead. I was the blissful follower now remembering when that had been my job. As the time to our connection evaporated, his confident smile turned to grim determination. When we got to our connecting Air Canada flight on time, all anxiety disappeared, we had made our final connection, and a sense of relaxation that was to last 10 days settled in. Boarding time slipped a couple of hours. We used that time to patronize an adjacent pub for a sandwich and a couple of local draft beers. Really relaxed.

We got to Smithers about sundown. It is a really nice, neat town that has recently improved its roads, walkways, and landscaping of public grounds. A special job. Steve said, "Dad, it even smells clean."

The motel was nice and folks friendly. We had dinner at a good local restaurant. A lot of miles. A good day.

Day 2
Stars

Friday, August 29

Look at the

Woke up at 7:00 a.m. to the rumble of a huge diesel truck resonating my bones. It was a pleasant feeling. Dozed back off and woke again in a few minutes. The truck had left. I missed the resonance. Looked over at Steve's bed, he had one pillow wrapped around the top of his head. I thought, O Lord, I must really have snored last night. I asked him about it when he woke up, he said I hadn't snored, but a sliver of light had gotten in his eyes. The sun was shining brightly through a crack in the shades announcing another beautiful day that obviously would also be unusually warm.

We left Smithers for Dease Lake at 11:45. Weather still beautiful. Spent the time between breakfast and take off listening to Don Horn, as Texas farmer, 30,000 acres milo and cotton. He entertained us with tales of his worldwide hunting experiences.

The terrain we flew over was rugged and craggy with a lot more snowfields and glaciers than I had anticipated. Also, quite a lot of timber cutting on the foothills. None of it

looked like it had been done recklessly. Only a small percentage of the timber had been taken. Crossed a couple of large rivers, often with white water rapids as viewed from our cruising altitude of 20,000 feet. The snow cover fell off as we reached the Spatzi Plateau. Still occasional smaller glaciers. Rugged snow capped mountains continued to the west. There are a lot of lakes, big and small, scattered across the plateau. Scatterings of small clouds below us and some wispy thin clouds above. A lot of barren land with treed valleys along small streams looks like great "game land". About a 55-minute flight to Dease Lake.

We left Dease Lake at 3:13. Bruce, our pilot, is not a humorous man, but is an experienced pilot. Bruce's plane was a Dehaviland Beaver. The embossed metal Dehaviland

name plate below the "throttle" and "mix" levers was worn nearly smooth from his use.

Five hunters gathered at Turnagain Lake. It was 72°.

Appropriately, we had moose sausage and/or salmon sandwiches for lunch. We figured out the maps and marked ours up. Steve and I are to go with Jesse

Smith and guides to Glacial Lake base camp. Steve will hunt goat to East, Jesse sheep to West.

With time to spare, Steve and I took a boat and went out fishing. The wind was blowing. About 6:00 it laid down. We noticed some fish breaking the water about 7:15 and went over. Steve hooked a small one and then a much larger one. Both got away. He then caught 2 Grayling. He thought he heard a moose mewling. He spotted a moose cow about 400 yards away on a small island. We motored over. It was a cow with a calf They swam to an adjacent island. By that time, it had cooled off so we motored back to camp.

The camp at Turnagain is like a resort. The lodge itself looks new although it was built over 30 years ago by Gene Overton. Gene had the lease for this area then. The logs were cut, shaped, and peeled on site. It only took 8 days to put it up. In the 1990's, the outfitter catered to Germans and put hardwood over the previously plywood floor. So clean we left our shoes outside. The smaller hunter cabins were built in 1988.

Steve said it resembled the "Dude Ranch" he and Mary took the kids to a couple

years
ago.

We got to bed about 11:00.
At 2:40 Steve asked, "Daddy, are you asleep?" I was not. He said, "Come out and see the Northern Lights and Mars, they're beautiful." The sky was also full of stars.

Day 3
Versus Ride

Saturday, August 30

Fly

Up at 6:15. Temperature 44°. Slightly overcast, but a few pretty pink clouds.
We sorted equipment: what to leave at base camp, what to put in canvas bed rolls (to pack on the horses), what to put in pack to carry, and what to put in duffel bag for the plane. Helped Steve roll bedrolls. He is handy at all aspects.

Ate breakfast: hot cakes, bacon, juice, and coffee at 7:15. Keith asked Steve if he would mind taking a bucket of bones, etc. out into the lake so they would not attract bear. I rode along. We also took the spinning gear. On one of my early casts, I fumbled around getting the reel set which allowed the lure, a red Mepps, to sink deeper. When I started to reel in, a 2-3 pound Lake Trout took it. Good fighter. Our first look at a Lake Trout. Steve noted, "The first of many."

Back at camp, Keith and Gene were working hard to get the horses ready for the trek to Glacial Lake, about a 6-hour ride. Fortunately, for me, I was going to fly over with Keith in his Cessna float plane. He was going to make a couple of trips to lighten the load on the horses.

It's a heavy work day for Keith: his partner is out with a broken foot, his cook is off this week, and his wrangler did not show up. In any event, he and Gene got the horses packed up and the string took off at 11:40. Steve was riding "Simba". The trail was from Turnagain to Glacial. It was neither well cleared nor well marked. Keith had set up a turn off point that differed from the one Gene was familiar with from years ago. Accordingly, Keith agreed to lead the pack train to that point and then come back to fly the Cessna float

plane over. The pack train included all 16 of the Glacial horses. Steve had to lead two horses, which made for

When you walk on the floor, it sounds like a drum and bounces like a trampoline. They had sited the tent in a clump of fir trees for protection from the wind. As we were to find out, the wind can whip.

Keith and I put up the first tent so I would have some shelter. I went with him back down so I could get another load and he could fly back to Turnagain. By the time I got back up to the camp, a warm rain had started.

Keith flew in at about 4:30 .with another load, including the second tent which we put up (over the wet deck). He made another trip down to get the stove.

The pack string pulled in about 6:00. Keith and Steve took a couple -of packhorses down to get the rest of the plane load.

Gene, in his quick and effective manner, put the stove up, got a fire going, and produced a dinner of steak, mashed potatoes, beans, and coffee. Tasted great. Everyone was in the sack by 9:00. It rained off and on all night.

Day 4

Sunday, August 31
the Rain

Make Do in

Gene got up at 6:15 and the rest of us strung it out till 7:00. I vowed not to get up until 7:00. Rain had stopped. Dusting of snow on mountaintops. Some fog, some sun, etc. Could be a decent day. Cooler.

Breakfast: bacon, eggs, toast, and orange juice.

Sprinkles continued.
Horses hobbled, but gone. Gene went searching. Steve and Jesse did dishes, then chopped wood.

Steve dragged the canoe ¹/₂ mile from camp down to the lake for me. What an effort, what a man. We tried to fish, but it was too windy. Steve went back up to get binocs

and spotting scope so he could spot while I fished. Neither yielded anything. Jesse came down and said he and Gene were going to go pick up the horses and also see what they could spot. I fished down to outlet stream but it was too windy.

Keith flew in with Quinton about noon. Went back out about 1:00. I went back up to camp, got there about 1:30, met Quinton.

Steve, Jesse, and Gene went to pick up horses which despite hobbles had grazed off. They also scouted. Found horses but no critters. Steve rode Sweetheart, which was to be my horse. Said I'd like it.

Pork chops, corn, rice, and pineapple cookies for supper.
In bed 8:30. Got cold at 12:40 and put more clothes on. Keith got in

later. Rained off and on all day. Closed in all day with heavy cold rain.

Day 5

Monday, September 1

Crazy

Horses

Much cooler and frozen ice says it got below freezing. Much clearer - still some clouds. Keith, Gene, and Quinton got up about 6:15 to wrangle horses and cook breakfast. I heard a tinkle of bells about 6:45 - good news. Gene knocked over coffeepot, with comments. I got up and dressed warmly. Breakfast included oatmeal today.

Plan - Jesse and Keith long ride to East

- Steve and Gene to the South
- Quinton and I may ride up to head of lake where fishing is reportedly

good. Some snow on peaks. I went to fill Steven's water bottle - big pile of Grizzly droppings next to spring.

The hunters got off about 8:30. I walked down to the lake at 9:15. Takes about 15 minutes down, 30 back. Quinton had his morning chores done, so I suggested that he saddle up the 2 horses Keith had designated for our use. Quinton was somewhat reluctant.

I nearly spun the saddle off on my first mount. The girth was too loose and the stirrups were too short. I got off and Quinton lengthened the stirrups and at my request tightened the girth. Quinton thought we should take one trail, I thought the other. (It turned out that I was correct.) We even confused the horses. Quinton said, "Let's just walk." We did.

We left camp walking at 12:10. We went up the lake for 2 hours. Did not get all the way up. We traded off on the fishing rod and fished about an hour. No trout. We started back through the bush. We finally reached the trail, which had been beaten into six inches of mud. A cold rain set in. It was miserable. We finally saw the happy sight of smoke from the campfire. Steve and Gene had returned and built a warming fire and a clothes-drying rack.

The horses ran off. Gene and Quinton went up to find them. The pleasant tinkle of the horse collar bells announced their return.

Keith and Jesse got back at 6:00 wet and cold. Gene brewed up some fine sheep stew, which we needed to warm our innards. Quinton did not eat. (My guess is that Keith had a talk with him about his lack of enthusiasm.) Both Gene and Keith are trying to work with him in learning the "wrangler trade" and what is expected.

Day 6
in Sight

Tuesday, September 2

Trophy

It's still rainy, but not as cold. We ate breakfast at 7:30. French toast, moose sausage, pork sausage, and coffee.

Weather threatening, but Steve and Gene rode out about 8:30 to scout and glass. Jesse and Keith were also to go out; however, Keith and Quinton got collecting firewood. The 2 groups agreed to radio contact on the hour.

About noon, I saw my first blue sky in 3 days. Decided it might be worth a hike down to the lake. Keith said he and Quinton were riding down to pick up a tarp he had brought in the other day. They already had a saddle on the horse they were going to use to pack the tarp back and had saddled a horse for me. Okay, I got on first. Keith

helped Quinton get on. Although he is a wrangler, I think I have spent more hours in a saddle than he has. Keith got mounted, but Quinton couldn't get his horse moving. Keith dismounted and gave the horse a pull start. By the time Keith got back on his horse, Quinton's had stopped again. After heel kicks didn't work, Keith said, "Slap him on the butt." After the second slap, the horse bolted out of the gate. He Ha. In the mean time, I was circling trying to get last place in a string of 3. Took some maneuvering most would laugh at. Finally we got going down the steep and muddy trail. My horse did well except for one gallop to catch up. Not my joy, but it was short lived.

I told Keith I was going to fish. He said, "Quinton and I are going to try to get back to camp." About then a rainsquall set in.

I propped the canoe up on its side and got under it to weather the storm. The life jacket made a comfortable pillow and I rode out about 4 squalls, even slept a little. Splotches of blue

sky finally gave me hope, the rain stopped and I tried to fish in the following gale. No luck. Hat blew in the lake once, but the waves brought it back. I gave up at 3:00 and hiked the now even muddier trail back.

The others were splitting wood but stopped that to batten down the tent which the gale winds were whipping around.

Steve and Gene got back at 5:00. They had spotted a nice Billy out in an open area but couldn't get to him today. Will try him tomorrow.

Keith and Gene did some serious planning for tomorrow's adventures. Keith made some spaghetti sauce starting from scratch, a specialty of his. He planned it for tomorrow night. I told him it smelled too delicious to wait 24 hours. Jesse seconded that motion. Keith gave in, boiled the spaghetti, and we had it for dinner. It was as good as it smelled. Keith did manage to squirrel away enough of it in a plastic bag so he and Jesse could take it on their hunt, at least two nights under a tarp at the spike camp. (Jesse told us later that

on the second night out Keith found one and then another pints of rum he had squirreled away in the bush last year for emergency use. They finished both bottles although the endeavor about finished Keith who, by that time, had no desire for the spaghetti. Jesse ate it all.)

The wind whipped hard all night. At one time, Steve got up to try to move in further from__^{the} edge of the. tent platform. He got a slap in the face from the loose tent flap swishing in the gale: This was a good demonstration of why the tent was sited in the trees. It could not have survived being in the open.

Day 7
Stalk

Wednesday, September 3

The

A windy night calmed down and although it was cooler, it was not cold. Quinton turned out at 6:00 to wrangle the horses. Keith was preparing breakfast.

He had packed the cast iron frying pan and was using a ribbed aluminum pan to cook the pancakes. They came off the pan a very fashionable striped pattern. He also had made a 3grain "Red River" hot cereal. Based on past recent experience, Steve declined the cereal.

Steve and Gene got off at 9:30 to seek out the Mountain Goat they had spotted on Tuesday. Jesse and Keith were hustling to get started on their 3-day spike camp hunt.

I told Keith I was going to fish the Glacial Lake outlet stream. He told me he would have Quinton meet me at the stream head with a couple of horses to ease the trip back. We agreed to meet at 3:00 p.m.

I left at 9_30 and fished along the lake until I got to the stream head. At 11:-:00, I got to the stream and was putting on my waders, a little off the trail, when Keith and Jesse rode by. I voiced my "Good Luck" which surprised Jesse's horse and caused a minor rodeo.

At a nice hole below the first rapids, I had a strike and after a nice struggle landed an 18" grayling. I didn't know if it was a trout or a grayling until just before I landed it. I released it since I did not want to carry bear bait around with me all day.

I thought I had it made. Not knowing what to use, I had selected a Bead Head Hare's Ear and caught a fish in the first hole. It didn't work that way. I fished hard to catch 2 more grayling. However, it -as a lot of fun and good sport.

Quinton was at the stream head when I returned about 3:00, but there were no horses. I took my waders off and packed them up for the long hike back to camp. Quinton offered to carry my pack. Sounded good to me.

We got back to camp with time to spare and missed most of the rain. I trimmed and cut the remainder of the sheep quarter into steaks and put them into a weird mixture to marinate. At 7:00, I put the potatoes on and opened the corn and peaches and started the first steaks.

Gene and Steve came in at 7:30 with a fine goat and a great story: When Steve and Gene got to the glassing spot where they had spotted the goat from the previous day, they did not see him at the same spot he had been, about 2 miles away on the left hand slope. It was a long valley with low Alpine shrubs and grasses reaching up the slopes and giving way to rock and gravel glacial spoil that in turn gave way to rugged rock and finally dark gray peaks. White snowfields and glaciers filled some of the crevices. There were frequent rivulets draining to the valley below. The valley was wide and peaceful looking with the foliage starting to gain the autumn shades, mostly red with some yellow. They soon spotted the goat still to the left but now 3 to 4 miles away. Gene did not think the possibilities were good. The terrain was too severe to approach the goat from behind the mountains. Steve *suggested* a frontal approach horizontally by traversing the slopes on the *valley side* and then seeking a path for the closing stalk. He noted that the worst thing that could happen would be for the goat to see them and run away over the mountain.

Gene did not feel he could make such a long and strenuous approach. Steve suggested going alone and Gene finally and reluctantly agreed, providing Steve promised not

to get up into the rugged cliffs. Gene would be able to follow the entire stalk through his spotting scope.

It was approaching midday so Steve shed his extra gear. He tied his jacket around his waist and took off with his gun and binoculars. He stayed in the low foliage on the sloping valley wall checking the location of the goat frequently. He had to cross several of the small rivulets, each with its own obstacle of mushy tundra and shattered boulders.

It took about 2 hours to get to a point he felt he could spot the goat. The goat had moved into the lower rock outcroppings. Steve carefully peeked around an outcropping and caught a glimpse of white. He drew back immediately to plan the final stalk.

He chose a path through the boulders that would get him both closer and higher and proceeded on that now quite strenuous course. Finally, he reached a point where he could see the Billy. It was reclining, but on its front forelegs, majestically surveying its valley below.

Steve's heart was thumping and he had to force a rest till he could settle into a secure firing position. Finally, he calmed to the point that he could get his rifle in a position to fire. His sighting path was uncomfortably low so he untied his jacket and carefully placed it to provide a rest for the rifle. The sight picture was good, but all he could see was the goat's head a small patch of its chest. The rock outcropping the goat was kneeling on shielded the rest of its body. It was about 150 yards away. He debated whether to wait until the goat stood or to attempt the small target available now. He did not want to shoot the trophy in the face.

His heart was still thumping. He concluded he could not sustain this position much longer. He took a deep breath, put the sight in the small area a little below the goat's jaw but slightly above the rock, and gently pulled the trigger. He saw a puff of white hair fly from behind the goat and felt that he had a good clean fatal shot. He stood up and faced back down the valley toward the point where Gene was watching and raised his arms and the gun in triumph and gave a rebel yell.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the goat trying to get up. He turned quickly and shot again, probably nicking the goat's horn. The goat turned broadside, and Steve took a third and finishing shot. He again turned, looked toward Gene, raised his arms, and this time shot into the air Madam style. Gene had been able to watch the entire stalk and action through his spotting scope.

Steve then proceeded to dress the animal, but first looked at the panorama around him. He said it was worthy of the cover of "Outdoor Life". Unfortunately in lightening his load, he had left his 8-ounce camera with Gene.

He had one more thrill as he was skinning the goat, which was worthy of a full body mount. As he was trying to break the right front ankle bone to include the hoof in the cape, the goat started to slip off the ledge and down the shear face of the cliff behind which led to oblivion. Steve g^{sped} the leg and pulled the animal back saying, "You sucker; you're not getting away now."

Gene was happy and proud for Steve and the stalk he had made. He told me later, "Your son made one hell of a stalk." Gene does not use profanity, but that did seem to be the right word.

They took pictures, packed the goat, and headed back to camp. I was frying sheep steak and boiling potatoes when they got there. The excitement, congratulations, and pictures took so long we had to rekindle the fire to finish cooking.

Yes, indeed, it had been "one hell of a stalk" and I'm not sure who was proudest of the fine trophy: Steve, Gene, or I.

We started out in the canoe shortly after breakfast. We had a light breeze at our backs, which aided progress. We started close to the bank. Occasionally we found a promising looking spot that earned a few casts. We also trawled a lure from the spinning rod but with no luck. When we got to the head of the lake we beached the canoe for awhile, and I put on waders and tried fly-casting. Still no luck. Finally, Steve caught a nice Lake Trout on the

only lure, a red and white Mepps #8 spoon, that had shown results at Turnagain Lake. He said, "Dad, here's lunch." On his next cast, the lure just keep going, the line had either broken or the knot untied. He rowed quickly to the point where the lure had hit the water, the deep deep blue water that was at least 20' deep. No chance of recovery. We both chuckled over his success and failure.

I told Steve I was going to fly fish up the entrance stream. It was a nice looking piece of water with several nice holes and rapids. It had many large boulders that Smokey Mountain trout would rest or feed behind. I was intent on fishing. I finally looked up and there he was grinning and watching. He said, "Dad let's have lunch."

Back at the shore and at the canoe, he had started a small fire and continued to stoke it into a bed of coals. He had packed a grill and some salt and pepper and preceded to clean, fillet, and cook the trout over the small grill he had brought from camp. I had stretched out on the beach with my head on a moss-softened stump and gone to sleep, He woke me and said, "Sir, here is your trout on a plank" and presented the nicely browned fillet on the canoe paddle. Fine feed.

Suddenly, fish began to dimple the surface. I tied on a fly and waded out to try the action. Finally, a fish dimpled the surface within my range. I cast at the dimple and hooked,

then landed a 12" grayling that put up a nice fight. As quickly as they had started, the fish stopped jumping. After casting at nothing for a few minutes, we decided to start back down the lake which now was perfectly calm.

Again, we would cast and then troll with a small mirror lure on the spinning rod and a small spinner on the fly rod. By this time, we had become familiar with the canoe and fell into a rhythmic rowing cadence that had us skimming across the water. We headed for a point that had a wall of huge glacial boulders that had fallen nearly vertically into the lake. As we rounded the corner away from the sun, my line snagged. I said, "Son, I've hung up." Then the rod began to dance. He said, "Dad, you've got a fish on and it's a nice one." We knew it was a

Lake Trout since it headed straight down. The rod bowed into a sharp curve and the tip went down steeply and almost under the boat. Steve said, "Dad, don't break the rod, loosen the drag." About this time, the fly rod started to leave the boat. Steve grabbed it, he had a fish on too. We roared laughing. Finally, I lost my fish but just in time to net his with my small fishing net -just right for Tennessee small stream trout but hardly adequate for these nice big Lake Trout. On my next cast, I did not get a strike but saw five large trout follow it toward the boat.

Steve hooked another trout just jigging the small spinner about 20' deep with the fly rod. He ^{yelled}, "Dad, does this line have backing?" The trout was running line off quickly as it dived for the bottom. He turned it before the line got to the backing. I reeled in my line and watched the struggle as he landed another nice trout. I lost 3 more in a row and told him that we needed more production so we changed rods. He quickly caught another fish. He was reeling in again when I heard this anguished yell and looked around. The trout had followed the lure in all the way under the boat and took it at the surface splashing water in his face. We had another big hee haw.

I had the spinning rod and saw a big trout follow the lure up. I knew it was going to strike and set the hook hard. It started down. I had the drag set pretty stiff but it hardly slowed the trout. I got it up in sight again, and we could see it was the fish of the day. It went down again. We both wanted the fish badly because of its size. Steve was determined that his Dad land this fish since I had lost several. Finally, I got him up on the boat again. Steve jabbed the net at him but he didn't fit in. He was afraid I had lost him but the fish was still on. I got him to the boat again. Steve tried to net him again. He got loose. Steve dove at him nearly falling out of the boat but ending up against the gunnels. What an effort. When we found he wasn't hurt bad, we had another big hee haw.

We kept switching poles and repositioning the boat until we had a nice string of fish. Steve said, "Dad, I'm going to radio Gene and tell him to get the skillet and cornmeal out that we will be back in about an hour." We stashed our fishing gear away and pointed the canoe down lake.

We immediately fell into a rhythm rowing. I was digging the paddle in and pulling to maximum thrust.. He was matching -me --easily and we were flying over the water in a beeline for camp. Suddenly, we both stopped rowing, we were in a different world. The water was perfectly smooth and reflecting the mountains and sky in a perfect mirror image. It was beyond beautiful. We both reached for our cameras. The glaciers reflected magnificently from the dark Glacial Mountain, craggy peaks in the West. The rolling mountains on the north

and south reflected their subdued brown hues that were splotted with dark fir trees. To the east, the mountains tapered to a soft point at the lake's outlet and the blue sky and cotton ball clouds reflected to each other.

Steve called Gene and told him we would be a little late that we had sights we could not leave. We started to row again but this time it was in a soft rhythm hoping not to shatter the mirror images surrounding us. At one time, we were gliding toward the cleft where the mountains met the lake's outlet. The water color or reflections were a perfect match for the sky and the white clouds fully reflected on the lake made it seem like we were floating through the sky. We said little as we slowly continued our journey to the shore. It was the kind of thing neither of us is likely to ever experience again and provided the kind of Father Son memory that most can only hope for.

We beached the canoe and came back to reality. Steve started up the steep trail toward camp carrying the fish and the fly rod. I followed with the spinning rod, net, etc. and my trusty walking stick. After about 100 yards, he stopped and asked if he could use my walking stick. He took it, formed a loop from the fish stringer, and put the stick across his shoulder to ease the load. Gene was out to meet us at camp. He admired the catch and suggested that Quinton and Steve take them over to the small run and clean them. He said he would cut them steak style for frying. Steve asked if he should collect the spoils from the cleaning so they would not attract bears. Gene said that the camp tramp birds would clean up any mess. (Grey Birds that congregate at a campsite to eat up the scraps.) I proceeded to wash up, put on my

cleanest jeans, and a clean shirt and even combed my hair to prepare for the feast. A feast it was, although all I remember are the trout, potatoes, and coffee.

Steve suggested I might want to go down to the run and look at the eggs that had come from one of the trout. I did and indeed they did look like Salmon eggs both in size and color. There was a large fist sized clump. Gene noted that the Lake Trout would soon be spawning.

It was our latest night to crawl in the sack, about 10:30. As anticipated at the start of the day, it had been special.

Although the Lord has blessed me and us with many things and in many ways, I thank Him for this day I will never forget.

Day 9
Day

Friday, September 5

Transition

Today was a transition day, one that hopefully would lead to our going back to Turnagain Lake and its almost resort like facilities. Steve had contacted Bruce, BC Yukon Air, in hopes that we could get back to Dease Lake in time to catch the flight back to Smithers. (There are three flights a week and catching the Friday flight would permit us to get home early.) Unfortunately, the Beaver was tied up in the morning and the best we could hope for was to get out in the afternoon. Steve was to call back at 2:30 p.m. to get an answer.

The day started out cold. There had been a heavy frost and a light freeze. Steve started a bon fire to burn the miscellaneous wood around camp and to provide enough warmth that we could read outside. The tent is too dark to read in comfortably. Also saddle boxes provided the only place to sit inside and we both needed some back support.

He soon had a blazing fire going and a place for us with a backrest to sit and read. The swirling wind pushed smoke in our direction sporadically. Quinton also got in the act picking up stray branches for the fire. The area now looked better, however, the horses

obviously had had priority in the area for some time and their droppings were scattered everywhere. There were also enough grizzly droppings to remind us we were very much in the wild.

Gene pulled a tarp over and started to do some more cleaning of the hide on Steve's goat. He had already turned the lips and ears inside out and removed the eyes and brains and cleaned up the skull. Gene is a wonderful guide and a wonderful person and he is always working.

Steve joined him in the goat work. He concentrated on removing the bone, etc. from inside the hooves. Steve was still considering a full body mount which required cleaning the bone, etc from the hooves.

We stopped for a light lunch of cheese, crackers, and the fried fish left over from dinner last night. Both Steve and I had some raspberry Kool-Aid. A somewhat odd but satisfying menu.

After lunch, we packed our gear in hopes we would be able to get out. The weather had continued to deteriorate with fog and clouds slipping down from the peaks. There was little wind. At 2:30, Steve called Yukon Air and got Bruce's wife who said that he was on his way. Gene and Quinton hustled to get our heavier gear packed on a horse and Steve and I hustled ahead down the trail to the lake. Strangely enough, I did not even hear the Beaver come in which is unusual since it has such a powerful and noisy engine. There always seems to be somewhat of a panic to get loaded. It took no time until we were roaring up the lake directly west toward Glacial Mountain. A gentle right hand turn aimed us directly East without even getting above the rim of the bowl formed by the mountains. It only took us about 20 minutes to make the flight, much nicer than a six-hour horse ride.

Our Fairbanks sheep hunter was glad to see us. He is a construction contractor and anxious to get back to take advantage of the, short 4 month building season there. He had hunted with Allen and Roy. They had had a two-day trail ride in and out to the spike camp. He got a very nice 36-inch ram and was anxious to get back to Dease Lake where he had left his

truck and could start the drive home. Bruce (Yukon Air) was glad to pick him up since he was going back to Dease Lake, Yukon Air's home base.

The Lodge at Turnagain looked even better than it had when we came in. The cabins so neat and clean sitting in a grassed area directly on the lake and most importantly with a shower/sauna cabin and plenty of hot water. Each cabin also has a really classy cast iron stove and mounds of neatly stacked dry wood split and stacked neatly behind them. Each also has a covered porch with two wooden chairs with backs, and a nice padded easy chair inside. Of course there are beds with mattresses.

Steve went up to the work shed to clean up his goat hide. Allen joined him to finish it up and salt it down. I started a fire and made an initial check of the shower. The water was hot and the shower stall was plain and simple. A week without a shower really leads to a better appreciation of that luxury.

Steve went first. We both had left a change of clothes at Turnagain so the transition was complete. The sun was pleasantly warm, so Steve and I sat on the front porch and read awhile. Steve spotted a Bald Eagle that landed on a tree on an island across the lake. Steve got his binoculars and said, "Dad, it is on that tallest fir tree on the middle island." He gave me the glasses. It was easy to spot the white head and tail of the noble bird against the dark background provided by the dark fir tree background.

Meanwhile, Allen and Roy had prepared a sheep stew using a whole quarter of sheep and an ^{assembly} of other ingredients. They had made a massive pot full in anticipation of others returning from spike camp. Steve had put some beers in the trough, which reached the perfect temperature for a pre-dinner beer. (I declined since I wanted to avoid the need for

frequent midnight sleep interruptions.) Allen made biscuits hot from the oven to compliment the stew which was delicious. He even had wine available, white or red. We declined

although the availability emphasized the new level of sophistication we had reached.

After dinner, Steve agreed to a caribou hunt on Saturday if the weather was right. Steve and I retired to our pleasantly warm cabin. Steve put another log on the fire. It was a good comfortable night. It started to rain during the night.

Day 10

Saturday, September 6
Rained Out

Steve got up about 8:00 and went over to the lodge to see what was up. The rain had squelched any idea of a caribou hunt so no one was up. Steve started a fire and put a pot of coffee on the kitchen stove. I got up shortly and joined him. It was drippy outside but not raining hard and the temperature was moderate. A single loon was making its plaintive call. A little later I thought I heard a moose call. Good conditions to enjoy ourselves and reading and writing.

Allen and Roy came in and cooked some bacon and pancakes. The pancakes looked picture perfect and tasted equally as well. Following breakfast, everyone settled down to read with occasional times out for discussions about a range of things from hydroelectric power to Las Vegas. Talk for young men to make and for an old man to listen.

At 6:30 Bryan, hunter from Dallas Texas, Jason his guide, and Silas trailed in. They had not gotten a sheep, however, Bryan got a wolf (at 300 yards) and hit another (at 400 yards) that was trailing it by 100 yards. They had been out for 5 days with only a tarp and it had rained every day. They were happy to be back in the dry and to shower. Allen and Roy had cooked lamb steaks, excellent, mashed potatoes, and peas and carrots. The table is getting fuller with 7 eating tonight. Still no word from Kyle, Jesse, Gene, and Gilliam.

Steve, Alley, and Roy agreed to hunt caribou in the a.m. Bed at 9:30.

Day 11
Rain

Sunday, September 7

Caribou and

Allen came by at 6:30 to ask Steve if he still wanted to try for a caribou. The weather was foggy and threatening. Steve said, "Sure". Allen said to sleep in another hour since Bryan and Jason were also heading out to another area in hopes of getting a sheep or caribou. Allen wanted them to get on the trail ahead of Steve, et al since Bryan had only gotten a wolf (Both parties would use the same trail for awhile.) At 7:30, both Steve and I got up and went for breakfast. Shortly after we had eaten, Silas came in to tell us that Bryan's saddled horse had run off with his rifle and they hadn't found it yet.

Steve and Allen left shortly after.
Bryan came in the Lodge and we had some coffee and chatted until about 10:30 when Silas said they had recovered the horse. They started down the trail soon after.

I searched around and found a number for Fairmont at the Vancouver Airport and made reservations for Steve and me for Monday night. Steve had cancelled our motel in Smithers. I tried to change our airline tickets from Smithers to Vancouver from Tuesday a.m. to Monday evening. All the agents were busy and it didn't make sense to wait 15 minutes on the satellite phone. I will try later or we will try to change at the airport.

Shane Black, Keith's partner, flew in along with Mitzi, our cook for the weekend. Safari's Ltd., our outfitter, tries to have a cook come in for the weekend when the transition is made to new hunters.

Silas and I decided to take the outboard out and try a little fishing. We barely got started when I looked to the North (not the normal direction for a storm) and saw a storm

bearing down on us. I said, "We better hightail it." We moved quickly and barely beat the storm.

Gene's pack train from Glacial pulled in about 6:00. The first thing he did was to

bring me my journal notes which I had left at Glacial. They were wrapped in a sealed plastic bag. I told Gene that Steve had told me, after hearing me moan and groan of their loss, that I shouldn't worry, "Gene will bring them". Gene produces again.

By the time Steve got back in the drizzle, I had had a ^{peaceful} day reading by the fire. They had seen a couple of legal caribou, but nothing exciting enough to shoot.

Bryan and Jason had returned. Bryan had shot a nice caribou. It was still drizzling when Steve and I walked over to the lodge. Mitzi was scurrying around in the final stages of completing dinner when there was a mild (by East Tennessee standards) clap of thunder. She jumped, nearly tossing the salad. Laughingly I asked what was the matter. She noted that they don't hear thunder often. Reflecting back on the past 11 days where we had a lot of clouds and wind, I must acknowledge that it was the first thunder I had heard. We had a fine feed followed by some toasting to success and whatever else that might remotely warrant a toast.

Day 12

Monday, September 8

Vancouver - The

Right Way "Pack Up and Pack Out"

It was a beautiful warm day and started with a big breakfast cooked to order: moose sausage, bacon, fried potatoes, toast, juice, and coffee served on china to a table with a table cloth.

It was the day we "old" hunters packed out and a new group came in. The new group was to include 4 Get mans, only one of whom speaks English. Steve and I packed up and then cleaned up our cabin. Silas assured me we did not have to do that, that they, the wranglers, normally do that.

Quinton was happy to have been asked to "wrangle" for this next hunt. Jason was to be the guide, his boss. Jason will not be as helpful and understanding as Gene had been.

Today's "Good-byes" were hurried since the guides and wranglers were busy getting ready for the new hunters. Serious handshaking had been done last night.

Bruce's Beaver pulled in at 10:30. A plane never comes in empty. This time he brought in some gear, but mostly compressed bales of hay. We, in turn, piled our gear in and boarded. I sat up front, Bryan and Steve in the two back seats, and Jesse strapped in with the baggage. Our little native girl was there to meet us with her new crew cab pickup. She is very proud of it. We had a couple of hours so she took us by the local crafts shop. Dease Lake is known as "the Jade Capital of the World" so it seemed appropriate to find some souvenir presents. When we got to the airport we still had plenty of time so she went and brought us some sandwiches. She was waiting for the plane to come in with a fresh load of hunters.

The lady at the airport desk was very efficient and very helpful. Steve and I asked if we would be able to get on the evening flight to Vancouver instead of having to wait until the morning. She smiled, got out her special number, made contact, and assured us we could.

We looked forward to a 2-hour flight to Smithers, but found that the service had been called to make a pick up at one of the two gold mines they provided "on call" service to. Our landing there was a real pounder. The pilot set us down on a short strip that was bladed off a gold mine spoil pile. The terminal was an unoccupied 12' x 12' corrugated metal shed. We picked up 6 hikers. Three young males and three females with equally large back packs. Their sunburned ruddy red faces and scuffed hiking boots indicated that this happy half dozen had been on the trail for some time.

When we got to Smithers it was still bright and sunny and we had a couple of hours. Steve and I decided I would change the tickets and check in while he caught a cab to town to check out a recommended taxidermist, pick up bags we had left at the motel and cancel us there, and to convert some US dollars to Canadian so we would have money for tips, etc.

The lady at the airline counter was particularly helpful in changing our tickets and in checking in my bags and holding Steve's. Steve got back in about an hour. His first remark was how nice everyone had been. The taxidermist work looked good. They had a picture of a

mount just the way he wanted the gnat to be ^{done.} and said they would hopefully have it done by April so they could deliver it to Knoxville. They take an annual trip to Florida dropping finished mounts along the way. Steve's only problem there was in breaking the conversation off to move on. At the motel, the manager refused Steve's offer for reimbursement and helped

Steve load the bags in the taxi. The taxi driver noted that the banks were closed but that a nearby convenience store would change the money. Steve needed a coke anyway. He told the clerk all he had was a hundred dollar US bill. She said, "No problem" and carried on a happy conversation as she gave him back \$130+ Canadian back. He got back to the terminal in plenty of time to finish check in.

The flight to Vancouver was pleasant. I was surprised at the number of streams, lakes, and dams along the way. BC has a lot of hydropower. It was dark by the time we got to Vancouver. The terminal had quieted down for the evening. We collected all our bags and put them on a "no charge" pull away cart which we trundled on the long path to the Fairmont. Bryan and Jesse were also checking in. Jesse suggested going to the bar. Steve said, "Not without a shower". We agreed to meet in 10 minutes. The Fairmont is a first-class hotel, and we had a very nice room, also a good rate considering the exchange.

We met Bryan and Jesse in the bar. Bryan graciously picked up the tab. We ate at the hotel's restaurant. The orders were as varied as the individuals. We each paid our own. It was a pleasant night.

Back at the room, Steve ordered room service breakfast and I soaked in the oversized bath. We both slept well . Another fine day.

Day 13
Trip Home

Tuesday, September 9

Good

A knock on the door by room service woke us up at 8:00 a.m. Steve went to the door. I didn't even roll over. Finally, the smell of coffee lured me out.

We checked out and the bell man recovered our stored bags. Delta Airlines was about 100' away with special access to hotel guests. Check in was quick and simple. Undoubtedly we had found the best way to get through Vancouver.

While we were snaking through the line to customs, I looked up and saw Gordon and Miriam Fee ahead of us. They are my neighbors back in Oak Ridge, and Gordon and I had worked closely on the Centrifuge Project. They were returning from Alaska. I proudly introduced Steve. Miriam said some sweet things about me (I thought later that Steve and I probably looked a little raunchy. We had both agreed not to shave while we were gone. We had done a little trimming at the Fairmont. I shaved later that night after Pauline saw it. Steve's lasted a few days on a split vote. Mary could accept both a mustache and a beard. Cissy nixed both. The boys split).

The flights were fine. I finished the paperback I was reading on the 30-minute flight between Atlanta and Knoxville. Even the smallest details were right on this trip.

We were on time and the bags were all there. It was after midnight when we got to Steve's house. Everyone was in bed so I didn't go in. Of course, Steve woke them up for a fond greeting. Later Sam told me he wished I had come in too. What a fine family.

Steve told Mary this had been our best trip yet.

It couldn't have been better, particularly from a Father Son point of view.