

Reindeer Lake Redux

July 14-29, 2018



Two days into our paddle last summer our medical officer Camel Legs—now rebranded Flipper—slipped on a wet root and dislocated his ankle. Some expedition doctor....



Fortunately his wife Tiny Tush is a doc too and popped it back into place, but they had to bail, and what followed was a year's rehab. Unsure of his recovery (it's complete, whew) I planned a repeat of this easy, lazy trip this summer. <http://www.jasonschoonover.com/2017/08/my-40th-and-laziest-canoe-expedition/>



We started with the traditional champagne. Jan the Ripper—one of a number who this trip didn't read my Procedures (or remember them) and jammed a saw not into its scabbard but rather into the Rec Pak where expensive tarps, \$75 water filters etc are—pops the cork. Things like placing blackened pots on the aluminum table, or sitting in the beach chair I've had for 25 years (the perfect height for cooking) are *Sure Ways to Perturb the Cook, Quartermaster and Navigator*, as I wrote in the Procedures emailed out for 20 years. Two chairs were broken and a third—mine—now has a cracked frame....



However, I have brigades well trained to lay out their designated gear neatly at each campsite, for easy access. But I'd be lying if I didn't confess to frustrations on this trip I don't normally have.



Balancing it somewhat was elating news just before we were out of range of internet that our Temperance property near the university sold. I bought this one in 1981 with money earned anthropological collecting for museums. This is the fourth to go this decade and leaves only one, besides our home. Friends claim I've always been retired, but it's not true. Most writers croak as semi-paupers and I didn't want to be one of them, so built up a real estate inventory to support me while I went after the brass ring. I just don't want, or need, the tenant etc hassles any longer, even if I have professional managers.



One expects all kinds of weather in a single week, but we had an inordinate number of wet days.



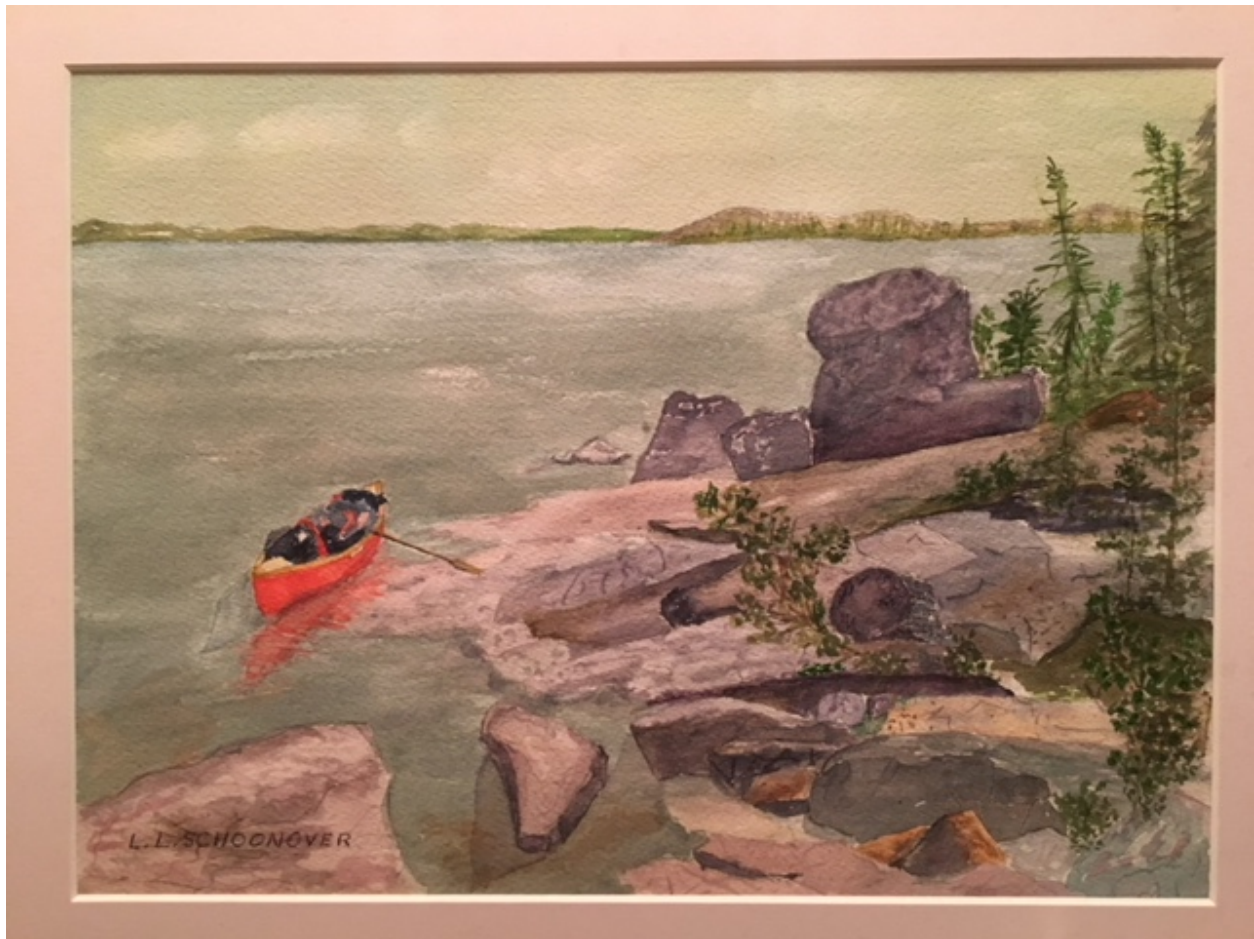
Indeed, we had to start out the first two in one of Ric Driedeger's cabins at Missinipe in northern Saskatchewan! Two to three inches of rain were literally thundering down! He's operated Churchill River Outfitters there since the '70s, with 83 canoe rentals, and also offering canoe trips and whitewater courses.



I was surprised and delighted to learn that he has had a series of maps on Reindeer Lake produced using photographs I shot on our 90-mile paddle down the length of the lake with Aeneas Precht and Shanghai Jane Zhang in 2006. This turned into a lengthy spread in the US magazine *Paddler*. Note the second one from the end on the right.



It was taken at one of the most beautiful sites on that trip.



My mother thought so too. Both are framed side-by-side at home.



We had grand days too.



It's an enormous lake but with hundreds of islands. Since my article and several Blah Blahs on our adventures on the lake I'm pleased to see a few paddlers venturing onto it. Its huge traverses formerly scared canoeists off. It's not for novices, at least without experienced leadership.





The Thunderbird Site, with the most beautiful pictograph I've seen in Saskatchewan. Comparing it with the picture in last year's Blah Blah (see above) I see the lake is down a foot this year.





The iconic Canadian lumberjack look is the rage all over the world this year—we've seen it from India to Southeast Asia to all over the tube—but I'm ahead of the curve, with my flannel pjs. Besides the axe, I'm holding Canuckistanian maple syrup. All together now: I'm a lumberjack and I'm okay....



The rock formations are one of the beauties of the lake. Once the roots of mountains, they're now exposed by millions of years of erosion. Finally, innumerable ice ages scraped The Canadian Shield bare of soil.



Reindeer Lake is named both for the beautiful reindeer moss and the herds of reindeer aka caribou that once migrated annually here. The herds haven't been seen since the '70s thanks to the snowmobile and rifle. The Inuit aka Eskimos and Dene are responsible for indiscriminate killing, according to Hudson Bay Company and fur trader reports. "...only one thing stops or limits their killing, lack of ammunition," wrote Warburton Pike in 1917 in *The Barren Ground of Northern Canada*. The Cree, on the other hand, were noted for only killing what they needed.

CO₂ is Plant Food

Here is what happens over one year with more CO₂



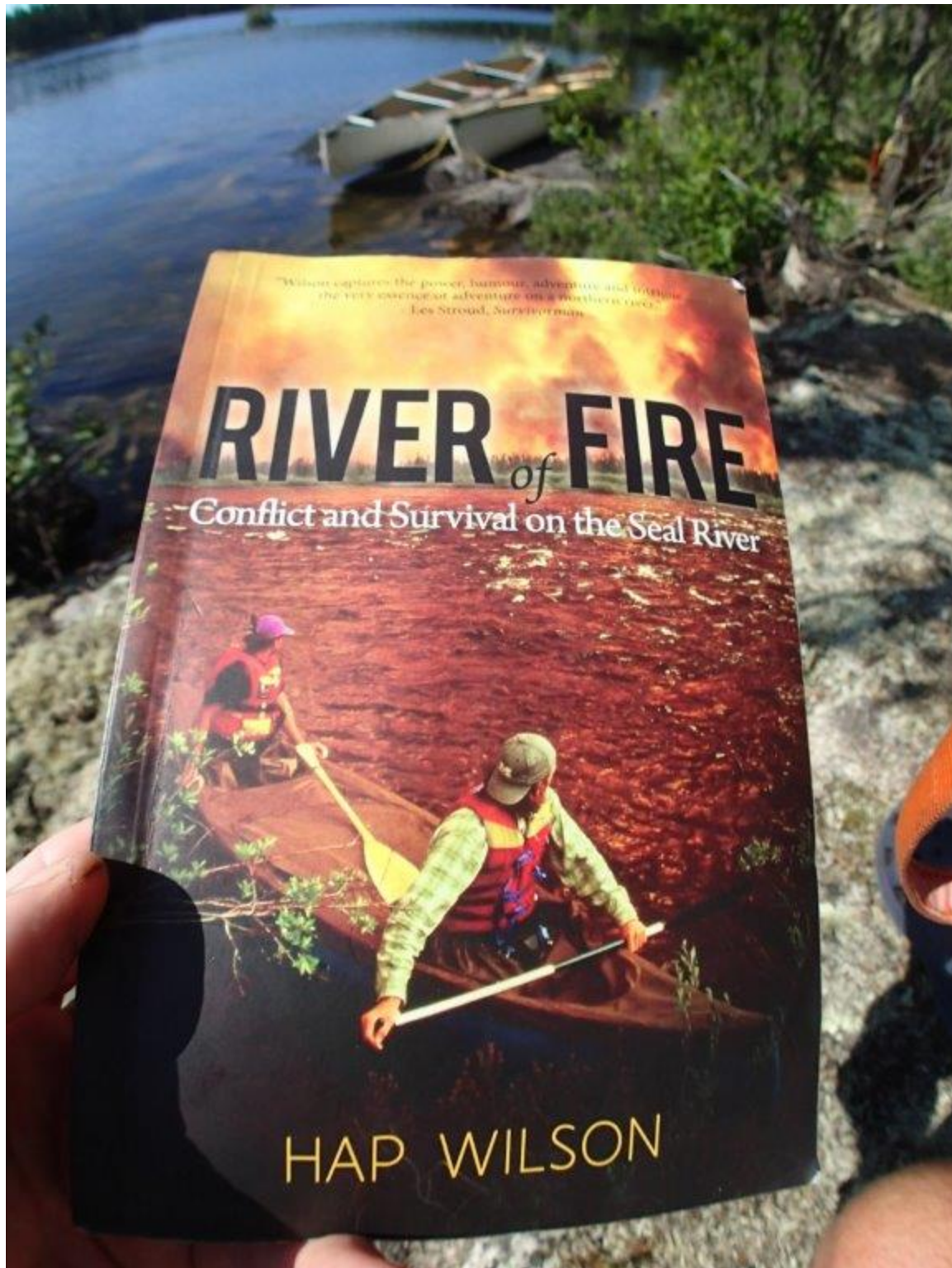
Of course foaming-at-the-mouth climate change alarmists will claim the plunge in reindeer numbers is actually because CO₂ destroyed their habitat. Hardly. Here's what happens when CO₂ is increased in laboratory conditions. There's MORE to eat.



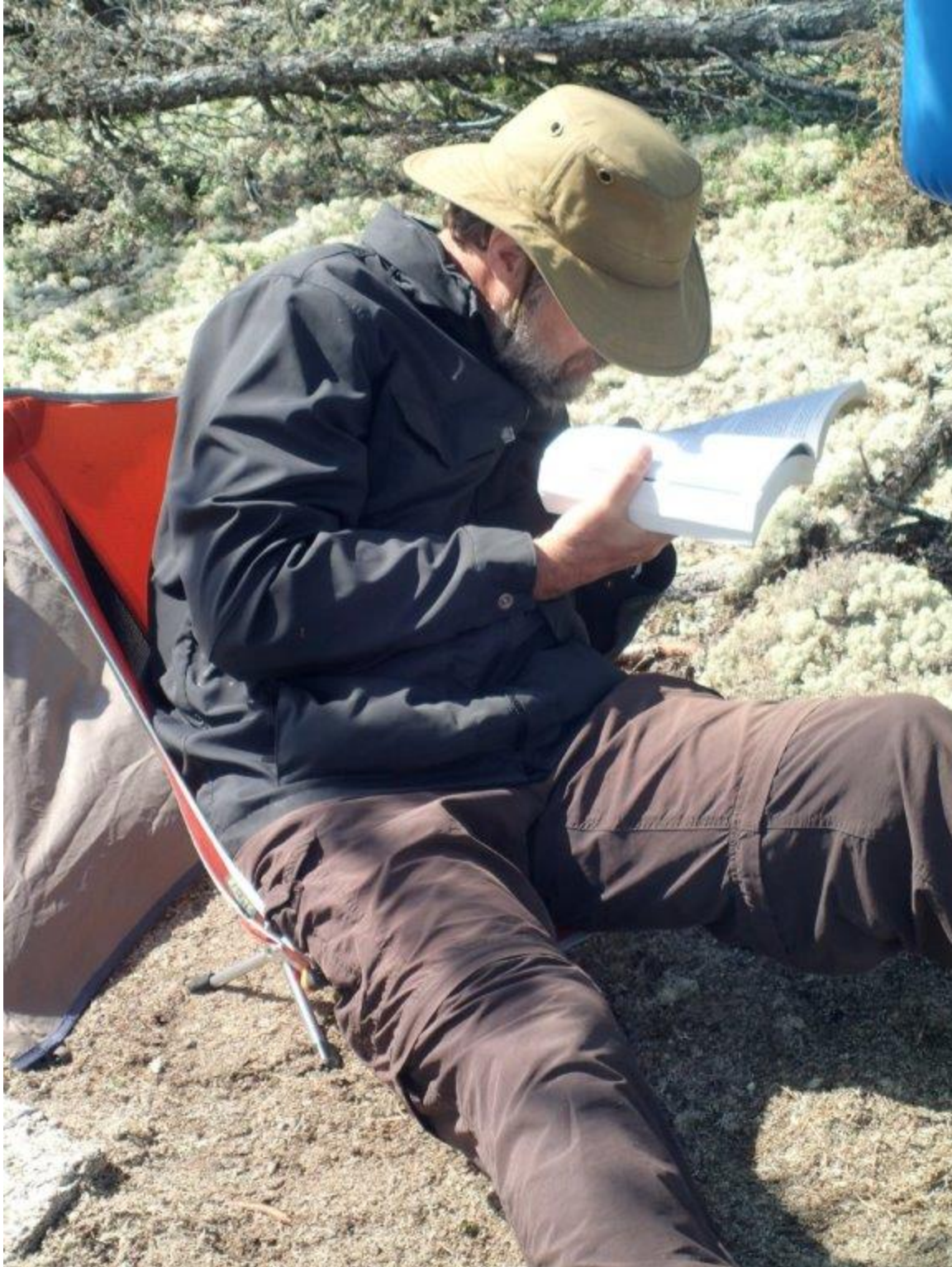
That's how come a jack pine (and a birch) growing out of crack in the rock...



...can grow into a full tree like this. There ain't much dirt up here. They're sucking carbon out of the atmosphere.



Making rounds in camp was another book—Hap’s dangerous adventure on northern Manitoba’s Seal River. *Les Survivorman* Stroud penned the cover blurb: “Wilson captures the power, humour, adventure and intrigue...the very essence of adventure on a northern river.” I’m pleased to have sponsored both into The Explorers Club.



Batman earned his name because he's been legally blind since birth. He and Margaret were with Hook and I down the Churchill River in 2008. Not quite blind as a bat, he copes very well, thank you.



Drunken Joe in a sober moment. He kept us in fish. And picked up fine filleting these difficult-to-fillet jackfish quickly, I'm pleased to say. Usually 100% of the filleting falls to me, though I don't really mind. It's an art, and one I'm always improving at, with these slimy, bony beasts.



The infamous Dragon Lady in her Greenlight Films cap. Bangkok based producer Lucky Les Nordhouser, Jungle Gina, and Madame Su and I are planning a Moroccan trip next year.





Alas, although I designed this trip for Flipper and Tiny Tush, a family wedding interfered and they couldn't join us until over half way through. And we only had a day together before we had to start working our way back in the direction of the launch site, while they explored further north.



Guess why Boston based Cabbage Lady earned that moniker? She flew in with Capt. Hook four years ago for our prospecting trip with paleontologist Phil Currie down Alberta's Red Deer River. We discovered an incredible six dinos on that 18-person expedition. <http://www.jasonschoonover.com/2016/10/the-dinosaurs-of-albertas-red-deer-river-badlands-expedition-ii/>



Sadly, Capt. Hook—Capt. Norm Baker—a veteran of 10 canoe adventures with us, and another two in Thailand (archaeological and ethnological), sliced into a Massachusetts ridge in his Cessna Skyhawk last fall. He was 89. Six months before he broke his hip skiing. The previous year his *neck* steeple jumping. I joked next his parachute wouldn't open. I wasn't far off....



Hook was Thor Heyerdahl's first mate, celestial navigator and radioman aboard the two *Ra*, and *Tigris* voyages of 1969, '70 and '78.

ADVENTUROUS DREAMS, ADVENTUROUS LIVES

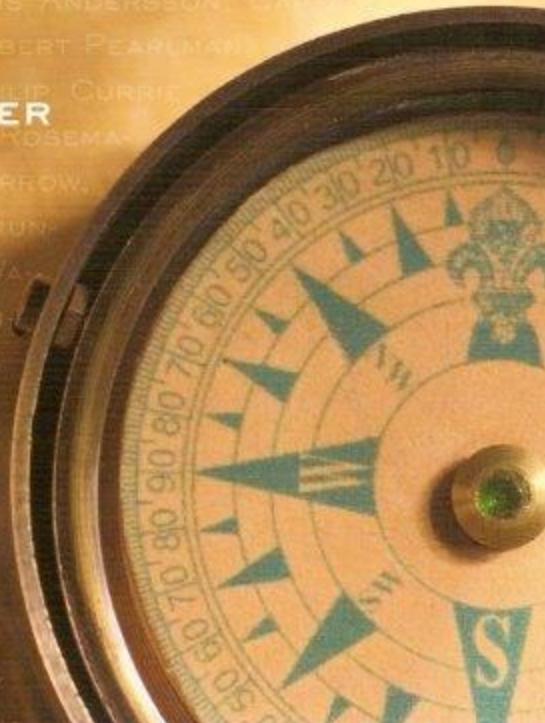
Collected and Edited by

JASON SCHOONOVER

Foreword by

MEAVE LEAKEY

I had no idea when I had my first youthful dream of flight that it would take me all the way to the moon—but that's the power unleashed in following one's dreams. Jason Schoonover's book should be required reading in every school. —BUZZ ALDRIN



The dream that launched his adventurous life is one of the 120, in their own words, in my 2007 book.



I've been invited by the family to deliver the eulogy at his Explorers Club memorial at our New York Clubhouse in September. That's Norm in the upper right; Thor lower right.



It was a pleasure and honour to know him. He was one of the world's greatest living explorers and adventurers. The Dragon Lady is the only other person I've met with so much in common, and Hook and I were joined at the other hip. I miss him. I always will. That said, he went out doing something he loved—flying. This trip was dedicated to him, and an appropriate toast around the campfire raised.



It is the end of one of my life's greatest friendships....

