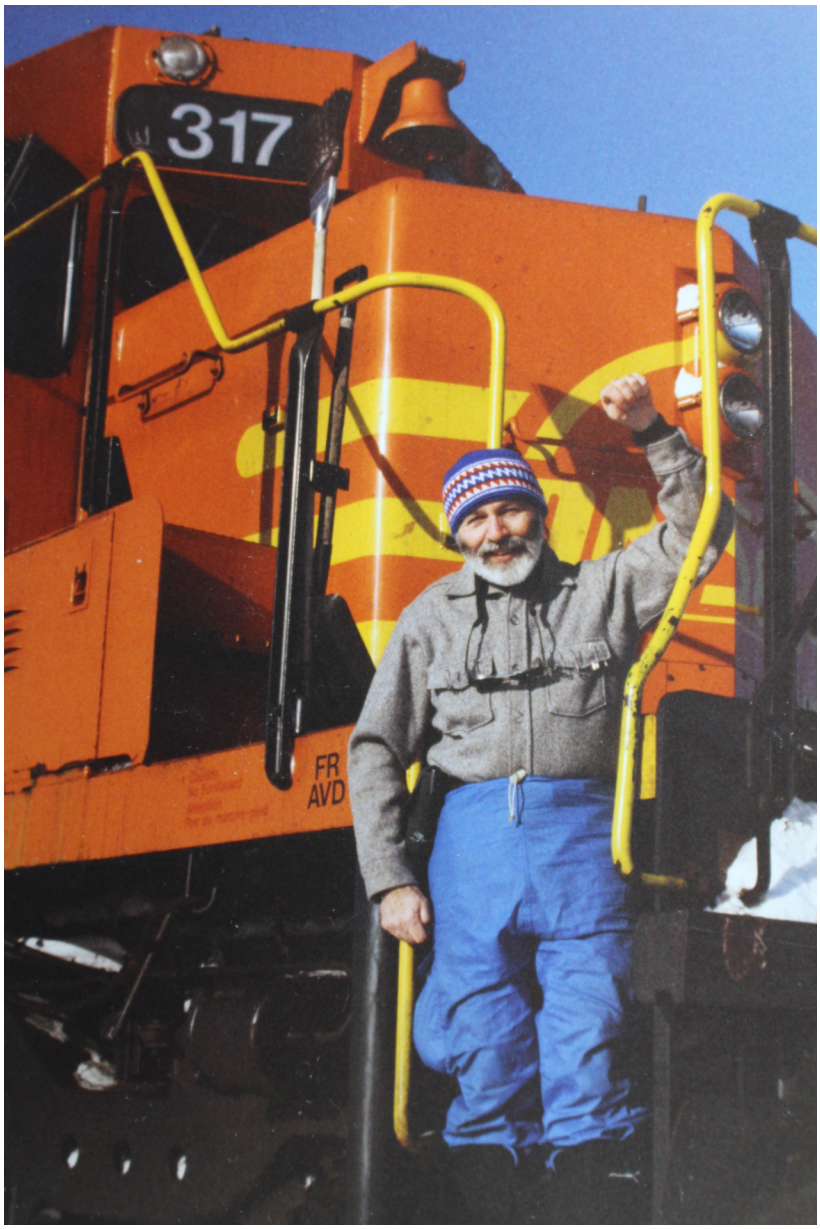


All Aboard

For a Fourteen Day
Snow Shoe Outing

on the

Labrador Plateau

Our Guides

Alexandra and Garrett Conover

The Trip

A 14 day "wildernessn outing", exploring the Menihek Hills on the west-cental-Labrador plateau. The Naskapi and Montagnais Indians have made their home in this country for centries. Our guides were Alexandra and Garrett Conover, of North Woods Ways.

Travel was on snowshoes over lakes and rivers. Each member pulled a toboggan with ~ 100 + pounds of supplies and gear. We averagd 5 - 6 miles between campsites. The total trip covered ~ 75 miles.

On a typical day we were up at 6 am, had breakfast, and broke camp by 9 am. We stopped on the trail for a picnic lunch, and would reach our next campsite by ~ 3 pm.

We quicly learned how to work well together, and could set-up camp in 2 1/2 hours. We were resting and munching snacks by a warm stove awaiting dinner by 5:30 pm.

The itinerary provided for layover days where we could explore the surrounding ponds, streams, and hills. Temperatures averaged in the high teens during the day, and between -17 F to - 22 F at night.

We had many sunny days, but experienced wind and white-out conditions during some of the lake travel.

A GREAT TRIP!!!

Introduction

This is a photo recap of a two week guided winter snowshoe trip in Labrador. Garrett and Alexandria Conover are a husband and wife team operating a Canoe and Snowshoe guide service, North Woods Ways, in Maine.

This trip was comprised of six clients and the two guides. Shel Abelson and Larry Cohen are two long time friends on the trip who have winter camped and canoed together for over forty five years. This is their photo diary of the trip.

Shel and Larry traveled by car for two full days over 700 miles from Lexington Massachusetts to Sept-ile Labrador, the gathering point where the group met with the guides for their pre-trip briefing and preparation for departure. The guides reviewed individual gear and described general techniques of travel and camping in the Labrador environment.

The text included in this publication is intended to describe the trip and the approaches used by the guides to provide a comfortable challenging experience.

We hope you enjoy the trip.

The Train North to the trips departure point

The first day of the trip involves boarding a train which travels once a week on a 300 mile route passing the trips departure point at a hydroelectric power plant. The group will stay overnight at the power plant prior to starting out on their two week winter snow shoe trip.

The train route is difficult, especially with ice conditions in the winter, so the 300 mile trip will take over 13 hours. To further complicate travel the train will stop anywhere along the route to pick up natives waiting at track side in the cold to catch the train. The water supply on the train is frozen so the train will have "Pee" stops every 2 hours.

Loading Gear on Tobaggons

Each individual on the trip has a tobaggon with a share of the trips total supplies. The tobaggons are narrow to minimize resistance when pulling them loaded with heavy gear.

When loading a tobaggon a tarp is layed on the ground above the tobaggon. The supplies are placed on the tarp, which is then wrapped around the supplies and tightly tied around the load to ensure a tight, compact load which does not snag as being pulled along very tight trails. Each tobaggon weighs approximately 100 pounds.

Traveling across wide open areas can be beautiful, but given a head wind can significantly change the difficulty and the temperature challenges.

Pulling a toboggan, even in temperatures below zero, can generate a lot of heat. One does not want to perspire and generate moisture within one's clothing, so if there is no precipitation, and calm winds, it is wise to open your clothing so the generated heat can ventilate. By adjusting your clothing you can be comfortable with layered clothing in a variety of weather conditions.

Stopping for a rest. A nice view of how toboggans are loaded and secured.

Water flows connecting separated large bodies of water result in small streams and in some instances small rapids.

Even given the cold temperatures these water ways can present problems since they are not frozen.

"HOW **ABOUT A LUNCH BREAK ?"**

TIME FOR ALEXANDRA'S HIGH ENERGY PICNIC LUNCHES

A picnic lunch

. This break on the trail is a real treat. By this time every one has built up enough heat to be comfortable stopping. Setting the table is a quick neat little exercise. Even though you are warm, you cool down quickly when you stop moving. We usually look for some protection out of the direct wind.

We are on about 4' of snow, so using our snow shoes we make a trench around the perimeter of what will become the (snow) table surface. All the fixings for lunch are conveniently on the rear of one of the toboggans.

Alexandra has a nice bright blue table cloth which she places on the snow as she sets the table with our lunch. We sit on our snow shoes around the table with our feet in the trench we just stomped out around the perimeter of the table. Some warm soup, high caloric food, and just sitting is a great break.

TRIUMPH

Time to hit the trail, we have limited travel time in the afternoon before we have to stop (around 3 pm) to prepare camp for the day.

Setting Up Camp

A 2 1/2 hour routine exercise for the entire team

This is **the great stomp**. Everyone walks around the intended campsite pounding the snow so eventually it will support our weight.

Note the poles stored against the trees from a prior trip, saves a lot of set-up effort

Pitching The Tents

Two ~ 9 x 12 x 3 foot wall tents

Setting the Ridge Pole Poll

WHEN SETTING UP CAMP

ORGANIZATION IS CRITICAL

Gathering Boughs

Unloading the toboggans

Cutting Wood

COLLECTING WATER

The Ice on the water is about 3 foot thick.

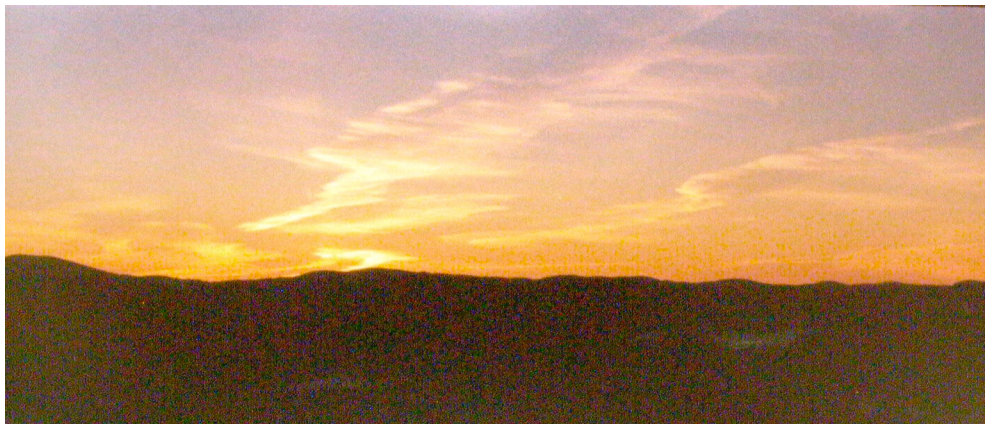
Using an Ice Chisel it takes about 1/2 hour to cut a hole through to free water.

Once we break through to the free water we use buckets to transport the water back to the cook tent.

Setting Up Camp Is Complete

Time to relax with some warm snacks before dinner

THE END OF ANOTHER GREAT DAY



RELAXING AFTER DINNER:

- Larry, Shel, and Alexandra are sitting with their backs to the front door of the tent,their feet are in the "PIT"
  The Stove is to the right in the PIT. (Note pot and stove pipe)
- Closest to the camera is another camper looking at a diary. He is sitting on the sleeping platform

Sleeping at - 20 F

And Comfortable

THE FIRST VIEW OF A NEW DAY

"HORAR FROST"

GLIMMERING ON THE TREES IN THE EARLY SUN LIGHT

Hot coffee while you are still in the sack

Today is a Leisure Day

Time to relax before getting up and out to explore the local hills.

TAKING A HOT SHOWER

The water in the pot on the stove is warm.

The camper standing in the PIT will disrobe and use the silver container to poor warm water over his head for a refreshing shower.

The excess water drains through the pine bows in the bottom of the PIT.

EXPLORING THE LOCAL HILLS

bolle

EXPERIENCING HOW

WILDERNESS SKILLS

ICE FISHING
&
A RIFLE

CAN BE USED FOR SURVIVAL

Ice Flows

During extremely cold nights the thick ice on the waters surface expands. In some instances the ice will crack with a loud clap like thunder. The pressure of the ice expanding will force the free water under the ice to be forced to the top, flow across the surface, and freeze smooth as glass.

Traveling across these extremely smooth ice flows present special challenges since it is extremely difficult to gain any traction.

Campers rest in front of their tobaggons prior to traveling accross the ice flow

Breaking Camp the last day on the trail

Loading gear on the train for the trip South

The Team

Less

Alexandra

(Taking the Picture)

All Aboard

Time to go home!