

# THE MOUSE, THE MOOSE, And ME

by: R. McNeill

It was a miserable summer. All of us who endured the winter during the summer of 1986 on P.E.I. wished for a few more days of sunshine, but there were plenty of opportunities for excitement for those few moments of sun.

My summer home is on a peninsula north of New London, about two hundred yards from the Cavendish sandspit by canoe or ten miles by car. Transportation to the beach is quick and simple for me, usually fueled by alcohol and propelled by paddles.

Two weeks of rain followed by a day of sunshine was enough to create an urge to venture upon the waters where the French, Southwest and Stanley Rivers meet. The pessimism of the weather forecast was welcomed as a nice contrast to optimism belied by rain. My awaiting canoe was surrounded by foot long saturated grass.

I was the bow engine, internal combustion provided by Melcher's Very Wild Canadian Whisky. Stern power was from my good friend Moose accompanied by a case of Olands Ale.

We planned a leisurely crossing. The beauty of the land and seascape takes time to consider. The comorants, cranes, blue herons, gulls and terns were active around us, all occupied in their individual methods of fishing.

Shortly after launching we discovered a stowaway. A moose had himself a nest during the deluges. As caretaker of the cottage resort where I live my job includes killing rodents, so I made him walk the paddle. He walked down the handle to where the blade of the paddle ends, and then I dumped him into New London Bay.

He promptly set out on a course of no return towards the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Despite my duty as an employee of the Hebrides Resort I could not let him drown. After fishing him out we inducted him as an honorary crewmember without pay. This ceremony was done with great pomp and mellowness.

Our recruit disappeared into the foreward handhold, hereafter known as the mouse quarters. Captain Moose and I shut all engines to get gassed while the current drifted us parallel to Cavendish about one hundred yards offshore.

Occasionally Mouse would come out of his quarters and venture onto the prow to see where we were going. Eventually he became bolder and explored the ship, ignoring my orders to get back to his post. The mutinous rodent had the impudence to climb up my leg. As first mate and shipowner I fired him from his position into the sea but I relented, rescued and rehired him.

We should have guessed something was wrong when a buoy went by us at about twenty miles an hour. It did distract me from soaking up sunshine and Melchers. Moose, Mouse and I took our bearings. The buoy was still charging away from us. The Hebrides were far away, but we were still the same distance from the Cavendish Sandspit. I tried to figure out how a channel marker could be cut adrift and moving so fast, but I had to conclude it was impossible. I was right.

The solution was a breeze. In a span of sixty seconds the wind grew from nothing into a gale. Halfway through that minute I realized the buoy was stationary; we were borne by a ripetide that was precursor to a storm and we

were in big trouble.

Bottles were flung overboard in our hast to man the paddles. The wind created swells that we had to crest at right angles but the tide's direction was perpendicular to the wind's, trying to push us sideways into the waves. If that happened Moose and I knew we would die. Mouse at least suspected it.

We managed to get halfway toward the proper direction before the full force of the gale hit us. Both of us were straining every muscle paddling at the port side, which was barely enough to save us. The tide tried hard to take degrees away from our course change but our incentive gave lots of power to the paddles. We could not get the bearing the rest of the way around but we had enough of an angle to keep us from being swamped immediately. We managed to maintain it.

Up we went to the crest of each wave, then down the other side. Mouse stood on the prow, amazing me by not being swept overboard. Wind, tide and top speed paddling

combined to give us velocity that I suspect might be a world record for canoeing.

I was too busy to be scared until we topped an especially large wave. I reached down paddling and stroked air instead of water. This threw me off balance and wobbled the canoe, but we recovered. Not a word was said and nothing extra was done; no more was possible.

The southerly wind tried to help us north towards Cavendish while the tide tried to push us east into the middle of the bay. We managed to compromise between the elements and go northeast which, while not the most direct rout, would eventually angled in and reduced the hundred yards between us and safety. I have no idea how much time elapsed. Everything happened extremely fast, yet it seemed an interminable journey.

Finally a wave carried us far up the beach. We sat there and gasped air for awhile, then we crawled out of the canoe. Tomorrow my muscles would stiffen and I would be

able to move only slowly and with great pain for the next three days, but for now I was alright. Moose had no ill effects other than his tan paling somewhat.

Moose got up to check on Mouse, who was in fine shape. We hated to set him free on the beach where a gull would soon make quick and easy meat of him, but we had no choice. We weren't leaving for awhile. Moose picked up Mouse, who promptly bit Moose. He let out a yell and flung the rodent away. Mouse rolled a few times and came up running as fast as he could away from us. I don't know why; our ship was no longer sinking.

Moose and I sheltered from the wind on the north side of the dunes. We watched the fury of the St. Lawrence which would have killed us in less than three seconds. We had been in the shelter of New London Bay, thankfully. The gulf impressed us.

The weather forecast had been wrong again — it never rained.

## OPEN LETTER TO THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

As the opportunity may never again present itself, I shall seize the moment. I want to thank all of the members of the GEM who throughout this semester in my term as editor have contributed to the GEM.

They have contributed their thoughts, feelings and ideas and have as a consequence made the GEM a better newspaper. I thank them, as you should, for making the publication of our student newspaper a worthwhile endeavor.

The members of the GEM staff made the transition between edi-

tors as easy as could be, under the circumstances in which the change was made. I thank each of them for their understanding and cooperation and wish them all the best for the holiday season and the rest of the academic year.

It's been a pleasure working with all of you, and I trust we can continue working together in the New Year. Good luck with your exams, all of you!

Sincerely,  
Lori Anne Heckbert  
Editor

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