

Quetico 2009

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September 7, 2009. A long day of traveling but oh, so worth it. Arrived at Zup's via sturdy float plane to a beautiful, warm, sunny day. Our gear and canoes were loaded onto a shiny aluminum power boat and after a monster lunch we were ready to head out. The boat ride to our first portage into Iron Lake was refreshing with the cool air filling our lungs as we sped by little islands that seemed to float on the dark surface of the water. Along the way, our guide took us to some native pictographs imprinted on a rock face. Faded, reddish images of moose and deer and human hands stood out against the moss and lichens that grew on the granite wall. Their age and exact purpose still remains speculative. Drawing nearer to our drop-off, the anticipation builds as the boat slows down and coasts into the shoreline. The scent of the piney woods and decaying undergrowth welcome us as we unloaded our heavy packs. A quick inventory of our goods and with a few grunts and groans the first portage is underway. No easing into this one. It is uphill for the first one hundred yards or so and if I ever cared to know what a loaded pack mule feels like, I sure know now. Slow, steady and deliberate steps get us to the top. Over and around many rocks and boulders, each one a potential twisted ankle or worse. Iron Lake is our destination and within a few minutes we are there. After a brief breather and a drink of water, we repeat the process with the canoes and remaining gear.

Iron Lake is delightful and the breeze is to our backs as we paddle for Rebecca Falls and our first campsite. It is great to be in a canoe again. Long, easy strokes and the slowly widening wake off the stern behind us mark our progress. Just around one more point and the low roar of fast moving water reaches our ears. The campsite we seek is on the opposite end of the small island ahead. On either side bronze-tinted water races through granite sluices with a dizzying roar and force. The noise dominates the setting reminding us of the awesome power of nature.

Upon securing the canoes on the bank, we take the trail around the southeast side of the island to the campsite. John and Lance have said on several occasions what a fantastic setting it is and should it be occupied, it will be a great disappointment. As we get closer we are nearly holding our breath in hopes of a vacancy. To our great delight and pleasure the spot is open and we lay claim. WOW! John and Lance were not exaggerating in the least with their descriptions. Facing due east it is situated on a big granite point approximately 30 feet above the water where the falls pour into a big open bay. Soon camp is set the hammocks strung and the rain fly stretched. Man am I tired. A few more camp duties and then supper. Darkness soon reveals an incredibly clear sky tonight and the moon is æ full as it climbs the eastern horizon. Its rippled reflection on the water is enchanting and our eyes quickly adjust to the brightening glow.

Though my eyes are heavy and I am ready to go to sleep, I am reluctant to turn my gaze from the star-filled sky, fearful of missing a shooting star or some other heavenly anomaly. Some lingering conversation about the events of the day and what tomorrow may hold, then we each retreat to the comfort and pleasure of our cocoon- like hammocks. It has been a long day and we will sleep well this night.

Sept. 8, 2009. A clear morning holds promise for another beautiful day. Slept well but with some goofy dreams as a result of eating late last night. The hammock was absolutely perfect though. Sat out on the huge rock point of our campsite this morning with my cup of tea gazing out over the gently rippled water. The sun's early rays illuminated our campsite and warmed things up quickly.

No hurry today. John is anxious to get fishing though, so after lunch he and I head out in the canoe to fish the bay. Lance chooses to lounge about camp. We worked our way around the perimeter, me with my casting rod and John with his long fly rod. It was slow going initially but soon John landed a small

mouth bass and just shortly after that I caught a big Northern pike. I worked it to the front of the canoe where John got a good look at it but before I could get a grip on it, the big fish thrashed his head from side to side dislodging the lure and was gone. John said he was at least 30 inches! While trolling back to the camp, John caught 2 more pike, each about 3lbs and they would be our supper tonight. In the process of cleaning the fish John examined the stomach contents and found the pincers of a crawdad! Fish with mac and cheese made good eating this evening and I am stuffed. After cleanup John and Lance go out to fish in the remaining daylight, while I sit on the rocky point to write. The big rock is slowly giving up the warmth it collected through the day and makes a great spot to pass the serene evening. Across the bay I watch the flash of the lures in the low evening sunlight as John and Lance cast about. What a relaxing scene. I believe working all weekend and the traveling on Monday have caught up with me. My chin keeps bouncing off my chest as I try to write. A quick dip in the lake should wake me a bit. I find a likely spot near camp and gingerly step into the very cool water. A soap up and a reluctant dunk to rinse off is all I can manage since it is much colder than I anticipated. Once dried off it really is refreshing. My cool max socks and fleece shirt feel so comfortable.

Back to my warm rock and I scribble out a little more in the journal until the waning light makes it no longer possible to see. The guys come in and as darkness falls we do some more star gazing from our front row box seats. It is quite easy to identify the big dipper and the north star but the sheer multitude of stars makes it a challenge to pick out any other formations. With a heavy sigh, a yawn and a stretch, we decide to turn in and look forward to another restful night.

"He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names."
Psalm 147:4

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