

**WEST CANADA TIMBER CRUISE PROVIDES DIARIST'S
SETTING
09/26/00**

Most of us can remember a composition we read that lingers in our memory long after more seemingly important matters in the same interim have faded. Many famous authors have left us with indelible memories that even the passage of time cannot erase. In my case, Archibald Rutledge was responsible for my recollections, but my most unforgettable was penned by a person who to the best of my knowledge may never have duplicated anything similar.

I will be pleasantly surprised if any readers of this missive will ever have heard of or remember the author. He is Ed Maunton and his story appeared in the late '50s or early '60s in *The New York State Conservationist* magazine. It was long before the publication became what it is today (politically correct) and when it was still a sportsmen's magazine. Then it appreciated true outdoorsmen and their real dedication to the environment, wildlife propagation and habitat.

The title of his article was "Diary of a Beaver Trapper."

Ed Maunton lived in the Albany area and I believe he was a Conservation Department employee. In any event, he was an associate of Victor Skiff, long-time Deputy Conservation Commissioner. (In those days there was one and only one Deputy Commissioner in contrast to today's plethora of political hacks rewarded for their political support.

Ed and Vic were guests of the Adirondack League Club on an extended beaver trapping expedition in the vicinity of the West Canada Creek and related environs. (This fact the reader will learn will have particular significance in this article.)

It was a time when the basic modus operandi was relatively unchanged from its earliest beginnings. There were no snowmobiles and transport was by the venerable and time-tested snowshoe. It was about the time Floyd Westover's substitution of rubberized nylon webbing for snowshoes came on the scene.

The article was very insightful and interesting for the experienced and neophyte as well as those totally unversed with the subject. It obviously had a lasting effect on me

and I found myself envious that I had not the foresight to document my own trapping endeavors.

I found myself allowing in his footsteps soon after his adventures when I discovered one of his trap tags wired to an alder branch on a beaver dam on Monument Lake. I still have it stored away as a cherished memento of his story and that day long past.

My own tale starts back in the winter of 1994 with a meeting with Tom Williams of Pleasant Valley, NY. At the time he managed 1,400 acres of remote timberland on the upper reaches of the famous West Canada Creek. He was an enterprising young entrepreneur reluctantly making a living in the suburbs while his heart was in the Adirondacks. It was a longing that was manifested with his becoming a New York State licensed guide. That connotation earned him more good-natured joshing from myself and other local acquaintances than it did monetary consideration.

Today, Tom and his business partner Mike Ostrow own 1,600+ acres of woodland bordering much of the historic West Canada Creek, an area that invokes images of such legendary characters as French Louis, Trum Haskell and Johnny Leaf.

It is one of the last and most remote private inholdings of what originally was a true wilderness. The river is the scene of a man's early forays against the vast tracts of prime timber. Millions of board feet of lumber was freighted to market on the cresting waters of the famous river.

This is a practice long since prohibited for the river that is one of the last remaining realms of native strains of brook trout. It has been given the highest classification for New York's Wild, Scenic and Recreation River areas.

It's in the setting my narrative begins with a timber cruise of the West Canada Preserve, LLC, the title bestowed on the area by its new owners. The inventory of the timber was completed a year ago and the marking and selection of trees to be harvested in a timber sale began on August 18 of this year.

The actual preparation and work involved in accomplishing that task will be outlined in subsequent columns titled "Diary of a Timber Cruiser." I will be well rewarded and flattered if even one young person views it with the same interest "Diary of a Beaver Trapper" instilled in me.