

YOU MUST ANTICIPATE INJURIES WHEN YOU'RE BACK IN THE WOODS

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When one has spent as much time as I have back in the woods, parts of it for prolonged spells, you learn to be resourceful. Many times it was a long way to help or supplies of any kind, particularly when the way is bereft of established trails, roads or conveyance.

This was a situation made worse by deep, often unstable, snow conditions prior to the 60s and the advent of the first practical snowmobile. Of the many concerns to contend with first and foremost was safety.

The very nature of the work guaranteed mishaps and medical problems that had to be attended to with resources one had on hand. Injuries and minor illnesses are unavoidable and must be anticipated beforehand.

My first extended sojourn was my longest and undoubtedly presented me with my greatest challenges. Several years of experience, formal training and physical conditioning in related fields all combined to mitigate and make me aware of the problems and dangers i would face.

The year was 1952 and the place was the Black Duck Hole, a sheltered bay off the Dead Creek Flow of Cranberry Lake, New York. I spent the entire month of March in a canvas tarpaulin shelter trapping beaver, otter and muskrat. It was the culmination of years following the accounts of E.J. Dailey, O.L. Butcher and Walter L. Arnold, legendary professional trappers, in the pages of *Fur-Fish-Game* magazine. It was one of the most memorable experiences of my life.

Safety was the all consuming aspect of my attempt to emulate the adventures of the aforementioned heroes of my youth. In spite of my cognizance of the fact as predicated earlier, I soon had a minor but very painful mishap. It occurred while making an under ice pole set for beaver. I was nailing a piece of dead branch to a larger pole with the back of my axe. The temperature hovered near zero and the axe had a coating of ice that deflected the axe from the nail to the nail on my left thumb.

The full significance of the accident was not apparent until later that night when I tried to sleep. The throbbing pain became almost unbearable and I knew something had

to be done if I was to get any rest.

I sharpened up the point of my skinning knife and with just the weight of the knife resting on the quick, gently bored a hole through the nail. The relief was instantaneous and welcome. I later learned this is an accepted practice in dealing with the injury, but common sense and logic were all that led me to the solution at the time.

I have learned the hard way to try to drill a hole through the nail with a small electric drill by yourself. A paper clip straightened and heated white hot on a gas stove burner will suffice if you do it carefully.

Ironically, it was another nail that caused a medical emergency. I stepped on a nail in a board but was able to rely on a treatment I learned from my Great Uncle George. He jumped out of a boxcar and drove a nail clear up through the bottom of his foot and out of his instep. A poultice of home cured salt pork rind worked to cure him with no ill effects and it did for me as well. Luckily, salt pork was one of my standard provisions since it kept well and had multiple uses.

Home remedies were a common thread among families when I was growing up. Most demonstrated some validity but many paled in the face of modern cures. They served self-practitioners well in an age lacking in money and enlightenment.

Patent medicines became a common ingredient in most domiciles and the purveyors names were household words. Many were dispensed by budding entrepreneurs whose first forays into the business world was selling them door to door. A recent gift of a bottle of Camphor Balm from a friend from that era brought it all flooding back to me along with the idea for another column.